

# **A Tangled Web: Family Preservation and Child Safety in the Child Protection System**

**Disentangling Neglect from Poverty Across Definitions, Outcomes, Interventions, and Policy Recommendations – Child Maltreatment Solutions Network**

April 22, 2022

John D. Fluke

Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect

Department of Pediatrics

University of Colorado School of Medicine

# Topics

- Child Welfare as a System
- Some Promising CPS System Reform Strategies to Address Neglect
  - Child Protection Screening Decisions
  - Engagement Enabling Policy
- Some questions

# Screening Threshold Analysis (STA):

## Why is action at screening important in thinking about child welfare neglect related decisions?

- In the US we have mandatory reporting –A decision to screen in means that we are necessarily going to engage with a family – for good or bad
- Taking action to investigate when we don't need to is the most common decisional outcome error (false positives)
- How the child welfare system responds to reports is how it trains the community about what is meant by child maltreatment
- Screening actions translate into resource expenditures by the child welfare system
- Racial disparities in child welfare systems emerge most strongly from reports made by the community

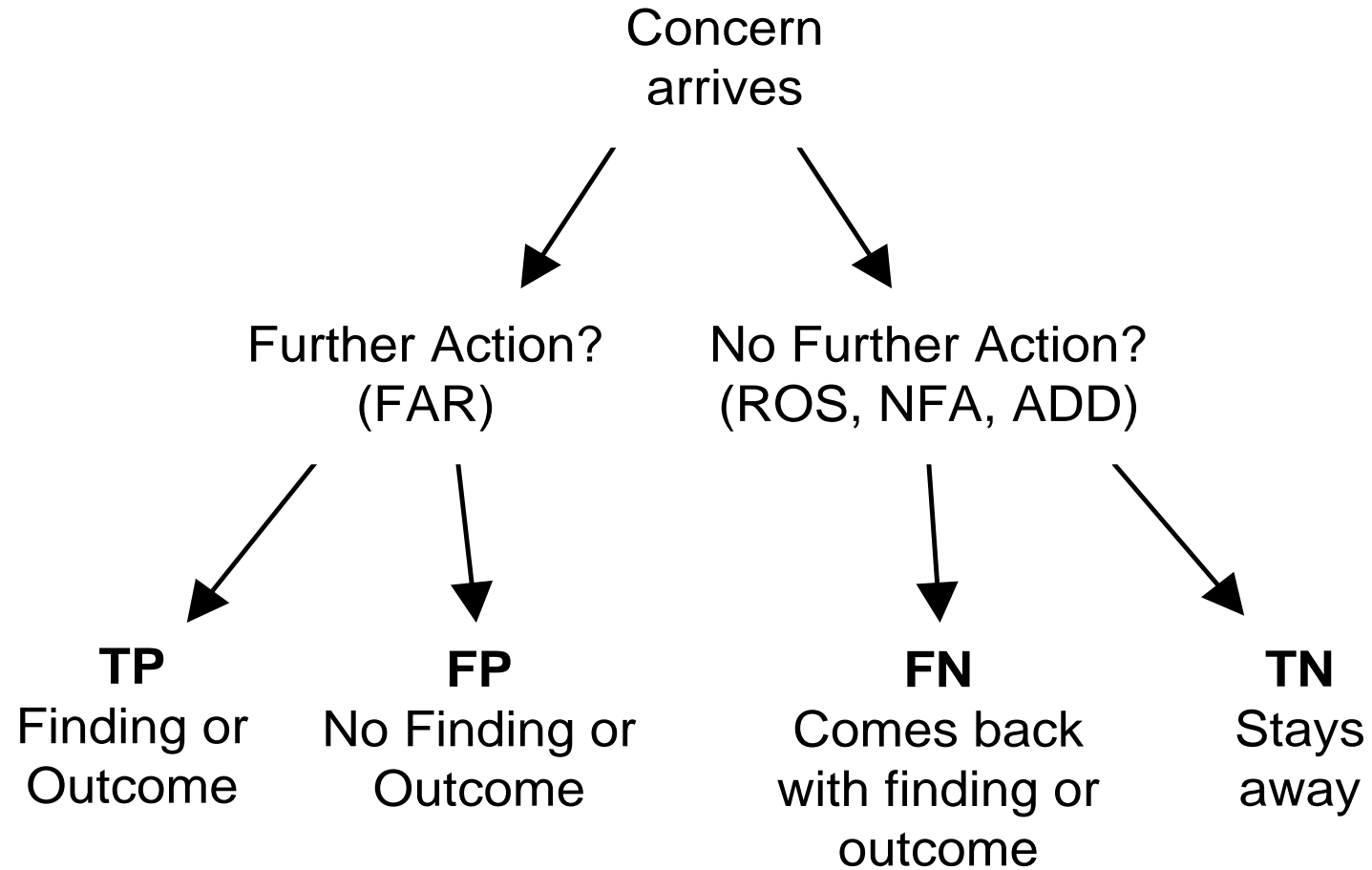
# Reframing child protection: A response to a constant crisis of confidence in child protection

**James Mansell**  
**Rissa Ota**  
**Ricus Erasmus**  
**Kip Marks**

Child, Youth and Family  
Ministry of Social Development  
New Zealand

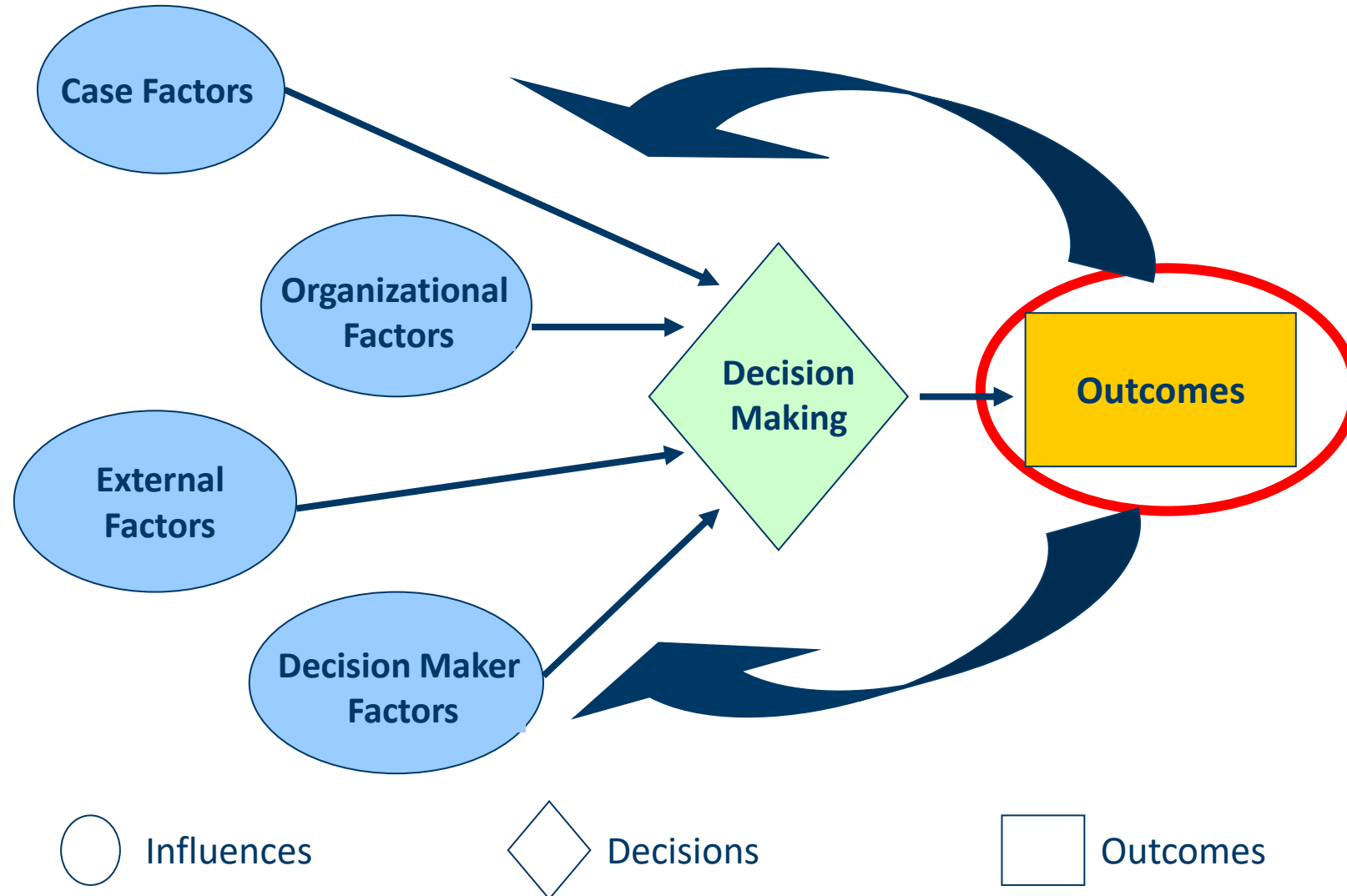
January 2011

# Intake Decision Tree



# Decision Making Ecology

(Baumann, Dalgleish, Fluke, & Kern, 2011)

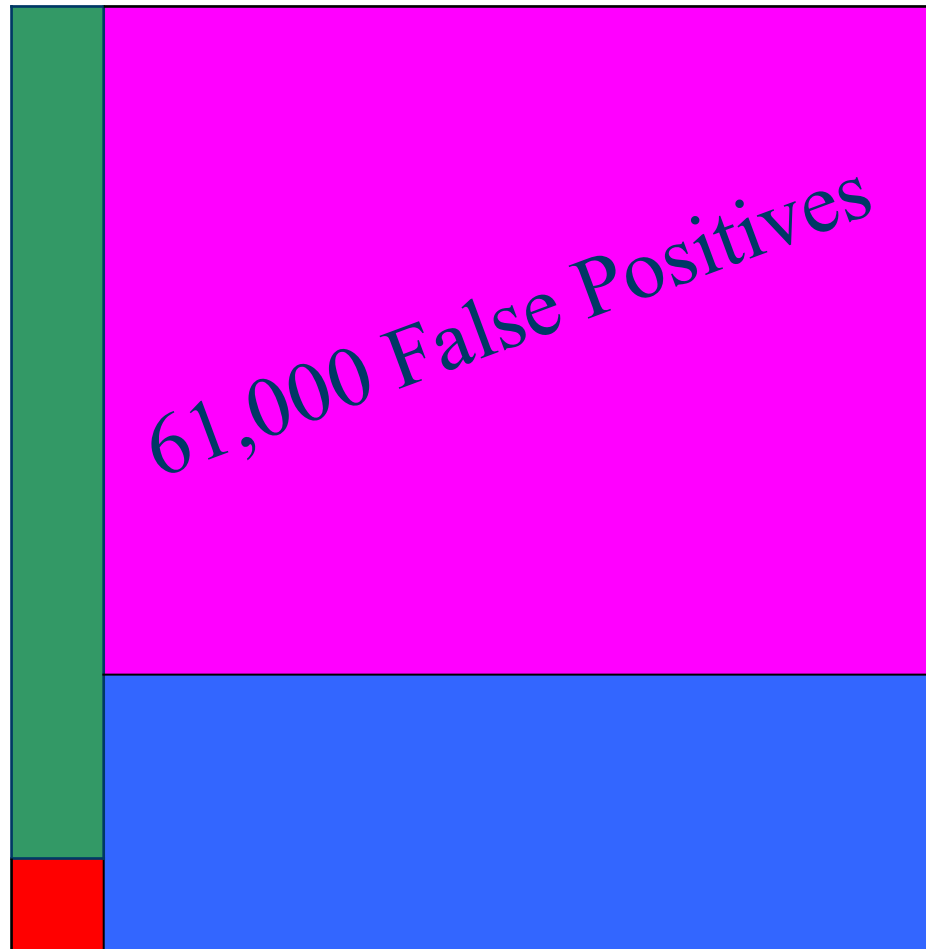


# Four-Fold Table Example

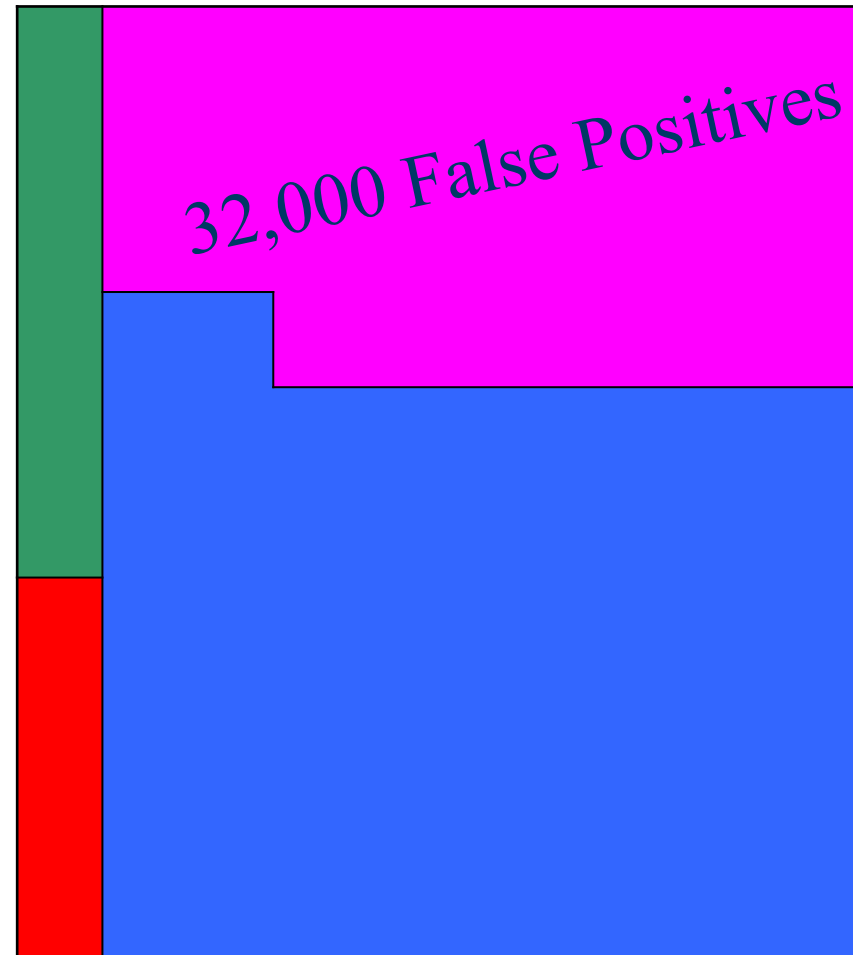
Outcomes for decisions to take action to place or not (Dalgleish, 2012):

	Should have taken action	Should NOT have taken action
PRM Prediction: YES - Remove	Hit is Yes Correct Outcome	False Alarm Error Damned if you Do False Positive
PRM Prediction: NO -Not Remove	Miss Error Damned if you Don't False Negative	Hit is No Correct Outcome

# Effect of Thresholds on False Positives (100,000 referrals)



**LOW THRESHOLD ACCEPT MORE REFERRALS**



**HIGHER THRESHOLD ACCEPT FEWER REFERRALS**

\* The assessment has an Area Under the Receiver Operator Curve = 63%: Prevalence assumed to be 10%: Applied to 100,000 children

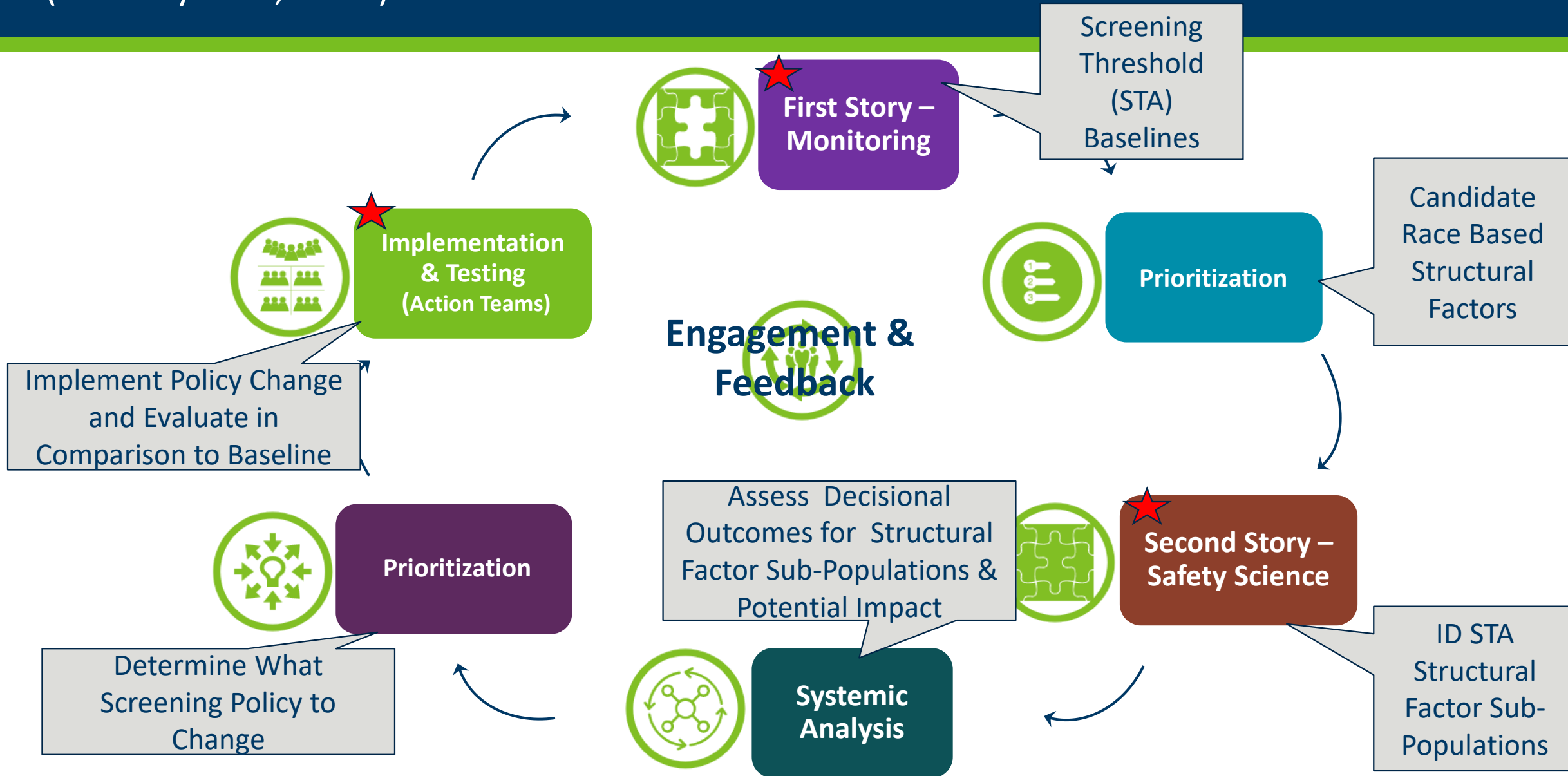


# Toronto CCAS: 2 x 2 Table of Reports Received FY 2011 to FY 2013 ( 365 day benchmark) – (Stoddart & Schumaker 2021)

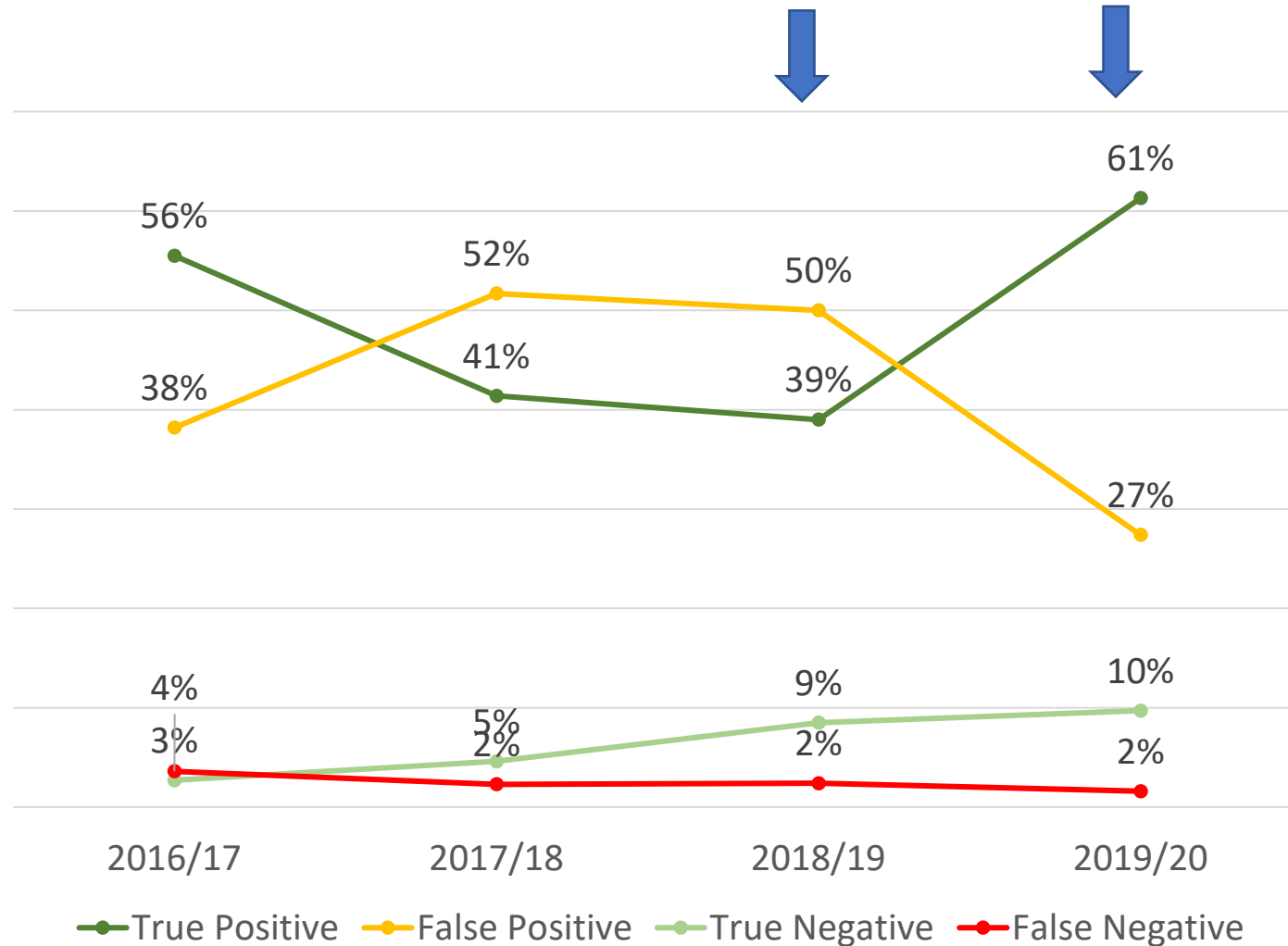
Intake Decision	Initial or Subsequent Response Confirmation		Total
	Response Confirmed	Response Not Confirmed	
Screened In N (%)	True Positive 4,029 (47.40%)	False Positive 2,567 (30.20%)	6,596 (77.60%)
Screened Out N (%)	False Negative 170 (2.00 %)	True Negative 1,704 (20.05%)	1,874 (22.04%)
<b>Total</b>	4,199 (49.40%)	4,271 (50.25%)	8,501

# What might this look like for CQI – Screening Review?

(Kearney et al, 2022)



# CCAS Toronto Current Findings: Black Families & Education Referrals for Physical Harm

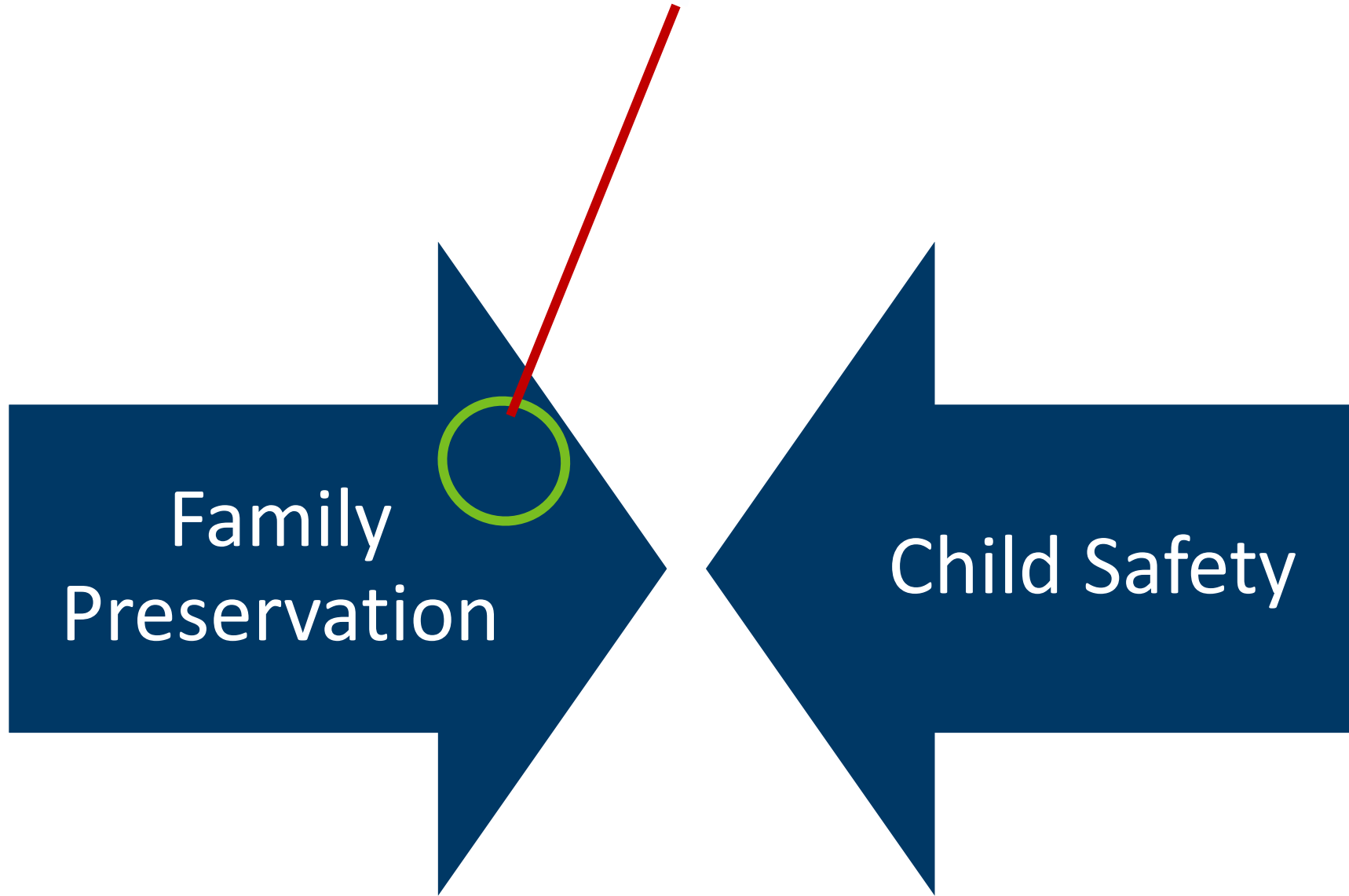


- Implemented Africentric Wraparound in 2018/19
- Presented data to the Toronto Catholic District School Board in October 2019
- Specificity remains an issue; still escalating more cases that don't have protection concerns than we would like (74%)
- However, this is in the context of changing threshold for both screening in AND verification
- Good news is the reduced intrusion into Black community while not increasing False Negatives

# Some Reflection on Screening Threshold Analysis

- Decisional Outcomes are Not “gold standards”
  - Unintended Consequences are very possible
- Identification of Appropriate Sub-Populations is Challenging
  - The identification of appropriate sub-populations may not be feasible given the data
  - Identifiable sub-populations may be too small or too large
  - Effect sizes may be too small
- Approach is Incrementalistic and Changes will be Gradual
- There may be pushback from safety focused advocates

# CPS Response to Neglect? – Can Differential Response (DR) Help?



- **Background**

- Differential response (DR): Allows child protective services (CPS) to engage families and differentiate its response to reports of child abuse and neglect based on risk and other considerations (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019).
- By 2014, the majority of states had at one point implemented some type of DR program (QIC-DR, 2014).
- Differential Response as engagement enabling policy
- Concerns have been raised and controversies continue
- Biggest research lack is adequate criteria for assignment

# Differential Response and Children Re-Reported to Child Protective Services: County Data From the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS)

Child Maltreatment  
2019, Vol. 24(2) 127-136  
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DOI: 10.1177/1077559518816381  
journals.sagepub.com/home/cm



John D. Fluke<sup>1</sup>, Nicole Harlaar<sup>1</sup>, Brett Brown<sup>2</sup>, Kurt Heisler<sup>3</sup>,  
Lisa Merkel-Holguin<sup>1</sup>, and Adam Darnell<sup>4</sup>

## Abstract


Child protection systems that implement differential response (DR) systems screen to route referrals to an investigation response (IR) or alternative response (AR). AR responses emphasize family engagement, assessment of family needs, and service linkage. Usually, AR state-level policy does not require child welfare staff to make a maltreatment determination. Jurisdictions implement DR systems differently, leading to variations in the proportion of AR cases, risk levels of cases served, and the ways families access and use services. County data from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System were analyzed for six states from 2004 to 2013 that implemented DR. Variation in county-level AR rates were associated with county-level re-report rates using regression models with risk adjustments for socioeconomic and other county characteristics. Counties had 3% fewer re-reports overall for each percentage increase in AR use; higher levels of AR use are related to lower levels of re-reporting. When county AR and IR cases were analyzed separately, increasing rates of AR were associated with lower re-report rates for IR cases, but higher re-report rates for AR cases. Findings for the AR and IR subgroup must be interpreted with caution as a number of technical factors may be driving these results.






# Key Findings

- 1. Overall, higher rates of alternative response were associated with lower re-reports**
- 2. Overall, for cases where investigation response (IR) was the initial response higher rates of alternative response (AR) utilization were associated with lower numbers of re-reports.**
- 3. Overall, for cases where an AR was the initial response higher rates of AR utilization were associated with greater numbers of re-reports**



# Differential Response and the Reduction of Child Maltreatment and Foster Care Services Utilization in the U.S. From 2004 to 2017

Child Maltreatment  
2022, Vol. 0(0) 1–11  
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DOI: 10.1177/10775595211065761  
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Michelle Johnson-Motoyama<sup>1</sup> , Donna K. Ginther<sup>2</sup> , Rebecca Phillips<sup>1</sup> ,  
Oliver W. J. Beer<sup>1</sup> , Lisa Merkel-Holguin<sup>3</sup> , and John Fluke<sup>4</sup> 

## Abstract

By 2014, the majority of U.S. states had implemented differential response (DR), a system policy that seeks to serve families of low-to moderate-risk for child maltreatment through family engagement, diversion from formal child protective services investigations, and service provision. However, the effects of DR programs on child welfare dynamics have yet to be evaluated nationally using causal methods. Using a quasi-experimental study design with data drawn from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System from 2004 to 2017, we found states with DR programs had approximately 19% fewer substantiated reports, 25% fewer children substantiated for neglect, and a 17% reduction in foster care services utilization when compared to states without DR programs. We find these estimates to be robust to the opioid epidemic and incarceration rates. Additional research is needed to better characterize DR programs and isolate the effects of DR programs geographically.

- To what extent was DR was utilized across U.S. states from 2004 to 2017?
  - 25 states (>1% utilization)
  - 13 states had DR programs in place between 2004-2010;
  - 12 states implemented between 2011-2017
  - On average, 28 to 44% of children served by DR programs were screened in for investigation or assessment each year

# Effects of DR Utilization Policy on Reports, Victims, and Neglect Victim Compared with States Without DR Utilization Policy

- Reports – no difference observed
- Victims – 19% reduction in victimization levels
- Neglect Victims – 25% reduction in victimization levels

# Effects of DR Utilization Policy on Out of Home Removals Compared with States Without DR Utilization Policy

- Out of Home Removals – 16% reduction
- Out of Home Care Removals: Victims – 15% reduction
- Out of Home Care Removals: Neglect Victims – 17% reduction

# Questions

- Are services that can prevent or treat neglect readily available in communities?
- Engagement enabling policy is predicated on the idea that carrots work better than sticks. Can policies that facilitate engagement increase service uptake when the agency has no way to require families to seek additional services?
- Re-reporting risk tolerance: What error (false positives/false negatives) do you want to avoid? The downsides:
  - As screening thresholds increase and false negatives are stable while false positive rates go down will safety concerns be raised? How much pressure will be exerted toward child safety if false negative rates rise to small degree?
  - Jurisdictions with higher AR utilization are likely have increased re-reporting among the AR component of the screened in cases
- Is keeping neglect out of the formal CPS system at intake and/or response a good strategy
  - What kinds of neglect?
- Should CPS systems respond to neglect but perhaps in a different way like DR? Do we need a completely different system?

Thank You!

## Contact Information

**John D. Fluke, Ph.D.**

Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse  
& Neglect

[John.Fluke@CUAnschutz.edu](mailto:John.Fluke@CUAnschutz.edu)