

**Minnesota Children's Summit 2005: Smart Policies, Strong Families**  
**Monday, March 28, 2005**  
**Practicing Family Impact Analysis**  
**1:45-2:45 p.m.**

**Alternative Response (AR)**

- AR (not deliberate abuse cases) – serves maltreatment cases that are child endangerment (e.g., domestic abuse, drugs/alcohol, other situations that could lead to endangerment).
- AR program – No child protection case filed if family chooses this option. The family does meet criteria for an investigation of some sort, but not criterion for an open child protection case. A negative of the AR program is that there are no consequences if the family does not follow thru. The program is voluntary.
- Principle 1
  - Helps parents carry out their responsibilities.
  - Focuses on the positives of families.
  - Negative – family can opt out
- Principle 3
  - Interdependence – calls upon natural supports and network (sometimes people don't have these).
  - Ensure perspectives for all family members represented (hard to do with small children); may increase secretiveness of family.
  - Pulls in many family members and supports and for older children peers.
  - Can take a whole day for a family conference.
  - Should there be bigger policy changes – is this just cosmetic to soothe and smooth in the short term?
  - Sometimes things aren't working in families because of contextual issues – lack of job, food, etc.
- Family Group Consultation
  - Includes people in natural nurturing network of family (going outside family boundaries)
  - Overwhelmed families, low-level intelligence families – difficulty making decisions – do they understand; how to help families understand.
- Principle 4
  - Partnering with professionals (AR program works better with this than Principle 3)
- Principle 5
  - Family diversity
  - Some same-sex domestic partners may not choose this option because they are not publicly open about the status of their relationship.
- Principle 6
  - Child protection lost lots of families they could not serve. AR gives services –provides help.
  - Provides help to families wanting help.

- Negative – still only targets reported families. Not enough service providers for some groups (e.g., Native Americans). Not funded as well as Child Protection. No services are provided unless the families choose to receive them.
- Some families choose traditional child protection plan for several reasons:
  - If they want to clear their name
  - If one parent wants to force treatment
  - To obtain needed services for the family
- AR gets closer to prevention/intervention because it does not yet meet the threshold for an open child protection case.
- A positive outcome of alternative response gives counties incentives to make referrals to agencies already contracted and under utilized.
- Northpoint in North Minneapolis
  - Will be trying to help families form support networks.
- Hennepin county has a new grant (supported by McKnight and other sources) to serve yet another level of reported families who do not meet the criterion for a full investigation. It is targeted at families with children under 5.
- In general policies focus on economics, in particular short-term economics. The focus of policies also move from one issue to another – there does not seem to be a clear investment in the future (early childhood)
- In general there has not been systemic changes in policy making