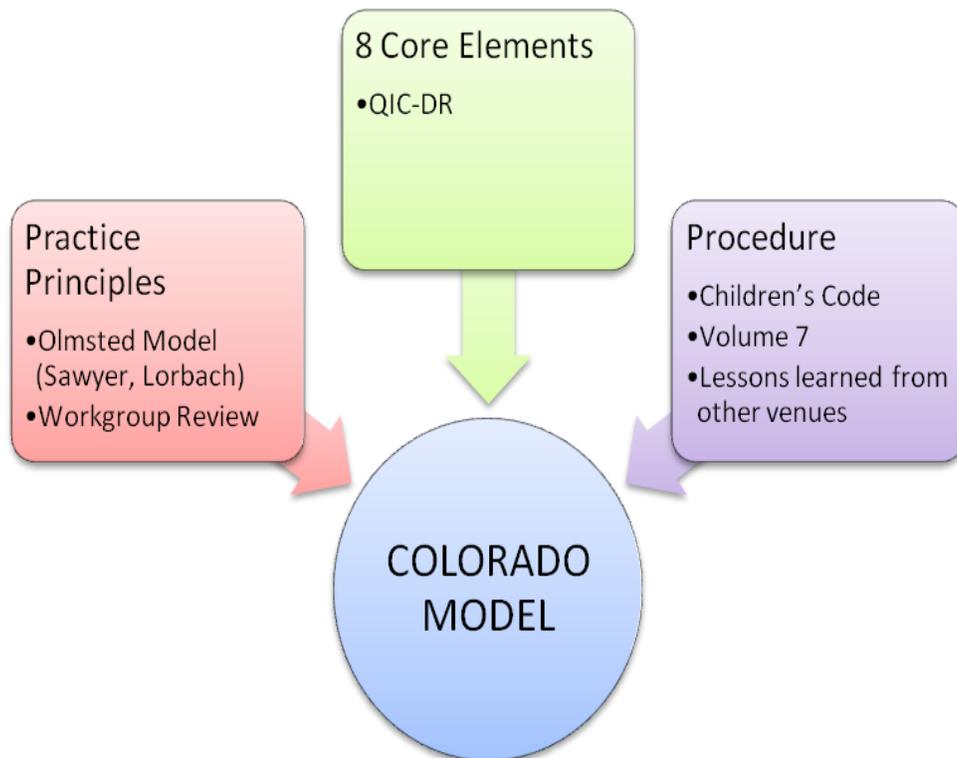


# PRACTICE MODEL FOR DIFFERENTIAL RESPONSE IN COLORADO

Version 1, September 2010

The following model was developed by the Colorado Consortium on Differential Response. The model is an integration of the eight core elements defined by the National Quality Improvement Center on Differential Response, practice principles that guide decision points, and procedure defined in Colorado law. The purpose of the document is to facilitate consistent implementation, serve as an outline for practice coaching, and to define process measures for fidelity.



## Eight Core Elements

Eight core elements were provided by the QIC-DR as standards for participation in the project and evaluation. Some statutory adaptation was necessary, including HB 1226, which allowed for two discrete tracks of intervention, including no determination of maltreatment in the non-investigative track.

Core Element (QIC-DR)	Colorado Strategy
1. Two or more discrete tracks of intervention.	A new, non-investigative track was developed: Family Assessment Response (FAR).
2. Multiple responses for reports of maltreatment that are screened in and accepted for response.	Track assignment decision is made at the time of screening.
3. No substantiation of alleged maltreatment for families served in a non-investigation track and services offered without a formal determination of child maltreatment (i.e., substantiation). This means that perpetrators and victims are not identified for the alleged reports of maltreatment that receive a non-investigation response.	Though the roles of alleged PRAN and alleged victim will continue to be entered in Trails prior to track assignment for the purpose of NCANDS reporting, there will be no finding made or determined PRAN entered for those cases served in the FAR track.
4. Differential use of central registry depending on track, meaning the name of the alleged perpetrator is not entered into the central registry for those individuals who are served through a non-investigation track.	Colorado does not utilize a central registry, but rather records background information in Trails. For cases served in the FAR track, that information cannot be used for the purpose of determining employment eligibility, as investigation will not be conducted.

Core Element (QIC-DR)	Colorado Strategy
5. Response pathways are formally established via legislation, policy or protocols.	HB 1226 established the FAR track as an option in all five counties in the project.
6. The CPS agency determines pathway assignment based on an array of factors (e.g., alleged maltreatment type; presence of imminent danger; risk level; number of prior reports; age of child).	Colorado has developed an agency response guide that provides structured analysis of an array of factors.
7. Initial pathway assignment can change if the agency obtains new information that alters risk level or safety concerns.	<p>A track change from FAR to IR occurs if any of the following is present within the assessment period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. The family requests investigation response.</li> <li>B. New information is received that might warrant a change in response.</li> <li>C. There is not sufficient engagement or ability conduct an assessment of child safety.</li> </ul>
8. Services are voluntary – families may accept or refuse services so long as there are no safety concerns.	If no safety factors are present in the safety assessment, the family may accept or refuse services from the agency without consequence.

## **Differential Response Practice Principles**

These practice principles were adapted from a model utilized in Olmsted County, Minnesota (Sawyer, 2010, April). They were further defined during pre-implementation by the project's Intake/Services workgroup.

### **Safety-Focused**

Child safety is the primary focus. Safety is achieved through family engagement. It is important to understand the danger/harm from the points of view of the caseworker and family members. Safety concerns of the agency are clearly articulated. Caseworkers develop safety-focused partnerships with families and conduct a comprehensive assessment of the family's strengths, resources and supports that will help address the identified safety and risk concerns. Caseworkers assess safety by using scaling questions with the family. Effort is made to identify exceptions that can be understood as strengths and built upon in the plan. Natural support systems that are committed to supporting the family over time to help reduce risk to children are included to help bring about necessary change to ensure their well-being. Safety plans have explicit and careful focus given to goals of the family and agency that ensure child safety.

### **Constructive Engagement (Partnership with Families)**

Partnership with families is a primary goal. Constructive engagement occurs when the caseworker practices out of a belief that every family has strengths, resources, their own way of solving problems and their own goals. Family members are seen as individuals with whom to build cooperation. To facilitate this, solution focused skill sets are used by agency staff. Additionally, serving the unique needs of various families demands creative and at times non-traditional service delivery strategies.

### **Collaborative Engagement (Collaboration with Communities)**

Community agencies and informal family supports are valued as partners in promotion and maintenance of child welfare. Caseworkers recognize the value of collaborating with other natural supports and community agencies to help the family. Caseworkers engage members of the support system in the same way they engage the family.

### **Family & Community Inclusion**

Caseworkers are open minded about family and community members identified as partners in building safety. Families are encouraged to look at extended family and community supports from the very beginning of the case to assist in problem solving. Family meetings are utilized whenever possible to facilitate and support networks of family support. Family meetings

facilitate constructive and collaborative engagement in an integrated fashion. Efforts are made to engage fathers and paternal side of the family, in addition to mothers and maternal supports. Caseworkers are familiar with community resources, particularly those that focus on meeting basic family needs. Before case closure, caseworkers develop support plans with families to assist in maintenance of networks. Services are sustainable post Department involvement if needed.

### **Assessment of Risk and Protective Capacity**

Structured decision making with the Risk Assessment tool balances with the intentional inclusion and integration of family's perspective. This represents a bridging of professional and family knowledge. A consistent framework ("The Framework," which is included in Trails) is used throughout agency involvement for assessment, service planning, supervision, family meetings and provides the opportunity for delineation of needs, strengths, and next steps (Turnell & Edwards, 1999). It also provides a common point of reference for group consultation/supervision (Lorbach, 2007). Development of treatment plans with the family that are concise, behaviorally specific, individualized and measurable using the language of the family. The focus remains on safety instead of services compliance and completion as main criteria for closing the case (i.e., is there enough safety to close?).

### **Transparency**

Transparency in child welfare represents clear communication of roles, responsibilities, and agency authority. There are multiple levels of authority implicit in the child welfare system. Efforts will be made at all levels to utilize authority in a responsible manner, with respect for individual needs and differences, culture, and diversity. Transparency is demonstrated by sharing with families how decisions were made or discussions that occurred when they were not present. There is general practice of "no decision about a family without the family." Recognition of the power of language that caseworkers and supervisors use – avoid professional jargon and use the family's language, empathic and active listening and check for understanding by the family. Agency authority is used when possible to advocate for the needs of families. Additionally, there is transparency of practice within the agency, and agency staff are engaged in group decision making among agency staff, including Review, Evaluate, Direct (RED) teams (Sawyer & Lorbach, 2005). Transparency of practice between workers is a main focus for group supervision and consultation (Lorbach, 2007).

## Differential Response in Practice

This portion of the model was developed through integration of the eight core elements, the practice principles, and current Colorado public child welfare policy. It was defined by conversations with project workgroups, consultation with various venues practicing differential response, and guidance from state program staff.

\*Asterisks indicate where waivers of rule are required for implementation.

Practice	Practice Principle	Fidelity Measurement (Indicator that model is followed)
<b>(All referrals) Comprehensive screening that organizes information regarding the allegation and family supports in the referral.</b>	Safety Focused Constructive Engagement Collaborative Engagement Assessment of Risk and Protective Factors	Screeners can articulate that effort is made to use The Screening Guide to gather explicit information about the allegation AND that solution focused and strengths based strategies are used to gather information about family support and protective factors to provide a comprehensive view of the family at the time of referral.
<b>(Most referrals) RED Team examination of referrals to establish agency response and track assignment</b>	Transparency Assessment of Risk and Protective Factors	Number of documented RED team frameworks in referrals.

Practice	Practice Principle	Fidelity Measurement (Indicator that model is followed)
Track assignment determined by presence of imminent danger, level of risk, the number of previous reports, the source of the report, and/or presenting case characteristics such as type of alleged maltreatment and age of the alleged victim.	Assessment of Risk and Protective Capacity	Pick list value from track assign window reflects regard for risk factors and/or if "Other" is chosen, comments reflect this principle.
In referrals that indicate that domestic violence in the family, caseworkers will utilize the Domestic Violence FAQs guide to assist in decision points.	Safety organized casework	Caseworkers meet first with the adult victim, if identified and utilize feedback from that individual as to how to meet with other family members.  At site visit, caseworkers can identify how strategies for families with domestic violence concerns differ from families that do not.
Initial contact with the family allows family choice in how/where interviews will be conducted in assigned response time. Effort is to make a phone call in advance of visit to inform for the reason of the visit.	Transparency  Constructive Engagement	Number of cases where phone call is made in advance to set up first visit.  (Suggestion is to add an Initial Contact pick list value to contacts in Trails).

Practice	Practice Principle	Fidelity Measurement (Indicator that model is followed)
*Children may be seen in the presence of their parents for the initial visit, except in incidences where child safety would be compromised by this approach.	Transparency Constructive Engagement	Trails, site visit.
Caseworkers explain the FAR approach to families as well as allow choice for investigation.	Transparency Constructive Engagement	Number of cases where CW gives family FAR brochure ,reviews brochure and answers questions. Choice Form?
Law enforcement is not a part of FAR initial contact. If caseworker has knowledge that law enforcement involvement is imminent (and related to the alleged maltreatment), caseworker allows family choice of whether they would like the caseworker to be present for this contact.	Transparency Constructive Engagement Collaborative Engagement	Number of cases where LE is not present on first visit. If LE visit imminent, caseworker documents that family was informed and offered choice to family to have caseworker present .
Initial assessment focuses on safety as mutual goal of caseworker and family. Safety plans, if safety factors apply, are developed with family and family support collaboration.	Safety Focused Collaborative Engagement Family and Community Inclusion	Number of cases where family participates in plan development and this is documented in case note or framework. Scaling is documented, supports identified, etc.

Practice	Practice Principle	Fidelity Measurement (Indicator that model is followed)
<p><b>If it is determined during the first thirty days that an investigation is needed due to family request, inability to engage to adequately assess for child safety, or information that introduces a level of risk that cannot be addressed under FAR, the caseworker conducts staffing with at least one supervisor to request track change. Caseworker documents the case-specific reason for the change in approach in the track change portion of Trails.</b></p>	<p>Safety Focused  Assessment of Risk and Protective Factors.</p>	<p>Trails track change screen.  Site visit.</p>
<p><b>Caseworkers meet with all caregivers in the home and with non-resident parents to discuss needs and strengths.</b></p>	<p>Family and community inclusion</p>	<p>Documented contacts with all participants in the case.</p>
<p><b>Caseworker employs engagement strategies in assessment to ascertain family needs and strengths (i.e. three columns, solution-focused strategies, etc.).</b></p>	<p>Constructive Engagement  Assessment of risk and protective factors</p>	<p>Number of times framework is used at all levels of case.  Site visit.</p>
<p><b>Caseworker incorporates specific tools to facilitate the voices of children in the process. These tools include: three houses and the safety house (Turnell &amp; Edwards, 1999).</b></p>	<p>Constructive Engagement  Assessment of risk and protective factors</p>	<p>Number of times child-focused techniques used.</p>

Practice	Practice Principle	Fidelity Measurement (Indicator that model is followed)
<b>Caseworker uses prompts for assessment to explore family needs and strengths to obtain comprehensive, early family assessment.</b>	Assessment of risk and protective factors  Constructive engagement	Analysis of Family Assessment Framework reveals comprehensive assessment of family needs and strengths and addresses majority of prompts from Framework document.
<b>Risk and safety assessments are conducted within the assigned timeframes and inform service plan development and casework.</b>	Assessment of risk and protective factors	Analysis of risk and safety assessment content.
<b>Caseworkers assess for family basic needs and assist families in identifying community resources at the first visit, and often leave the first visit with next steps for coordination of services or community resources.</b>	Constructive engagement  Collaborative engagement	Documentation of next steps in case notes of initial visit.  Possibly caseworker exit survey.
<b>Caseworkers inform families of the voluntary nature of FAR services after ensuring that child safety thresholds are met.</b>	Constructive engagement  Safety organized casework	Caseworkers can articulate that their process is to inform families that FAR services are voluntary.
<b>Caseworkers regularly monitor and assess child safety concerns throughout the open FAR and document on-going assessment if additional referrals are received regarding the family during the case.</b>	Safety organized casework	Documentation of on-going assessments of risk and safety in Framework and in case notes. Completion of new safety assessment when new safety concerns are identified.

Practice	Practice Principle	Fidelity Measurement (Indicator that model is followed)
<p>Effort is made to preserve a one caseworker per FAR case structure. However, if transfer must occur to on-going caseworkers due to length of the case, the transfer occurs in a family meeting with both caseworkers present ('warm hand-over').</p>	<p>Constructive Engagement</p>	<p>Family meetings are documented at case transfer between caseworkers.</p> <p>Majority of cases follow the one caseworker per FAR case structure.</p>
<p>Agencies regularly monitor and advocate for community resources that meet the needs of families in the child welfare system. This includes effort to streamline services to ensure services are "front-loaded."</p>	<p>Collaborative engagement</p>	<p>Site visit and/or caseworker report.</p>
<p>Agencies pursue and use flexible funding when necessary to assist families in attaining basic needs. Agencies may choose to alert community agencies of this need and may also work to identify previously untapped community flexible funding.</p>	<p>Family and community inclusion</p> <p>Collaborative engagement</p>	<p>Site visit.</p>
<p>Caseworkers partner with families to develop FAR service plans that are individualized to unique family situations. *The FAR service plan differs from the typical FSP in that it explicitly names family and agency goals, and also provides a flexible framework suitable for completion with the family.</p>	<p>Constructive engagement</p>	<p>Current service plans, signed by all participants in the case, are available for all open cases and a record of such exists for all closed cases.</p> <p>Site visit.</p>

Practice	Practice Principle	Fidelity Measurement (Indicator that model is followed)
<b>Caseworkers meet regularly (at least three times per month) with families who have active FAR service plans and update plans as needed to address changing family circumstances.</b>	Constructive engagement	Number of cases where CW meets with family three time per month.
<b>Family meetings are offered in FAR cases to assist families in developing family and community support networks and plans for child safety and/or family circumstances when needed.</b>	Family and community inclusion	Number of times facilitated family meetings are offered.  Site visit.
<b>Case closure (of cases where services are delivered) is family driven, and facilitated by the caseworker by a concrete, agreed upon support plan that includes identified extended family, informal supports, and community resources to build protection around children.</b>	Constructive engagement Collaborative engagement Safety organized casework	Number of cases (where services are delivered) that have a complete support plan at closure.  Site visit information on case closure process, which includes addressing whether risk factors presenting in the case were addressed in the case.

## References

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Turnell, A. & Edwards, S. (1999). *Signs of Safety: A solution and safety oriented approach to child protection casework*. New York: Norton.