

MEMO

DATE: July 24, 2007

TO: Directors, Public Children Services Agencies

FROM: Caren Kaplan, Project Co-Director, American Humane Association
Lisa Merkel-Holguin, Project Co-Director, American Humane Association

CC: Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
Supreme Court of Ohio
Subcommittee on Responding to Child Abuse, Neglect and Dependency

SUBJECT: Request for Proposals & Proposal Instructions—Alternative Response

Please find the attached Request for Proposals. As the Consultant to Ohio's Alternative Response Pilot Project, the AIM team (American Humane, Institute of Applied Research, and Minnesota consultants) is seeking applications from public children service agencies to:

1. participate in a Design Workgroup that will guide the development of an Alternative Response System in Ohio. Participation will be ongoing throughout the life of the 27-month project;
2. assess reports of child maltreatment using an Alternative Response family assessment model as permitted under Ohio Statute, Amended Substitute Senate Bill 238;
3. provide services for some families as directed by the family assessment; and
4. participate in an experimental design evaluation of the program activities identified above.

Alternative response is a form of practice in child protective services that allows for more than one method of response to accepted reports of suspected child abuse and/or neglect. This approach recognizes the variation in the nature of reports and the concomitant value of responding differentially, either a traditional investigation or a family assessment response. A family assessment response assesses the needs of the child or family and offers services without requiring a formal disposition (substantiation) that maltreatment has occurred or that the child is at risk of maltreatment.

The project design requires that a participating county apply the Alternative Response family assessment model to *at least* 25% of their accepted child maltreatment reports. Forty percent of this group must subsequently receive services as directed by the assessment. Counties selected to participate will be reimbursed \$1,000 per family for post-assessment services with a cap of no more than 500 families included in this study. In addition to the targeted service dollars, each selected site can receive up to \$50,000 per year for two years (September 15, 2007 – September 14, 2009) to allocate as needed to support other aspects of the design and implementation.



Awardees are expected to work with project evaluators and have the capacity and willingness to provide the evaluation team access to agency staff and records, including specific client and service related data.

Child protection services staff– administrators, supervisors, and direct service staff involved in this project-- and appropriate community partners are expected to attend initial and ongoing training concerning Alternative Response and compatible strength-based interventions that the pilot counties deem helpful as they implement alternative response. For example, in Minnesota, after initial training was conducted, specialized trainings in the areas of family engagement, solution-focused interviewing, and family group decision making were offered to augment the counties' efforts in this area. The time commitment for initial training will be determined by the project Design workgroup and there will be additional seminars and training opportunities provided throughout the course of the project.

Up to ten counties will be chosen to pilot Alternative Response, as mandated in Amended Substitute Senate Bill 238 (126). Selection will be based on uniform criteria detailed subsequently, including a county's ability to implement this approach, and the research requirement to include a representative sample of Ohio counties.

**The deadline for submitting a proposal is August 31, 2007.
Selection decisions will be announced on September 12, 2007.**

Please note: Pre-implementation activities, including Design Workgroup meetings, training and pre-implementation readiness activities will occur between mid-September 2007 and March 30, 2008. Pilots' implementation of the family assessment response will be launched on April 1, 2008 and conclude September 30, 2009. Continuation authorization will be considered as an element of the project.

If you are interested in applying to become a pilot site or want additional information concerning this opportunity, please first consult the list of questions generated at the regional forums and the AIM Project Team responses. If your question is not answered in that document, please contact Caren Kaplan via e-mail at carenk@americanhumane.org. Please provide the subject line, "Proposal Assistance." To maintain the competitive integrity of the process, all non-logistical questions will be compiled into a response document and posted on the National Center for Adoption Law website at www.ohiochildlaw.com for access by all PCSA Directors.

Enclosures:

- Request for Proposals and Proposal Instructions
- Regional Forums: Responses to Participant Questions
- Legislation authorizing ten Alternative Response pilots



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS AND PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS

Ohio Alternative Response Pilot Project

I. BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF PROJECT

The Advisory Committee on Children, Families, and the Courts was appointed by Chief Justice Moyer of the Supreme Court of Ohio to make recommendations regarding family law initiatives. A *Subcommittee on Responding to Child Abuse, Neglect, and Dependency* (Subcommittee) was established by the Advisory Committee to:

- ^ determine if Ohio's statutory guidelines for the investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect properly serve children and families in need of government intervention;
- ^ make statutory and administrative recommendations to improve Ohio's system for accepting and investigating reports of child abuse and neglect; and
- ^ make recommendations to standardize and make uniform Ohio statutes regarding abuse, neglect, and dependency cases.

After 18 months of study, the Subcommittee made a series of recommendations in two distinct, but interrelated, areas:

1. Rewriting the language of the Ohio Revised Code that defines categories and dispositions of child abuse and neglect to move to a "Child in Need of Protective Services" model.
2. Establishing an Alternative Response System for responding to reports of suspected child abuse and neglect.

The Advisory Committee on Children, Families, and the Courts accepted the recommendations of the Subcommittee, including the recommendation to field test and evaluate the value of an Alternative (differential) Response System in Ohio. Statutory authority for up to ten pilot sites was enacted.

This document requests applications from counties that wish to participate as a pilot in the design, implementation and evaluation of an Ohio Alternative Response System for responding to accepted reports of child abuse and neglect.

II. CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM REFORM EFFORTS

Over the past forty years, the child protection system has been given increasing responsibility to address conditions that have been defined as child neglect. The existing protocols, developed to

¹ Alternative Response may also be referred to as differential, dual or multiple response. For the purposes of this document, these terms will be used interchangeably.



respond to reports of substantial child endangerment, have not always been a good match for these new responsibilities. In response to this concern, a number of states began selectively applying a family assessment intervention to specified categories of accepted child maltreatment reports. These states continued to conduct a traditional protective services investigation when responding to reports involving substantial child endangerment. This flexibility in response allowed the intervention to be adjusted to the family's needs.

In 1995, the State of Missouri began piloting a differential response system. Reports of child maltreatment were screened and assigned to either a protective services assessment or family assessment track. Cases could be transferred between response systems if new information or changing circumstances indicated a better match in the other track. Missouri was able to use the family assessment response in over 70% of the reports they received.

The evaluation of this approach found that the safety of children was not compromised and often children were made safer sooner. More families received services, family cooperation increased, and recidivism decreased overall. Placement rates did not change but the duration of placements decreased. Families, social workers and community representatives preferred the family assessment approach. In 1997 Virginia implemented a similar program called the Multiple Response System. As with Missouri, up to 70% of the reported families were served with a family assessment or referral to needed services. In Minnesota, the Department of Human Services encouraged child welfare reform by funding pilot programs that intervene early to prevent child maltreatment or respond in non-traditional ways to reports of child abuse and neglect. These projects have shown promise in the areas of prevention, early intervention and differential response.

To date, the Institute of Applied Research (the evaluator for the Ohio pilot) has conducted the most extensive research on Alternative Response. Evaluation findings to date are significant: child safety has not diminished, cooperation with families has improved, families are more satisfied and feel more involved in decision making, CPS Staff has reacted positively, services to families and children have increased and changed, new child abuse and neglect reports, and later placements of children have been reduced. Although short-term costs have been greater, long-term costs have been reduced.

III. ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE PROJECT PURPOSE

In its Final Report to the Advisory Committee on Children, Families and the Courts, the Supreme Court of Ohio's Subcommittee on Responding to Child Abuse, Neglect and Dependency included a series of recommendations for developing and pilot testing an alternative response protocol in Ohio based on cumulative data from other jurisdictions implementing alternative response as well as feedback from Ohio child welfare professionals. The report contains several global recommendations regarding the establishment of an alternative response system in Ohio. The Subcommittee's recommendations include:

1. statutorily authorized dual investigative and family assessment tracks;
2. criteria that would mandate an investigation defined by administrative rule;



3. strong alternative response screening, risk and safety assessment processes;
4. a provision to allow for re-tracking of cases;
5. established timeframes for initiating and completing a family assessment
6. a rigorously designed pilot program (Carpenter, *Ohio Bulletin*, Spring 2007).

For the purpose of this pilot, enacted legislation allows the (up to) ten public children services agencies to set aside the mandate to respond to all accepted reports with a traditional child protection investigation. Within the pilot program, public children agencies also will be offered the option of a family assessment and services response, in compliance with the criteria and policy developed under the project. The authorizing Ohio statute allows Ohio rules to be temporarily changed, to be responsive to the Subcommittee's recommendations and the future recommendations of the project's Design Workgroup.

This RFP is being initiated to support the implementation of Alternative Response in accordance with the Subcommittee's recommendations. The pilot initiative will provide an opportunity for further evaluation and learning, informing subsequent decisions regarding the desirability of and required components for statewide implementation.

IV. PROJECT DESIGN

Participating pilot counties are expected to be fully invested in the design phase of this project (September 17, 2007 – March 30, 2008). Guided by the AIM team, a Design Workgroup will be formed that will have diverse representation of all project stakeholders, including youth/consumers of service. Each pilot will have at least one workgroup member who is expected to be actively engaged in the tasks and activities of this body. The experiences, protocols, and forms, etc. from other states engaged in alternative response will be leveraged to support Ohio's pilot project. The activities of the Design Workgroup include, but are not limited to,

- ^ building on the work of other states, and creating Ohio's Alternative Response System;
- ^ designing Ohio's Alternative Response protocol;
- ^ reviewing and revising screening protocols,
- ^ reviewing Safety, Family Assessment, and Risk Assessment tools;
- ^ making training recommendations – both content and delivery; and
- ^ reviewing State level infrastructure support including, press kits, SACWIS integration.

At this juncture, four in-person meetings are scheduled in which **attendance is mandatory**: 9/17-18; 10/18-19; 11/1-2; 11/29-30. In addition, there will be four telephone conference calls between September and November and work assignments between both the conference calls and the in-person meetings. The locations of the meetings will be announced once pilot selection has occurred.

In terms of established design elements, pilot counties are expected to apply a family assessment response to at least 25% of their yearly child maltreatment reports using 2006 child protection experience as the base. The maximum number of reports any one county will be allowed to



contribute to this project is 500 for the project duration, even if that amount is less than 25% of a county's 2006 base. Thus, for larger counties, a portion of service population can be targeted, such as particular zip codes. Reports will be randomly selected from each county's pool of accepted reports potentially eligible (meet project criteria) for a family assessment response. Counties have the option to expand beyond the specified caps but must support additional family assessments with existing county resources. Project funding and research is limited to those reports selected for study.

Post-assessment services must be provided to 40% of the reports selected for a family assessment. These service cases require a written service plan and documentation of resources used to address family needs and goals. Post-assessment funds provided by the state may be used to finance agency needs related to the pilot, including county staff, or to purchase services from community agencies.

As a part of the project, pilot agencies will receive skill-based instruction to facilitate incorporation of the Alternative Response model into the system. Alternative Response, however, is predicated upon an embrace of certain philosophical concepts that must be accepted prior to initiation. The family assessment response to reports of child maltreatment assumes that families are concerned about the safety of their children and want to address safety threats, risk of future maltreatment and child well-being. Families' protective capacities and strengths must be identified, respected and used to protect children and reduce risk.

The assessment process is expected to be more holistic and less incident-based than the traditional child maltreatment investigation. The family assessment typically is a cooperative process, accomplished jointly with the family. Results of the assessment are shared with the family and case plans are developed together with family members. Addressing family-identified concerns and needs, honoring the family's wishes, and using agency and community resources to support families are key elements in the service design.

V. PROJECT FUNDING

Counties selected for participation will be reimbursed for post-assessment service costs based on the number of families included in the project study, as identified under Project Design.

For the 40% of families receiving services beyond the assessment, the reimbursement rate will be \$1,000 per family. Counties have the discretion to treat the reimbursement allocation as a whole and not a required expenditure for each family. In addition to the targeted service dollars, each selected site can receive up to \$50,000 per year to allocate as needed to support other aspects of the design and implementation.

Counties will be required to document expenditures for the total funding received. Any specific spending guidelines and fiscal documentation will be developed by the Design Workgroup in conformance with existing state fiscal reporting policies and processes.



Supplemental project funding will partially subsidize, rather than fully cover the cost of serving families in the Alternative Response pathway. The families served are not new responsibilities for public children services agencies. They represent reports that are currently accepted and receive an investigation. However, the pilot project does expect that more of these families will be engaged in post-assessment services than is currently practiced. Project funds are for the purposes of facilitating organizational transition and cushioning the expected, initial increase in families that receive services past disposition. Given that one of the preeminent goals of this work is post-project sustainability, it is critical that the pilots not be based upon the presumption of a large influx of new dollars, but that existing dollars be realigned to support the bulk of this new practice approach.

ODJFS reserves the right to adjust financing for proposals dependent on the number of proposals selected and available funding. Ten awards are anticipated. Funding commitments will be made through award letters once the selection process is complete. These commitments will require counties to implement their proposals as approved by ODJFS.

VI. REQUIRED TRAINING

Child protective services staff are expected to attend training covering the Alternative Response guidelines, best practices, and strength-based family support approaches. Periodically, participating counties will come together for additional training and to share lessons learned. Community partners and other local stakeholders are also strongly encouraged to actively participate in training events. Training needs and content will be guided by the decisions of the Design Workgroup. The designated pilot leader—the primary point of contact for all project-related activities who is identified on the proposal cover sheet—is responsible for assuring that all relevant staff are in attendance at training sessions.

VII. PROJECT EVALUATION

The Institute of Applied Research will be working with selected pilot counties to study the following outcomes:

- ^ Changes in child safety
- ^ Long-term child safety and welfare: new reports of child abuse and neglect
- ^ Permanency: subsequent removals and placements
- ^ Family satisfaction and cooperation
- ^ Family functioning and well-being, skills of individual family members, financial well-being and social support
- ^ Services to families
- ^ Worker satisfaction
- ^ Judicial system: referrals to juvenile/family court, reduction in court hearings, child removals, TPR orders, etc.
- ^ Economic outcomes: costs of initial cases and later contacts



In order to obtain the information needed to understand these outcomes, IAR will ask participating pilots to assist in the collection of data from the following sources:

- ^ Agency automated records for experimental and control families
- ^ Case-specific survey: Feedback from workers about specific samples of experimental and control cases
 - Ongoing throughout pilot period
 - Limited number of cases per worker over 18 months
- ^ Feedback from families: mail and telephone surveys
- ^ Community surveys and interviews
 - Regular site visits and staff interviews
 - General early-late surveys of child protection workers
 - Judicial system data
- ^ Financial data on sample experimental and control cases

Proposal applicants must have the capacity to collect and make these sources of information available to the researchers. Should difficulties be encountered with the automated systems (SACWIS), the information may have to be collected and organized manually or through an alternative data collection system.

VIII. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

The lead applicant must be a public children's services agency. The public children services agency may apply as a single entity and single agencies can join with community providers in this application. Any combination is acceptable as long as the public children services agency is the lead entity in the application to implement an alternative response approach. Applicants are encouraged to promote the collaboration of county agencies, private providers and community social services in the delivery of post-assessment services.

By submitting an application, the public children services agency has affirmed:

- ^ its commitment to the philosophical concepts of the project as described in this RFP;
- ^ full participation of staff in the activities set forth in the RFP;
- ^ adherence to the data collection requirements for the program evaluation; and,
- ^ the identification of a *project leader* who will serve as the primary point of contact for all pilot activities for the duration of the project.



IX. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

- A. Proposals must be sent in WORD or PDF format via e-mail to Project Co-Director Caren Kaplan, at: carenk@americanhumane.org with the subject line “Ohio AR Proposal.”
- B. Applications must be received by 5:00pm ET, August 31, 2007.
- C. Each applicant will receive an electronic receipt of acceptance. If an email confirmation is not received within 2 business days, please contact Caren at carenk@americanhumane.org or call **Lisa Merkel-Holguin at 303-925-9421**.
- D. Proposals should be no more than 15 pages in length including attachments.
- E. Late proposals will not be accepted.

X. PROPOSAL CONTENTS

Please complete the proposal application **Cover Sheet** and the **Application Outline** found in Attachment A.

XI. EVALUATION OF PROPOSAL

- A. Evaluation: The eight members of the AIM project team will evaluate all proposals received by the deadline. Proposals will be evaluated using the criteria outlined in the attached Application Outline.
- B. Selection: The AIM team will make recommendations to the Subcommittee on Child Abuse, Neglect and Dependency. The Subcommittee will make the final selection decisions.
- C. Notification: All applicants will be notified of pilot selections on September 12, 2007. Applicants who are selected will be notified by telephone (preferred) or e-mail should connection by telephone not be made.

XII. PROPOSAL ASSISTANCE

Prospective applicants who have any questions regarding this RFP may contact Caren Kaplan, Project Co-Director *via e-mail* (carenk@americanhumane.org) using the *subject* header **Proposal Assistance**.

All inquiries must be received by Friday, August 3rd. Responses will be available on Monday, August 13th and posted on the National Center on Adoption Law and Policy at www.ohiochildlaw.com.



Attachment A
Ohio Alternative Response Pilot Project



Application Cover Sheet

Applicant Information:

County:

Address:

Contact Person:

Phone:

Fax:

E-mail:

Pilot Leader (may or may not be individual named above)

Name:

Position:

Mailing address:

E-Mail address:

Telephone:



Application Outline

Please limit your proposal to no more than 15 pages and please provide the header for each of your responses to the seven elements below.

Selection Criteria for the Ohio Alternative Response Pilot Project

I. AGENCY CAPACITY (15 POINTS)

Describe the public children services agency's capacity to implement an Alternative Response Program, citing administrative and community commitment, staff skills and training, ability to respond to the cultural needs of the target population, data privacy protections, agency infrastructure. Note any resolution or approval that the applicant deems required for full participation, e.g. County Commissioners or Executive Board.

Describe the agency's commitment to fully engage in the precepts of this project. This should address, but not necessarily be limited to, the following questions:

- ^ What is the commitment to implement, support, and spread this work across the county and the state, as successes are achieved?
- ^ How have you included the staff— social workers, supervisors, and managers - - in the decision to apply for this project and the discussion of structural reorganization that will be required if your jurisdiction is selected as one of the AR pilots?
- ^ How is a commitment to fully participate in the Design Workgroup demonstrated?
- ^ Is the capacity for leadership established through notable examples of initiative and/or innovation in the child protection arena on the agency, community, county, state and/or national levels?
- ^ Has the capacity to develop MOU's with partnering services/agencies and/or universal release forms to assure the enduring provision of services and adherence to confidentiality tenets and privacy protections of families been established?

II. COMMUNITY CAPACITY (15 POINTS)

The success of the differential model relies, in part, on the creation and development of strong community support agencies that are willing and able to become partners with the state to protect the interests of children.

Summarize any discussions you have had with the community (community advisory councils, mandated reporters, community social service providers, advocates, courts, law enforcement etc.) concerning the implementation of Alternative Response including the anticipated level of support.

Describe the potential for referral to or collaboration with community programs in meeting service needs identified in the family assessment. Describe the capacity of community programs to meet the service and cultural needs of the target population.

Note: Applicants are encouraged to provide a letter of commitment from external partner(s) that identifies the roles and responsibilities of the prospective partner(s) and demonstrates the building of community capacity. While multiple stakeholders may



provide signatures indicating their intent to collaborate with the public children's services agency, only one letter will be accepted per applicant.

III. TARGET POPULATION (10 Points)

Provide an abbreviated sketch of the county-specific demographics including population size, racial and ethnic composition, geographic location, urban/suburban/rural composition, industry/job opportunities, and major issues in the external environment that are likely to impact the development and implementation of Alternative Response.

Provide demographic information about the population receiving child protection services in your county including any data on race/culture, income, child's age, frequency distribution within maltreatment categories, family makeup and geographic distribution within the county.

The project design requires the identification of all potential Alternative Response assessments and a random sample of this pool that would equal *or exceed* 25% of the total number of reports accepted for a maltreatment response. At least 40% of the families that receive a Family Assessment must receive post-assessment services. For example, under the project design, a public children services agency that annually accepts 100 reports of suspected child abuse or neglect for investigation must identify all cases which meet the guidelines for Alternative Response and a *minimum* of 25 of these reports must receive a Family Assessment. At least ten families must receive post-assessment services.

Using this formula, identify the number of reports you anticipate will receive an Alternative Response assessment in a 15-month period (i.e., 1.25 years) based on projections from the total number of reports accepted in calendar year 2006. Larger counties (i.e., the 5 metro areas) may identify catchments such as specific zip codes to serve as the target population. Please know that funding and evaluation is limited to 500 families. Should the county want to expand the service population that receives an Alternative Response, no additional resources will be awarded beyond the 500 family limit.

IV. SERVICE DELIVERY STRUCTURE (20 points)

As has been previously stated, many of the design issues will be guided by the decisions made by the Design Workgroup. That said, with the information acquired during the Regional Forums and the responses to questions raised during the forum that are included in this RFP, detail your plan for the acquisition of needed resources, the delivery of needed services to the families assigned to the Alternative Response System, and the administration of an assessment pathway. State your agency's capacity to implement this alternative assessment process. State who will assess these reports. Who will provide the service needs identified in the family assessment? Describe the extent to which there will be collaborative or contractual arrangements with community service providers. Describe the ways in which you have engaged or will engage the various levels of staff in the planning for and support of the requisite changes in structure and role assignments. Describe the staffing structure, including job functions, within your proposed program. Identify whether the assessment and post-assessment functions will be separated or will be the continuous responsibility of the same staff person.



V. EVALUATION CAPACITY (15 POINTS)

Describe the applicant agency’s capacity to collect the data identified under the evaluation component of the Alternative Response RFP (see page 7). Identify who will be the county representative responsible for coordinating data gathering with the project researcher. Indicate your commitment to participate fully in process and outcome evaluations using randomized, experimental design to evaluate system development, including tracking cases and case outcomes.

VI. ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES (15 POINTS)

Each and every agency reform is accompanied by practice, agency, and community challenges – both anticipated and those that were not intended. It is not the presence of challenges that threaten projects’ success, but the failure to recognize and/or address them. A candid appraisal will be considered an important facet of application evaluation.

Identify the most significant challenges you anticipate and the various levels of impact (e.g., practice, agency, community, county) and how you plan to address them should they arise. Also identify what assistance the AIM team can provide to you in order to limit the deleterious impacts of these challenges.

VII. BUDGET PROJECTIONS/FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS (10 points)

The budget is based on a \$1,000 reimbursement rate for each family for whom post-assessment services are provided. In addition to the targeted service dollars, each selected site can receive up to \$50,000 per year to allocate as needed to support other aspects of the design and implementation. Provide a projection of the expected total cost reimbursement based on the project requirement to assess 25% of all accepted reports and to serve 40% of the reports assessed. Describe the agency’s and/or community’s ability or plans to reallocate existing funds in preparation for sustainability of Alternative Response in your county.

Provide your signature below indicating your consent to the following statement:

If selected to be a pilot, _____ (name of county) will participate in this endeavor from July 2007 to September 2009 or for the duration of the project as specified on the award letter.

Signature

