

From: Interim Child Welfare Director, Dr. Reginald Richardson, Sr.

I want to make sure you are all aware of decision made today regarding the Child Welfare program. **Effective immediately, I am pausing further expansion of Differential Response (DR).** Oregon is nearly halfway through a staged implementation of DR. Before we move into Multnomah County, I must ensure DHS is doing its best to ensure safety in screening, assigning cases for investigation, conducting investigations, and reaching conclusions about child safety.

This is my decision, and I believe the pause is absolutely necessary based on the state's performance on the recent Child and Family Services Review self-assessment and other indicators. The pause in DR implementation gives DHS time to take inventory of the child welfare system.

I intend to take the following actions:

- Create a workgroup charged with identifying and removing barriers to safety in casework;
- Clear the backlog of overdue Child Welfare assessments; and
- Develop a program improvement plan to sustain better outcomes in safety, well-being and permanency and systemic issues identified in the Child and Family Safety Review (CFSR).
- I fully intend to fulfill our obligation to complete this work, as the legislature expects and has supported, once safety is better guaranteed.

In addition to pausing implementation in Multnomah County, I am also placing Columbia, Clatsop and Tillamook counties on hold. I do not believe the pause will be long-lasting. For the counties already practicing DR, we will continue our efforts to provide high-quality family engagement, timely face-to-face visits and improved response time to investigations. We will also continue to monitor DR outcomes and evaluate the work.

Please expect to future messages regarding DR. If you have any questions please contact me.

Sincerely,

Dr. Reginald C. Richardson, Sr.

From: Child Welfare Director, Lena Alhousseini

To: All DHS Child Welfare Staff & Oregon Stakeholders

After consulting with the Differential Response (DR) Steering Committee and reviewing the interim DR evaluation I have made the decision to continue the expansion of the implementation of Differential Response in Oregon. Child safety remains our top priority and engaging families and communities in that effort is a critical component to keeping children safe.

I want to share with you the information that was used to make this very important decision. The DR interim report which is now posted on the [DR website](#) (listed under Key Differential Response Documents) was analyzed and your voice was heard. Here are some highlights.

- Staff surveyed across the state find:
 - training & coaching (from supervisors and consultants) helpful
 - very positive opinions about Oregon Safety Model (OSM) and DR & feel it promotes safety and well-being of children
 - DR positively affects family and values cultural and ethnic backgrounds
 - Significant differences in Alternative Response (AR) practice and Traditional Response (TR) practice
 - Half of the screeners in DR counties are sometimes uncertain about track assignment, the other half are rarely uncertain
- About half of the screening reports in counties practicing DR are assigned AR and the other half were TR
- There has been a gradual increase of Child Protective Services (CPS) assessments assigned in DR counties, there has been an increase across the state as well
- Compliance in timely initial contact has improved significantly since last year's interim report
- Approximately 7-20 percent of families receiving AR are offered services and 40-50 percent accept; TR families accept at rate of 33-63 percent
- Children are just as safe in counties practicing DR as those not practicing DR
- Family Strengths and Needs Assessment process is still problematic despite adjustments
- Parent feedback is positive in DR and non-DR counties

The DR steering committee came forward with a recommendation to continue the expansion of DR only after some work addressing issues that came up in the interim evaluation including:

- Screening – to look at track assignment tool and process, any changes needed to help screeners feel more confident
- Family Strengths and Needs Assessment – to look at the tool and the process and remove barriers

for workers, families and providers

- Coaching/Support – to look at the support districts receive in implementation and determine any adjustments need to be made

A subcommittee will be created to address these issues and propose recommendations to senior child welfare management. The management team will then review the recommendations and create an implementation plan and timeline for the continued roll-out of DR. Once this work is done you have my commitment that I will share with you what the plan looks like and offer timely updates throughout the process.

Thank you all so much for your patience and hard work, especially for those working in DR counties who have continued practicing DR during a time of uncertainty.

Lena