

South Carolina Children's Justice Act Task Force
2017 Assessment Survey Report



Prepared by the Children's Law Center



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
School of Law

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Executive Summary

To improve the handling of child abuse and neglect cases in South Carolina, the South Carolina Children's Justice Act Task Force conducted an assessment survey to identify systemic problems in the state's response to maltreated children. The survey was distributed through Survey Monkey to over 50 organizations who were asked to share the survey with partners who serve child victims. The survey was open from October 23, 2017 to November 27, 2017.

Respondents

A total of 687 participants responded to the survey. The primary professions represented were 163 counselors, 123 medical professionals, 68 social workers, 62 Law Enforcement officers, and 53 child welfare professionals. The highest respondent organization represented was the school system at 46% (n=313), then the Department of Social Services (DSS) at 13% (n=89), and Law Enforcement at 12% (n=85). Responses were received from the state's 46 counties with the highest response rate from respondents who serve children in Lexington County (n=107), then Richland County (n=84), Statewide service providers (n=58), Greenville County (n=43), and Berkeley County (n=40).

Special needs

The three most common special needs/disabilities encountered with abused or neglected children were identified as 1) behavior disorders (n=505), 2) mental/emotional disorders (n=476), and 3) hyperactivity/attention issues (n=356). The top three additional supports needed to work more effectively with these children were identified as 1) support services for families (n=491), 2) information and referral resources (n=396), and 3) treatment services (n=338).

Child fatality investigations

Respondents who indicated that they had been involved in a child maltreatment case that resulted in a fatality (n=149) identified the following top three systemic problems as prohibiting protection for these children: 1) agency issues (n=26), 2) inadequate training and treatment services (n=23), and 3) faulty monitoring of risk to children and inadequate staff supervision (n=19).

Reporting and investigative process

The following components were most identified as needing improvement (n=638): 1) DSS follow-up investigation (60%), 2) service needs to mitigate the lasting effects of trauma to child victims of abuse/neglect (55%), 3) use of a safety plan (50%), 4) DSS response time (46%), and 5) training for professionals who investigate child abuse and neglect (45%).

Judicial process in family court

Respondents who indicated experience in this area (n=297) identified the following components as needing the most improvement: 1) timeliness of family court processes and hearings (57%), 2) services to mitigate the lasting effects of trauma to child victims of abuse/neglect (55%), 3) "child friendliness" of courtroom setting and process (46%), 4) court's role in monitoring child safety while under court's jurisdiction (43%), and 5) coordination with criminal court case (40%).

Judicial process in criminal court

Respondents who indicated experience in this area (n=135) identified the following components as needing the most improvement: 1) timeliness of criminal processes and hearings (56%), 2) timeliness of case disposition (49%), 3) coordination with family court case (44%), 4) “child friendliness” of courtroom setting and process (44%), and 5) services to mitigate the lasting effects of trauma to child victims of abuse/neglect (43%).

Other problems that continue to hamper the system’s response to maltreated children

The most cited problems by respondents were in the following categories: 1) caseworkers-underpaid, understaffed, undertrained and overloaded (n=197), 2) DSS challenges (n=84), 3) lack of resources (n=47), 4) lack of communication and coordination between agencies (n=46), and 5) court-related problems (n=33).

Most important changes that would improve the state’s response to maltreated children

The most cited changes by respondents were in the following categories: 1) staff and pay increase, staff trained and educated, and reduce caseloads (n=125), 2) improve and increase training and education (n=65), 3) DSS improvements (n=49), 4) better communication and coordination between agencies (n=41), and 5) increased resources (n=32).

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Background and Purpose

The Children’s Justice Act is a federally funded program that provides grants to states to develop, establish, and operate programs designed to improve the investigation, prosecution, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect. The South Carolina Children’s Justice Act Task Force conducts an assessment of the state’s systems every three years and adopts recommendations in these areas. The purpose of this voluntary survey was to identify systemic problems in the state’s response to maltreated children. The survey was distributed through Survey Monkey to over 50 organizations who were asked to share the survey with partners who serve child victims. The survey was open from October 23, 2017 to November 27, 2017. A total of 687 participants responded to the assessment. These voices that were captured in this survey will be considered, in conjunction with other data and information, as part of the task force’s three-year assessment. Comments and summaries in this report are aggregated data from the survey responses and do not necessarily reflect the views of the task force.

Results

I. Respondent professions (Answered: 668, skipped: 19)

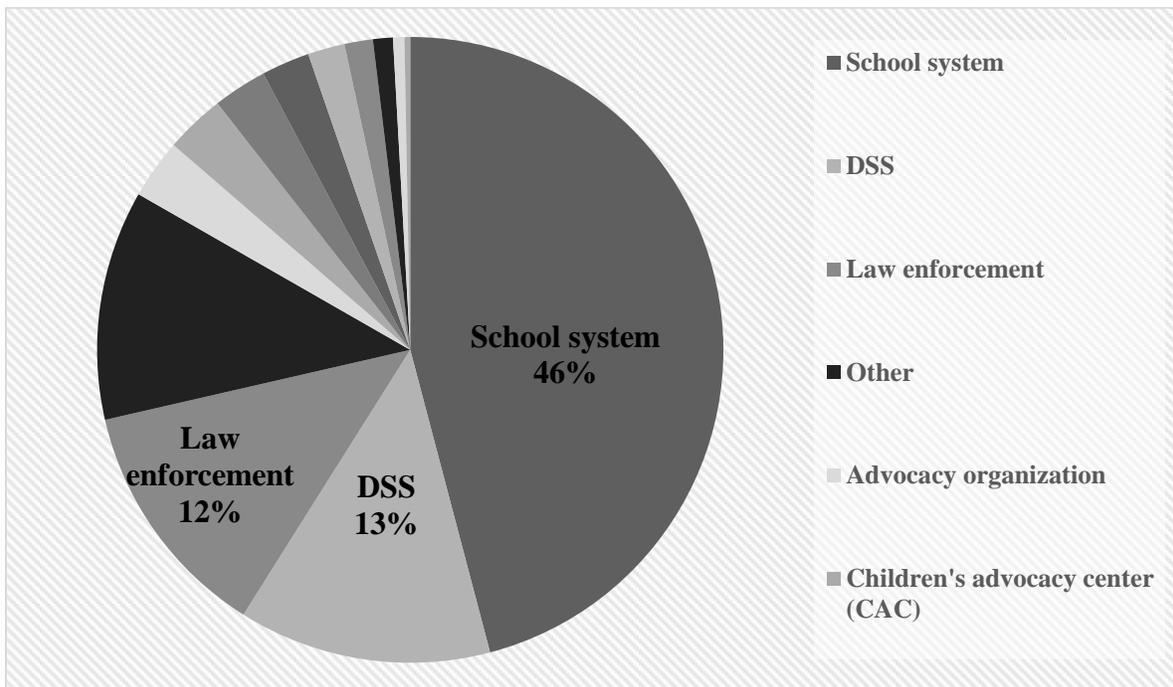
| Professions | Number |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Counselor | 163 (157 or 96% school counselors) |
| Medical professional | 123 (118 or 96% nurses) |
| Social worker | 68 |
| Law enforcement professional | 62 |
| Child welfare professional | 53 |
| Attorney | 50 |
| Program manager/coordinator/director | 28 |
| Coroner | 23 |
| Advocate | 16 |
| Agency/program administrator | 12 |
| Educator/teacher/tutor/trainer | 10 |
| Forensic interviewer/examiner | 9 |
| Other services agencies/provider | 9 |
| School psychologist | 6 |
| Guardian ad litem | * |
| Court liaison | * |
| Foster parent | * |
| Retired | * |
| Judge | * |
| Student | * |
| Prosecutor | * |
| Public defender | * |
| Other legal/paralegal | * |
| Houseparent | * |
| Consultant | * |
| Community volunteer | * |

* ≤ 5 respondents

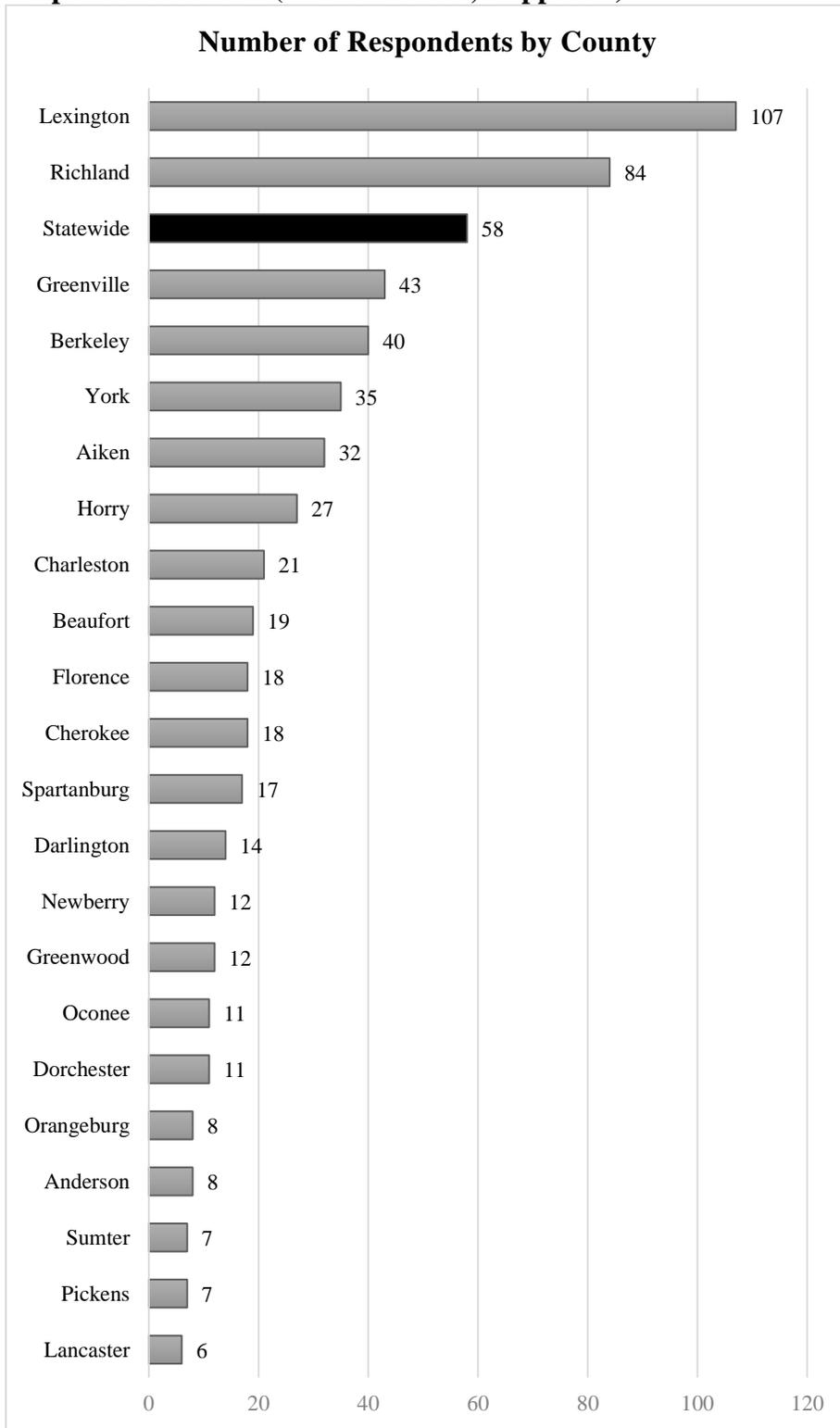
II. Respondent organizations (Answered: 682, skipped: 5)

| Organizations | Number |
|---|---------------|
| School system | 313 |
| DSS | 89 |
| Law enforcement | 85 |
| Advocacy organization | 21 |
| Children’s advocacy center (CAC) | 21 |
| Medical/Healthcare | 19 |
| Guardian ad litem (GAL)/Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) | 17 |
| Prosecutor’s office | 13 |
| Mental health | 10 |
| Family court | * |
| Private attorney’s office representing children or parents/families | * |
| Circuit/Criminal court | * |
| Other | 81 |

* ≤ 5 respondents



III. Respondent counties (Answered: 680, skipped: 7)

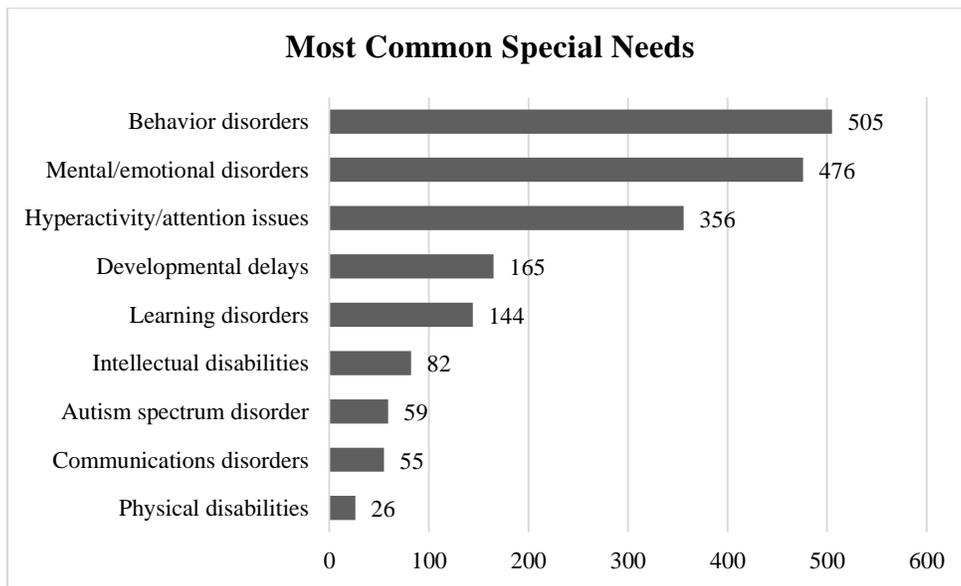


*the remainder of counties had 5 or less respondents

IV. Abused or neglected children with special needs (Answered: 671, skipped: 16)

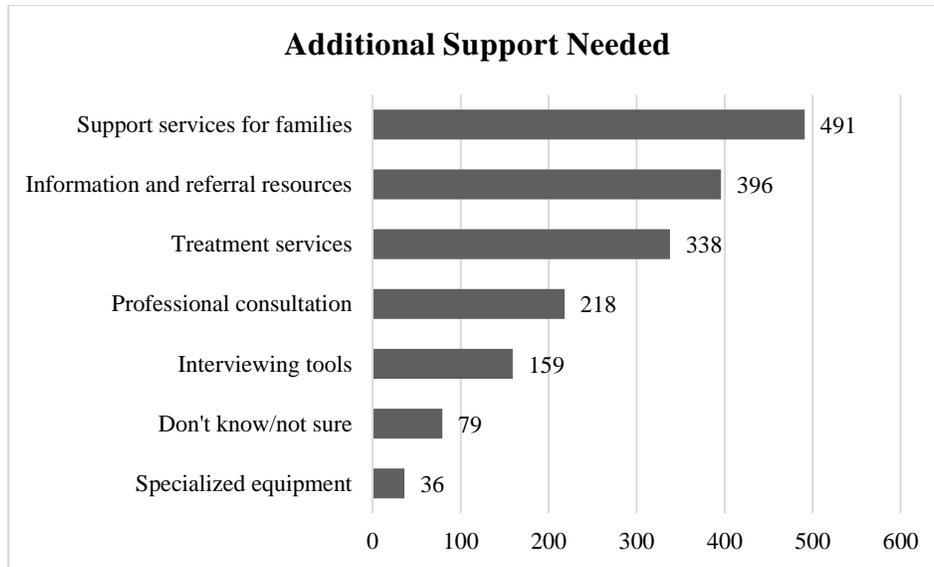
a. What are the three most common special needs that you encounter when working with abused or neglected children?

| Special Needs | Number | Percent |
|--------------------------------|--------|---------|
| Behavior disorders | 505 | 75% |
| Mental/emotional disorders | 476 | 70% |
| Hyperactivity/attention issues | 356 | 53% |
| Developmental delays | 165 | 25% |
| Learning disorders | 144 | 21% |
| Intellectual disabilities | 82 | 12% |
| Autism spectrum disorder | 59 | 9% |
| Communications disorders | 55 | 8% |
| Physical disabilities | 26 | 4% |
| Other | 58 | 9% |



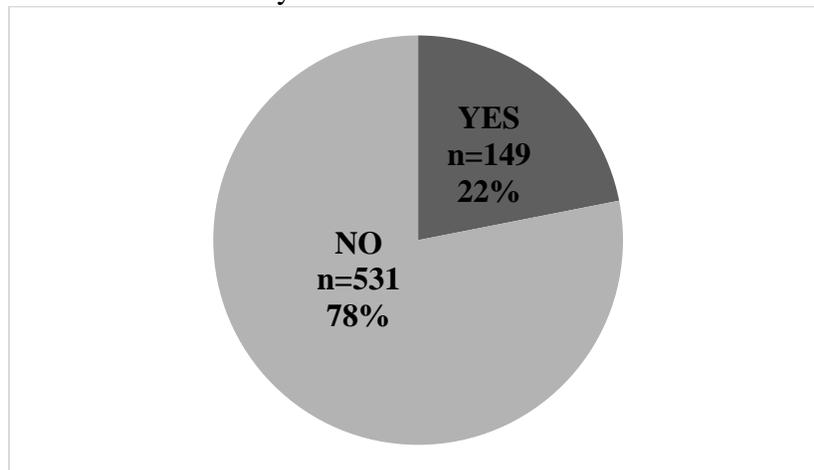
b. What additional supports would you need to work more effectively with children with special needs? (check all that apply) (Answered: 674, skipped: 13)

| Additional Support Needed | Number | Percent |
|------------------------------------|--------|---------|
| Support services for families | 491 | 73% |
| Information and referral resources | 396 | 59% |
| Treatment services | 338 | 50% |
| Professional consultation | 218 | 32% |
| Interviewing tools | 159 | 24% |
| Don't know/not sure | 79 | 12% |
| Specialized equipment | 36 | 5% |
| Other | 59 | 9% |



V. Child maltreatment cases resulting in a child fatality (Answered:680, skipped: 7)

a. Have you been involved in any child maltreatment cases that resulted in a child fatality?



b. If YES, what systemic problem(s) do you think prohibited protection for the child/children? (110 responses)

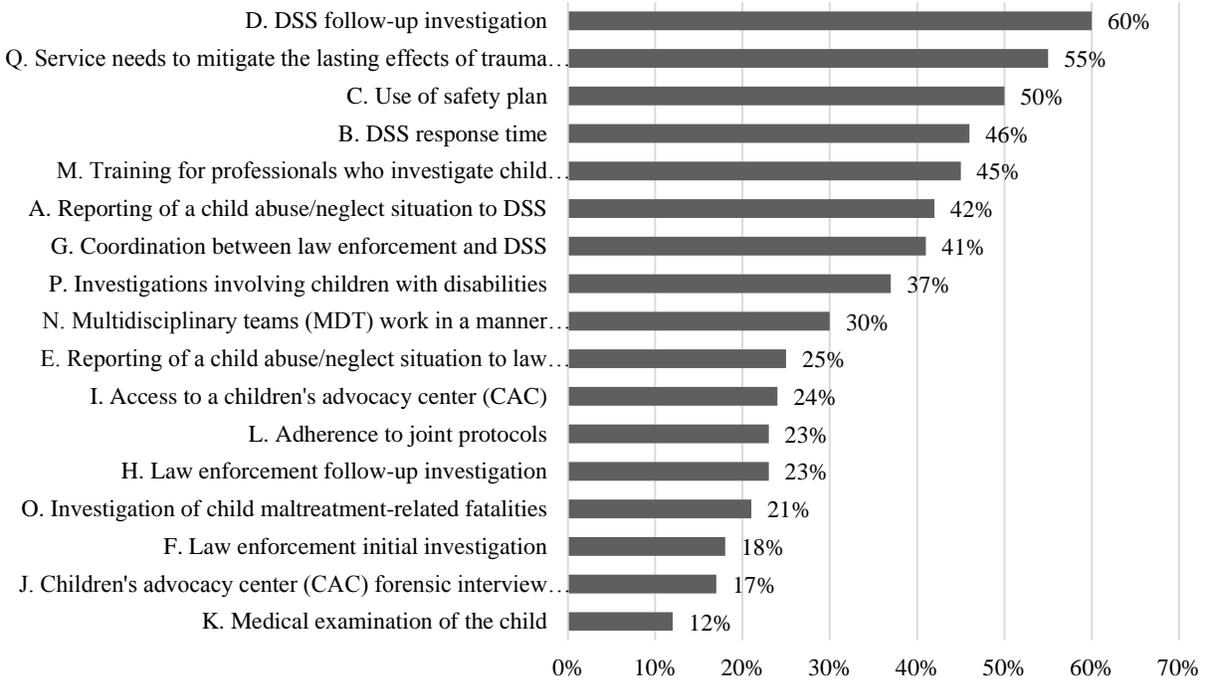
- 1) Agency issues (26 responses)
- 2) Inadequate training and treatment services (23 responses)
- 3) Faulty monitoring of risk to children and inadequate staff supervision (19 responses)
- 4) Lack of community involvement and education on reporting (8 responses)
- 5) Lack of communication (7 responses)
- 6) Lack of family engagement/uncooperative parents (5 responses)
- 7) Unreported abuse (5 responses)
- 8) Lack of resources (5 responses)
- 9) Failure to accept report (4 responses)
- 10) Lack of safe sleep education and follow-up (2 responses)
- 11) Drug abuse (2 responses)
- 12) Lack of proper risk assessment and individualized treatment planning (2 responses)

VI. Reporting/investigative process (Answered: 638, skipped: 49)

- a. Keeping in mind the reporting/investigative process (family and criminal) in cases of child abuse and neglect, please rate the following components based on your experience with the child welfare system.

| Reporting/Investigative Process | Needs Improvement | Adequate | Excellent | Don't know | Total Respondents |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| A. Reporting of a child abuse/neglect situation to DSS | 42% | 44% | 8% | 6% | 636 |
| B. DSS response time | 46% | 40% | 7% | 8% | 629 |
| C. Use of safety plan | 50% | 32% | 4% | 14% | 632 |
| D. DSS follow-up investigation | 60% | 26% | 3% | 10% | 632 |
| E. Reporting of a child abuse/neglect situation to law enforcement | 25% | 44% | 15% | 16% | 635 |
| F. Law enforcement initial investigation | 18% | 42% | 17% | 23% | 631 |
| G. Coordination between law enforcement and DSS | 41% | 29% | 6% | 24% | 636 |
| H. Law enforcement follow-up investigation | 23% | 36% | 10% | 31% | 628 |
| I. Access to a children's advocacy center (CAC) | 24% | 27% | 21% | 27% | 633 |
| J. children's advocacy center (CAC) forensic interview procedures | 17% | 22% | 22% | 40% | 632 |
| K. Medical examination of the child | 12% | 25% | 19% | 44% | 627 |
| L. Adherence to joint protocols | 23% | 25% | 7% | 45% | 623 |
| M. Training for professionals who investigate child abuse and neglect | 45% | 25% | 7% | 23% | 629 |
| N. Multidisciplinary teams (MDT) work in a manner sensitive to all populations, cultures, and race/ethnicities | 30% | 29% | 11% | 30% | 627 |
| O. Investigation of child maltreatment-related fatalities | 21% | 20% | 7% | 51% | 628 |
| P. Investigations involving children with disabilities | 37% | 26% | 3% | 34% | 627 |
| Q. Service needs to mitigate the lasting effects of trauma to child victims of abuse or neglect are adequately assessed | 55% | 20% | 3% | 22% | 627 |

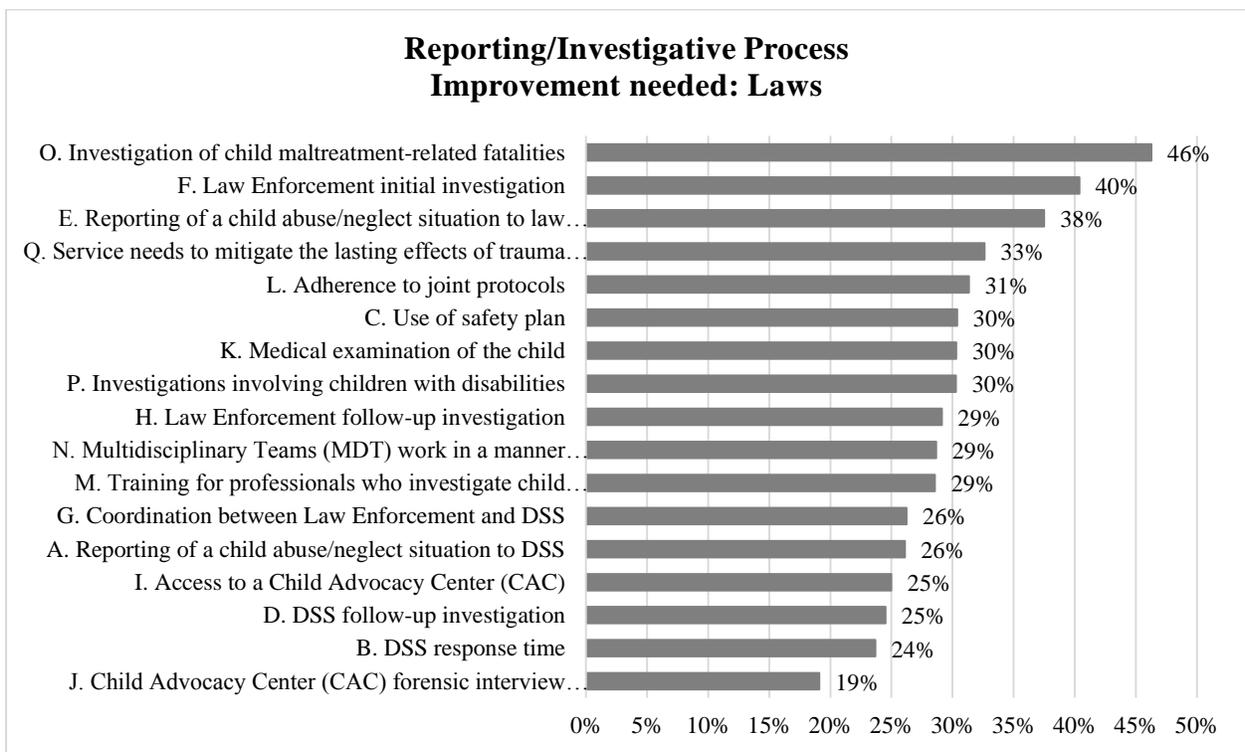
Reporting/Investigative Process Improvement Needed



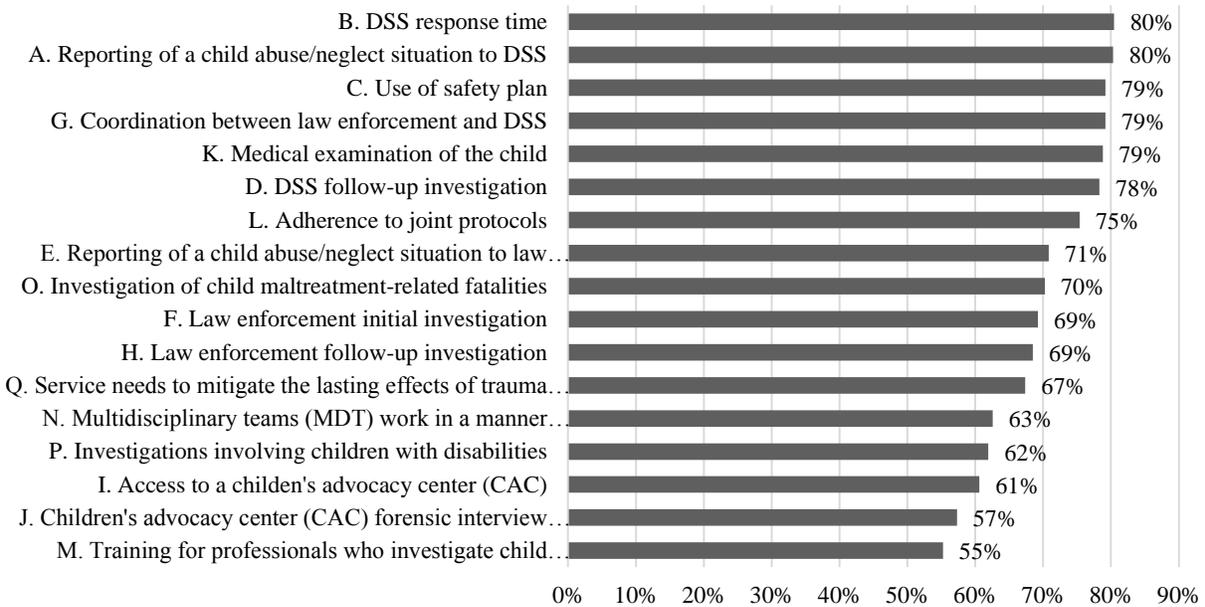
b. For each of the components where you indicated that improvement was needed, please select area(s) of improvement needed. (Answered: 532, skipped: 155)

| Reporting/Investigative Process | Laws | Policies and Procedures | Training | Total Respondents |
|--|------|-------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| A. Reporting of a child abuse/neglect situation to DSS | 26% | 80% | 68% | 249 |
| B. DSS response time | 24% | 80% | 58% | 266 |
| C. Use of safety plan | 30% | 79% | 67% | 293 |
| D. DSS follow-up investigation | 25% | 78% | 68% | 355 |
| E. Reporting of a child abuse/neglect situation to law enforcement | 38% | 71% | 78% | 144 |
| F. Law enforcement initial investigation | 40% | 69% | 77% | 104 |
| G. Coordination between law enforcement and DSS | 26% | 79% | 75% | 240 |
| H. Law enforcement follow-up investigation | 29% | 69% | 71% | 127 |
| I. Access to a children's advocacy center (CAC) | 25% | 61% | 64% | 132 |
| J. Children's advocacy center (CAC) forensic interview procedures | 19% | 57% | 80% | 89 |
| K. Medical examination of the child | 30% | 79% | 64% | 66 |
| L. Adherence to joint protocols | 31% | 75% | 78% | 134 |

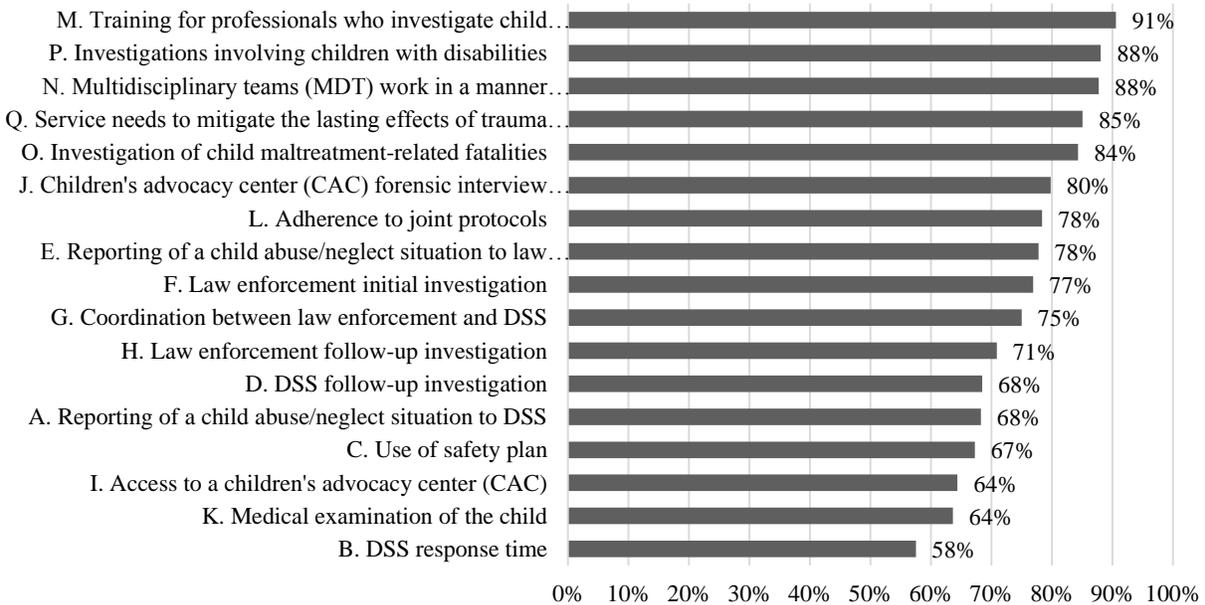
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|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| M. Training for professionals who investigate child abuse and neglect | 29% | 55% | 91% | 266 |
| N. Multidisciplinary teams (MDT) work in a manner sensitive to all populations, cultures, and race/ethnicities | 29% | 63% | 88% | 171 |
| O. Investigation of child maltreatment-related fatalities | 46% | 70% | 84% | 121 |
| P. Investigations involving children with disabilities | 30% | 62% | 88% | 218 |
| Q. Service needs to mitigate the lasting effects of trauma to child victims of abuse or neglect are adequately assessed | 33% | 67% | 85% | 328 |



Reporting/Investigative Process Improvement Needed: Policies and Procedures



Reporting/Investigative Process Improvement Needed: Training



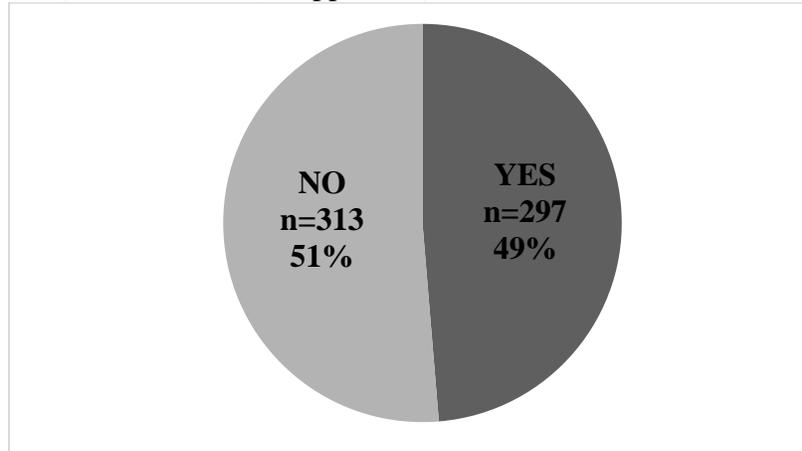
- c. For each of the components of the reporting/investigative process (Family and Criminal) in cases of child abuse and neglect where you indicated that improvement was needed, please explain any specifics that you can:

| Reporting/Investigative Process | Total # Responses | Responses (#) |
|--|--------------------------|--|
| A. Reporting of a child abuse/neglect situation to DSS | 26 | -Not able to make a report quickly (6) -Reporting is difficult (6) -Reporters are not followed up with (4) -Cases being refused for acceptance (2) -Callers are not remaining confidential/anonymous (2) -Continue improvements that have been made (2) -Miscellaneous (4) |
| B. DSS response time | 15 | -Response time too slow (8) -Need for more workers (4) -Miscellaneous (3) |
| C. Use of safety plan | 28 | -Schools not getting safety plans is a problem (11) -Need for formalization/enforcement (7) -Outdated or expired (3) -Miscellaneous (7) |
| D. DSS follow-up investigation | 16 | -Poor communication with reporters (7) -Poor investigation (7) -Children returning to unsafe environments (2) -Miscellaneous (5) |
| E. Reporting of a child abuse/neglect situation to law enforcement | 1 | Central number is needed due to jurisdictional issues. |
| F. Law enforcement initial investigation | 2 | -Lacking Emergency Protective Custody (EPC) skills -Lacking child interviewing skills |
| G. Coordination between law enforcement and DSS | 19 | -General disconnect (9) -Law enforcement not contacting DSS when children involved (2) -Need to ensure minimal interviews (2) -DSS not providing appropriate information to law enforcement (1) -Miscellaneous (5) |
| H. Law Enforcement follow-up investigation | 1 | Better follow-up needed |
| I. Access to a children's advocacy center (CAC) | 6 | Need better access |
| J. Children's advocacy center (CAC) forensic interview procedures | 2 | More thorough interviews sometimes needed |
| K. Medical examination of the child | 1 | Need better access |
| L. Adherence to joint | 1 | Joint investigations/court coordination not followed |

| protocols | | |
|---|----|---|
| M. Training for professionals who investigate child abuse and neglect | 35 | -General training needs (12) -For DSS (9) -For mandated reporters (4) -For law enforcement (3) -For school counselors (3) -Training on specific topics such as safety plans (1) -Joint training (1) -Miscellaneous (2) |
| N. Multidisciplinary teams (MDT) work in a manner sensitive to all populations, cultures, and race/ethnicities | 2 | Improvement needed |
| O. Investigation of child maltreatment-related fatalities | 0 | N/A |
| P. Investigations involving children with disabilities | 8 | -Communication barriers with the child (5) -Agency lack of abilities to serve (2) -Ongoing training needed on this topic (1) |
| Q. Service needs to mitigate the lasting effects of trauma to child victims of abuse or neglect are adequately assessed | 14 | -Protocol/policy needed to ensure services (5) -Not enough providers/resources (8) -Implementation of services too slow (1) |
| R. DSS issues | 34 | -Lack of communication between DSS and schools (7) -Policies not adhered to (4) -Current laws not enforced/followed (4) -Insufficient staff /caseworker turnover (4) -New laws needed (3) -Lack of coordination (3) -Poor management/leadership (2) -Poor working conditions (2) -Unresponsive to calls (2) -Miscellaneous (3) |

VII. Judicial process in family court

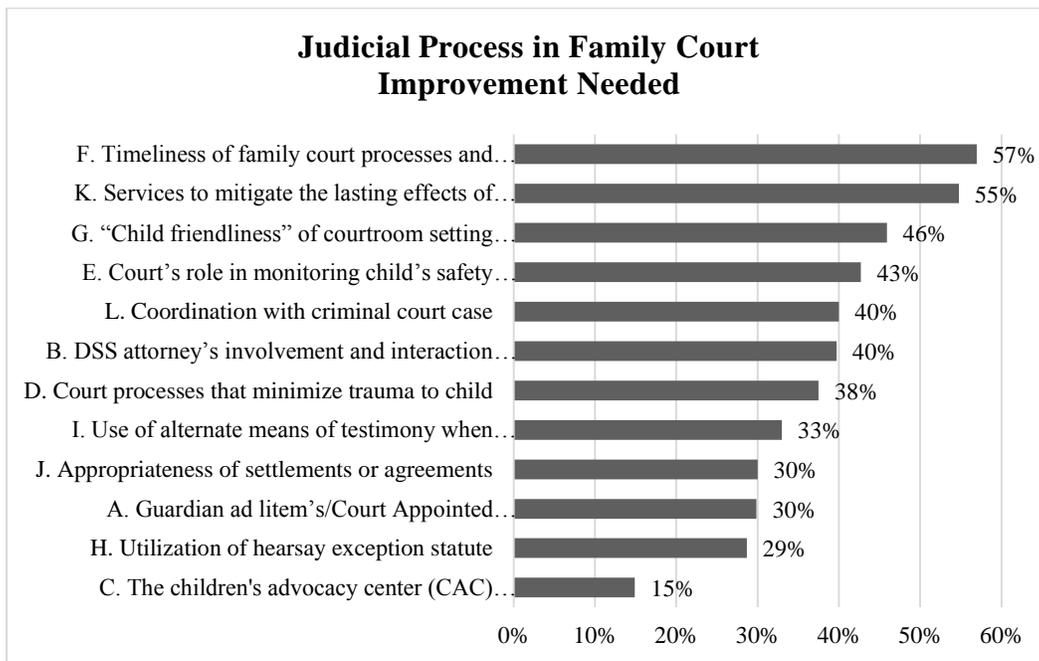
- a. Do you have experience with the judicial process in family court in cases of child abuse and neglect? (Answered: 610, skipped: 77)



- b. Keeping in mind the judicial process in family court in cases of child abuse and neglect, please rate the following components based on your experience with the child welfare system. (Answered: 298, skipped: 389)

| Judicial Process in Family Court | Needs Improvement | Adequate | Excellent | Don't know | Total Respondents |
|--|-------------------|----------|-----------|------------|-------------------|
| A. Guardian ad litem's/Court Appointed Special Advocate's involvement and interaction with the child during court involvement | 30% | 48% | 16% | 6% | 298 |
| B. DSS attorney's involvement and interaction with the child during court involvement | 40% | 38% | 4% | 18% | 297 |
| C. The children's advocacy center (CAC) forensic process is effective in assisting with prosecution of child abuse and neglect cases | 15% | 39% | 26% | 20% | 295 |
| D. Court processes that minimize trauma to child | 38% | 43% | 8% | 11% | 296 |
| E. Court's role in monitoring child's safety while under court's jurisdiction | 43% | 41% | 4% | 12% | 295 |
| F. Timeliness of family court processes and hearings | 57% | 34% | 3% | 6% | 295 |
| G. "Child friendliness" of courtroom setting and process | 46% | 38% | 5% | 12% | 294 |
| H. Utilization of hearsay exception statute | 29% | 33% | 6% | 32% | 293 |
| I. Use of alternate means of | 33% | 30% | 6% | 30% | 294 |

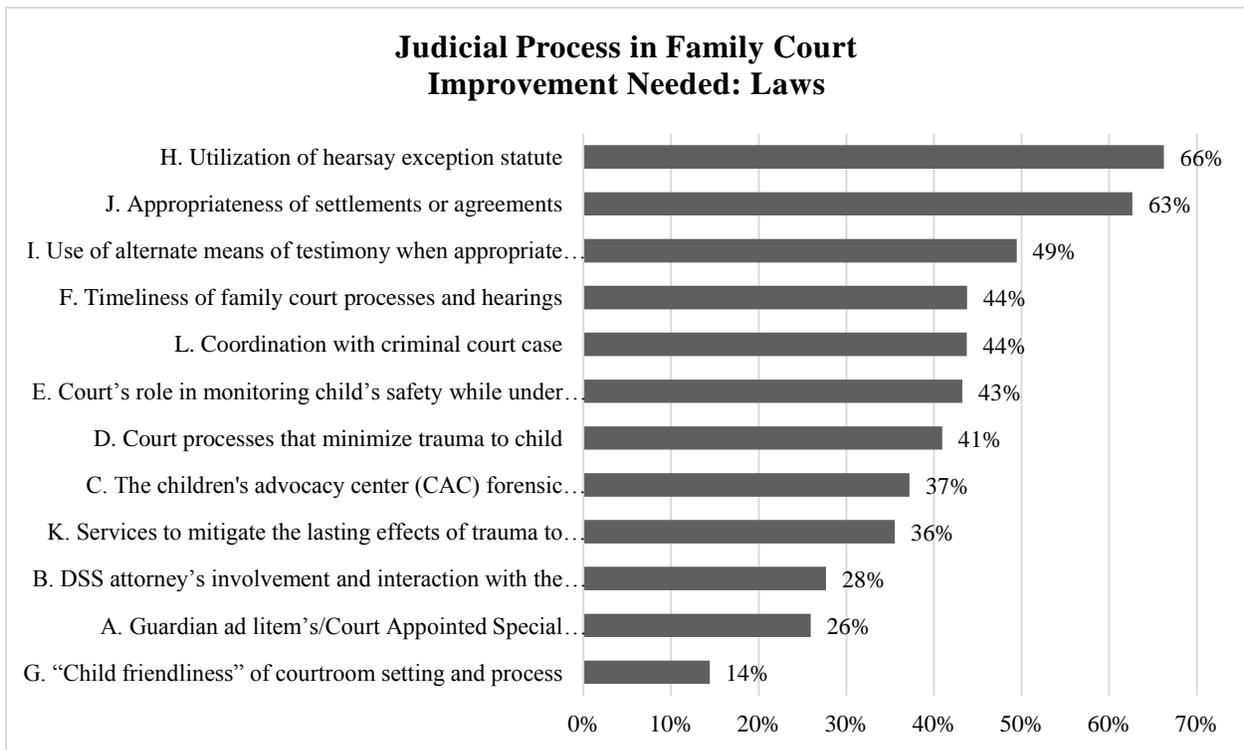
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|--|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|
| testimony when appropriate (e.g. closed circuit) | | | | | |
| J. Appropriateness of settlements or agreements | 30% | 44% | 6% | 20% | 293 |
| K. Services to mitigate the lasting effects of trauma to child victims of abuse and neglect are adequately delivered | 55% | 28% | 4% | 13% | 294 |
| L. Coordination with criminal court case | 40% | 30% | 4% | 26% | 295 |



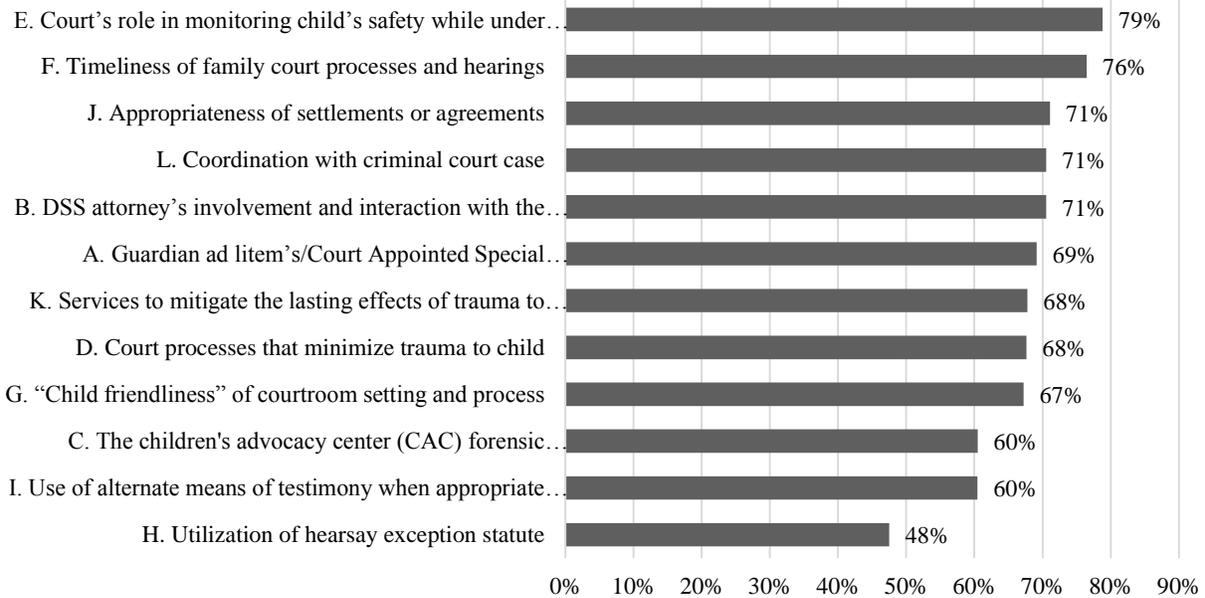
c. For each of the components where you indicated that improvement was needed, please select area(s) of improvement needed. (Answered: 236, skipped: 451)

| Judicial process in Family Court | Laws | Policies and Procedures | Training | Total Respondents |
|--|------|-------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| A. Guardian ad litem's/Court Appointed Special Advocate's involvement and interaction with the child during court involvement | 26% | 69% | 88% | 81 |
| B. DSS attorney's involvement and interaction with the child during court involvement | 28% | 71% | 84% | 112 |
| C. The children's advocacy center (CAC) forensic process is effective in assisting with prosecution of child abuse and neglect cases | 37% | 60% | 74% | 43 |
| D. Court processes that minimize | 41% | 68% | 78% | 105 |

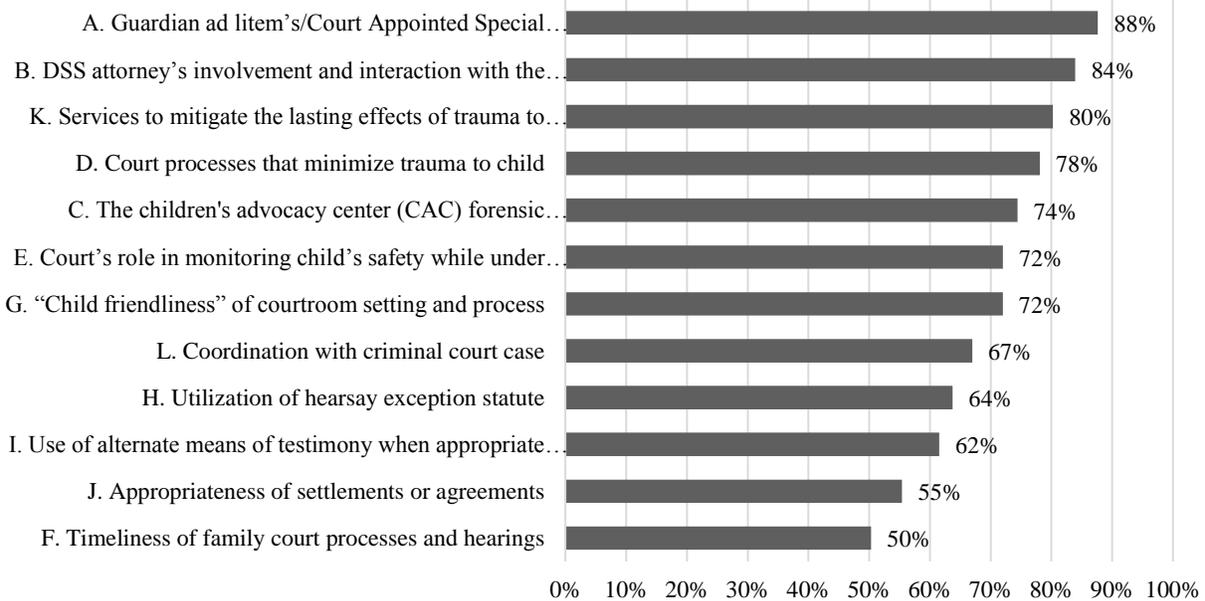
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|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| trauma to child | | | | |
| E. Court's role in monitoring child's safety while under court's jurisdiction | 43% | 79% | 72% | 118 |
| F. Timeliness of family court processes and hearings | 44% | 76% | 50% | 153 |
| G. "Child friendliness" of courtroom setting and process | 14% | 67% | 72% | 125 |
| H. Utilization of hearsay exception statute | 66% | 48% | 64% | 80 |
| I. Use of alternate means of testimony when appropriate (e.g., closed circuit) | 49% | 60% | 62% | 91 |
| J. Appropriateness of settlements or agreements | 63% | 71% | 55% | 83 |
| K. Services to mitigate the lasting effects of trauma to child victims of abuse and neglect are adequately delivered | 36% | 68% | 80% | 152 |
| L. Coordination with criminal court case | 44% | 71% | 67% | 112 |



Judicial Process in Family Court Improvement Needed: Policies and Procedures



Judicial Process in Family Court Improvement Needed: Training



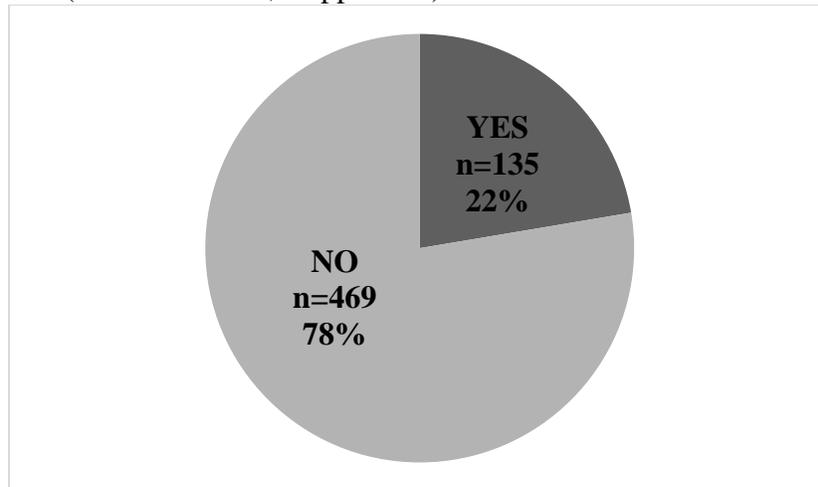
- d. For each of the components of the judicial process in family court in cases of child abuse and neglect where you indicated that improvement was needed, please explain any specifics that you can:

| Judicial Process in Family Court | Total # responses | Responses (#) |
|--|--------------------------|--|
| A. Guardian ad litem's (GAL)/Court Appointed Special Advocate's involvement and interaction with the child during court involvement | 22 | -GAL does not seem qualified (4) -More GAL input needed (4) -More involvement needed with the children (4) -Problematic GAL interactions (3) -GALs need more timely information (2) -Too much weight given to GAL (2) -Miscellaneous (3) |
| B. DSS attorney's involvement and interaction with the child during court involvement | 5 | -Child interaction not feasible (3) -Poor court preparation (2) |
| C. The children's advocacy center (CAC) forensic process is effective in assisting with prosecution of child abuse and neglect cases | 4 | -More expert witness testimony needed (1) -More CACs needed (1) -Improve video interviewing process (1) -Training needed on the CAC role (1) |
| D. Court processes that minimize trauma to child | 10 | -Clearer laws (3) -Delayed permanency (2) -Miscellaneous (5) |
| E. Court's role in monitoring child's safety while under court's jurisdiction | 6 | Monitoring safety needs improvement |
| F. Timeliness of family court processes and hearings | 21 | -Timeliness laws are not enforced (7) -More court time and judges needed (5) -Too many delays (4) -Abusers receive too much leniency by court (2) -Miscellaneous (3) |
| G. "Child friendliness" of courtroom setting and process | 9 | -Courtrooms are not child friendly (6) -Preparation of child witnesses needed (2) -Better treatment of child witnesses needed (1) |
| H. Utilization of hearsay exception statute | 3 | -Hearsay laws need amending (2) - DSS attorneys do not use the exception enough (1) |
| I. Use of alternate means of testimony when appropriate (e.g., closed circuit) | 10 | -Lack of technology (4) -Inconsistent judge decisions (2) -Criteria too strict (2) -Miscellaneous (2) |
| J. Appropriateness of settlements or agreements | 1 | Focus is not on best interest of child |
| K. Services to mitigate the lasting effects of trauma to child victims of abuse and | 9 | -Training needed on effects of trauma (4) -Service delivery needs improvement (4) -More school counselors are needed (1) |

| | | |
|--|----|---|
| neglect are adequately delivered | | |
| L. Coordination with criminal court case | 13 | -Rare coordination of courts (4) -Coordination would delay family court (3) -Lack of communication (3) -Miscellaneous (3) |
| M. Others | 21 | -General improvement needed across the board in family court (6) -Poor coordination/communication (4) -Needs of children should come first (2) -Increased training (2) -Miscellaneous (7) |

VIII. Judicial process in criminal court

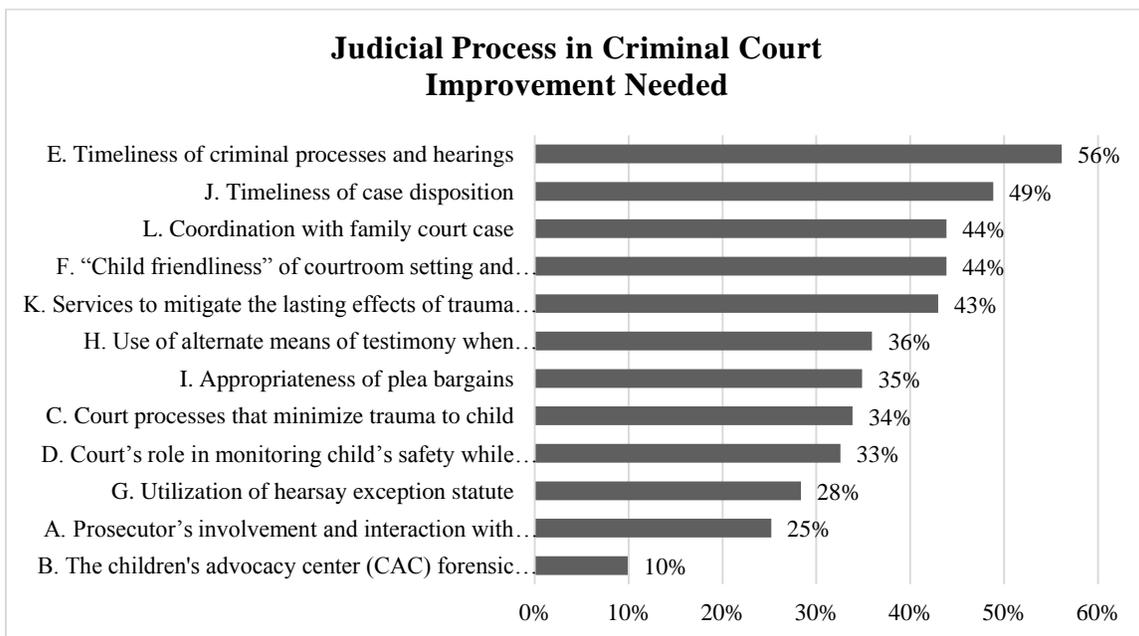
a. Do you have experience with the judicial process in criminal court in cases of child abuse and neglect? (Answered: 604, skipped: 83)



b. For each of the components where you indicated that improvement was needed, please select area(s) of improvement needed. (Answered: 131, skipped: 556)

| Judicial Process in Criminal Court | Needs Improvement | Adequate | Excellent | Don't know | Total Respondents |
|--|-------------------|----------|-----------|------------|-------------------|
| A. Prosecutor's involvement and interaction with the child during court involvement | 25% | 51% | 16% | 8% | 131 |
| B. The children's advocacy center (CAC) forensic process is effective in assisting with prosecution of child abuse and neglect cases | 10% | 44% | 36% | 10% | 131 |
| C. Court processes that minimize trauma to child | 34% | 51% | 10% | 5% | 130 |
| D. Court's role in monitoring child's safety while under court's | 33% | 48% | 7% | 12% | 129 |

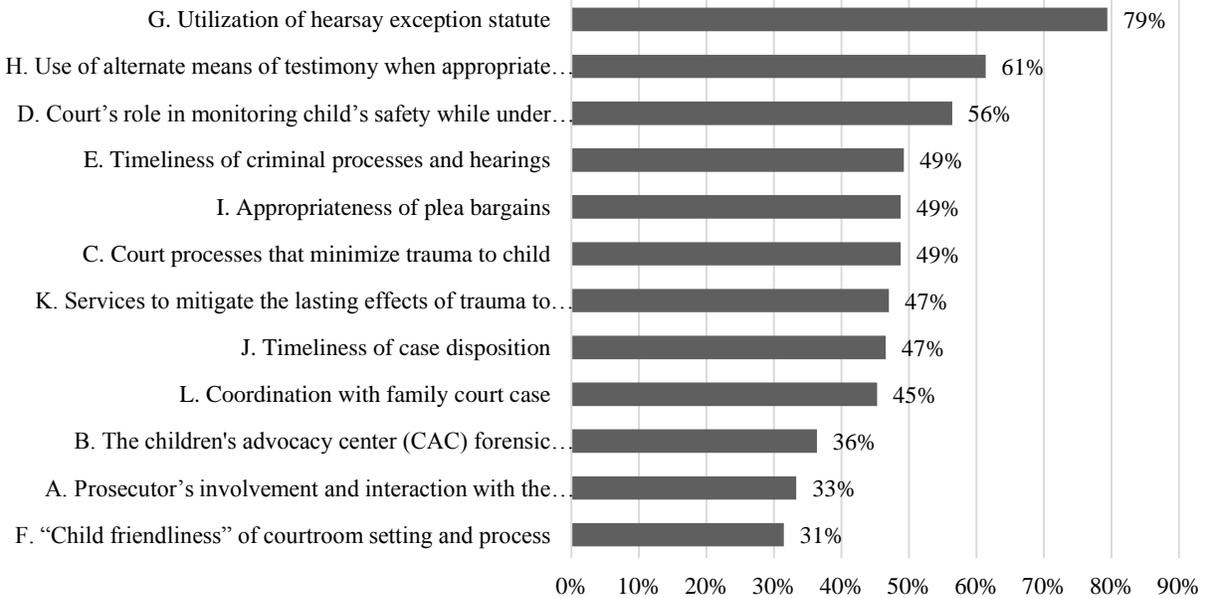
| | | | | | |
|--|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|
| jurisdiction | | | | | |
| E. Timeliness of criminal processes and hearings | 56% | 35% | 5% | 4% | 130 |
| F. “Child friendliness” of courtroom setting and process | 44% | 45% | 5% | 7% | 130 |
| G. Utilization of hearsay exception statute | 28% | 39% | 9% | 24% | 127 |
| H. Use of alternate means of testimony when appropriate (e.g., closed circuit) | 36% | 41% | 9% | 14% | 128 |
| I. Appropriateness of plea bargains | 35% | 45% | 5% | 16% | 129 |
| J. Timeliness of case disposition | 49% | 40% | 2% | 9% | 129 |
| K. Services to mitigate the lasting effects of trauma to child victims of abuse and neglect are adequately delivered | 43% | 42% | 4% | 11% | 128 |
| L. Coordination with family court case | 44% | 40% | 4% | 12% | 130 |



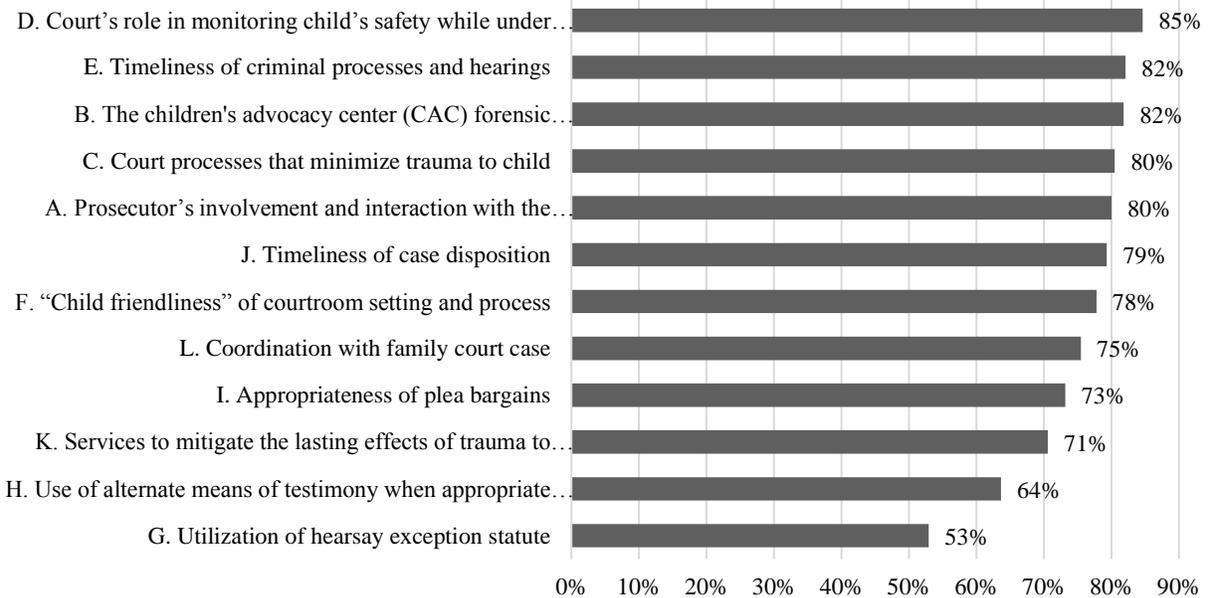
c. For each of the components where you indicated that improvement was needed, please select area(s) of improvement needed. (Answered: 88, skipped: 599)

| Judicial Process in Criminal Court | Laws | Policies and Procedures | Training | Total Respondents |
|--|-------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| A. Prosecutor's involvement and interaction with the child during court involvement | 33% | 80% | 90% | 30 |
| B. The children's advocacy center (CAC) forensic process is effective in assisting with prosecution of child abuse and neglect cases | 36% | 82% | 73% | 11 |
| C. Court processes that minimize trauma to child | 49% | 80% | 90% | 41 |
| D. Court's role in monitoring child's safety while under court's jurisdiction | 56% | 85% | 79% | 39 |
| E. Timeliness of criminal processes and hearings | 49% | 82% | 43% | 67 |
| F. "Child friendliness" of courtroom setting and process | 31% | 78% | 72% | 54 |
| G. Utilization of hearsay exception statute | 79% | 53% | 59% | 34 |
| H. Use of alternate means of testimony when appropriate (e.g., closed circuit) | 61% | 64% | 55% | 44 |
| I. Appropriateness of plea bargains | 49% | 73% | 63% | 41 |
| J. Timeliness of case disposition | 47% | 79% | 50% | 58 |
| K. Services to mitigate the lasting effects of trauma to child victims of abuse and neglect are adequately delivered | 47% | 71% | 73% | 51 |
| L. Coordination with family court case | 45% | 75% | 72% | 53 |

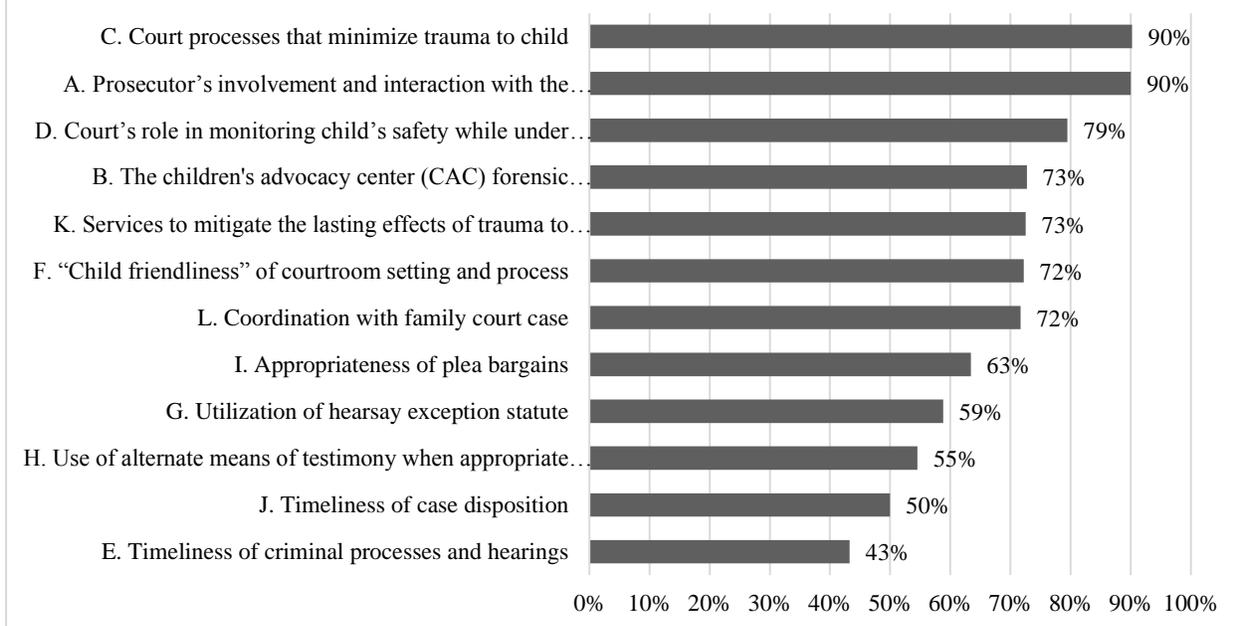
Judicial Process in Criminal Court Improvement Needed: Laws



Judicial Process in Criminal Court Improvement Needed: Policies and Procedures



Judicial Process in Criminal Court Improvement Needed: Training



d. For each of the components of the judicial process in criminal court in cases of child abuse and neglect where you indicated that improvement was needed, please explain any specifics that you can:

| Judicial Process in Criminal Court | Total # Responses | Responses (#) |
|--|-------------------|---|
| A. Prosecutor's involvement and interaction with the child during court involvement | 1 | Prosecutor may lack child development knowledge (1) |
| B. The children's advocacy center (CAC) forensic process is effective in assisting with prosecution of child abuse and neglect cases | 0 | N/A |
| C. Court processes that minimize trauma to child | 5 | -Testifying is too traumatic (2) -Child abuse cases are not made a priority (2) -Trauma training needed for judges (1) |
| D. Court's role in monitoring child's safety while under court's jurisdiction | 2 | Child safety needs improvement in criminal court |
| E. Timeliness of criminal processes and hearings | 4 | -Too much backlog (1) -Long timeframes are harmful (1) -More judges and court time are needed (1) -Due process and fairness to the alleged abuser in court proceedings (1) |
| F. "Child friendliness" of | 4 | Child friendliness of court needs |

| | | | |
|----|--|---|---|
| | courtroom setting and process | | improvement |
| G. | Utilization of hearsay exception statute | 1 | Hearsay laws need amending |
| H. | Use of alternate means of testimony when appropriate (e.g. closed circuit) | 3 | More alternative options needed to reduce trauma |
| I. | Appropriateness of plea bargains | 2 | Sexual abuse pleas to other offenses do not reflect the crime |
| J. | J. Timeliness of case disposition | 1 | Safety can be an issue during the long wait. |
| K. | K. Services to mitigate the lasting effects of trauma to child victims of abuse and neglect are adequately delivered | 1 | Trauma not adequately addressed |
| L. | Coordination with family court case | 9 | -Entries to the central registry needs improvement (2) -Better coordination needed (2) -Miscellaneous (5) |

IX. What other problems continue to hamper the systems' response to maltreated children? (Answered: 385, skipped: 302)

1) Caseworkers - underpaid, understaffed, undertrained, overloaded (197 responses)

- Not enough staff and high turnover rate (84)
- Excessive caseloads/overworked (45)
- Lack of adequate training/education (36)
- Underpaid (15)
- Poor work ethic/attitudes (13)
- Maltreatment of caseworkers (4)

2) DSS Challenges (84 responses)

- Slow and inconsistent response (21)
- Poor investigation and follow-up (11)
- Difficulty reaching staff (9)
- General agency failure (9)
- Poor decision making (5)
- Lack of vision/whole picture (4)
- Safety plans not effective or not enforced (4)
- Problematic agency interaction (4)
- Management/supervisor issues (3)
- Continue response improvement (3)
- Inaccurate and inconsistent information on reports (2)
- Untimely information sharing (2)
- Miscellaneous (4)

3) Lack of Resources (47 responses)

- Lack of community resources and services (21)
- Lack of placements (8)
- Lack of mental health services (7)
- Lack of funding and financial resources (7)

- Lack of children's advocacy centers (CACs) (2)
- Miscellaneous (2)
- 4) Lack of communication/coordination between agencies (46 responses)**
 - Lack of communication between involved agencies (19)
 - Lack of coordination among all agencies (16)
 - Lack of communication with schools (11)
- 5) Court-related problems (33 responses)**
 - Court process too lengthy (10)
 - Lack of court time (7)
 - Need more attorneys and GAL appointments (5)
 - Perpetrators not held accountable (4)
 - Judges (3)
 - Miscellaneous (4)
- 6) Reporting problems (32 responses)**
 - Reports not being made (7)
 - Callers are not remaining confidential/anonymously (5)
 - Cases being refused for acceptance (4)
 - Continue improvements of the hubs (4)
 - Unable to make a report quickly (4)
 - Reporters are not followed up with (3)
 - Inappropriate reports (3)
 - The hubs have made reporting slower (2)
- 7) Premature reunification/parental issues (30 responses)**
 - Children returned to home/abuser too soon with low supervision (11)
 - Uncooperative or unfindable parents (6)
 - Treatment for parents needs improvement (5)
 - Parents rights superseding rights of child and other caretakers (4)
 - Inconsistent removals (2)
 - Miscellaneous (2)
- 8) Inadequate placement/foster care (16 responses)**
 - Placements not being better than original home (7)
 - Lack of foster parent support and training (4)
 - Permanency barriers (3)
 - Miscellaneous (2)
- 9) Law Enforcement issues (10 responses)**
 - Lack of specific training (4)
 - Failing to make referrals (2)
 - More officers needed (2)
 - Miscellaneous (2)
- 10) Culture/lack of awareness (9 responses)**
 - Culture (5)
 - Lack of awareness (3)
 - Bureaucracy (1)
- 11) Confidentiality/record sharing (6 responses)**
 - Confidentiality limitations (4)
 - Difficulty accessing records (2)

12) Inadequate training (5 responses)

- Lack of quality training (3)

13) Drugs (4 responses)

- Identifying and treating drug endangered children (2)
- Parents not receiving adequate or complete drug treatment (1)
- Need for more clearly defined procedures dealing with pregnant women (1)

14) Neglect not recognized (3 responses)

- Recognizing neglect (2)
- Blaming poverty for maltreatment when the situation is actually neglect (1)

15) Need for trauma informed practice (3 responses)

- Understanding how the system continues to traumatize children
- Professionals need to become trauma informed through ACEs training
- Need more trauma informed care for staff

16) Lack of timely assessment (2 responses)

- Immediate assessment needed

17) Lack of Multidisciplinary team (MDT) participation (2 responses)

- Better MDT participation needed

18) School practices (2 responses)

- Administrative policies that hinder investigations
- Teachers need to understand/support children and their issues

19) Miscellaneous (26 responses)

X. What would be the most important change to make to improve the state's response to maltreated children? (Answered: 390, skipped: 297)

1) Staff and pay increase/staff trained and educated/reduce caseloads (125 responses)

- Fund and hire more case workers/staff (57)
- Decrease caseloads (22)
- Better paid staff (17)
- Better trained and educated staff (17)
- Improving retention at DSS (6)
- Miscellaneous (6)

2) Improve/increase training and education (65 responses)

- More training (35)
- Increase training for DSS case workers (11)
- Training on specific topics (8)
- Increase training for law enforcement (6)
- Increase training for mandated reporters (4)
- Increased training for prosecutors (1)

3) DSS improvements (49 responses)

- Improve the DSS system/involvement (13)
- Improved/consistent policies and procedures (8)
- Better management (7)
- Better staffing (5)
- Improve availability and response (5)
- Shorter timeframes (4)
- More agency accountability (4)

- Improve safety plan (2)
- Miscellaneous (9)
- 4) Better communication/coordination between agencies (41 responses)**
 - Better collaboration (13)
 - Better communication with schools (11)
 - Better communication between agencies (9)
 - Better collaboration with schools (7)
- 5) Increased resources (32 responses)**
 - Increase funding for child welfare (11)
 - More comprehensive resources (10)
 - Increase mental health support (8)
 - Increase accessibility to resources (3)
- 6) Faster response (26 responses)**
 - Faster response time (24)
 - Adequate response time (2)
- 7) Better follow-up/supervision (19 responses)**
 - Better follow-up (15)
 - Better supervision (4)
- 8) Placement/foster care improvement (19 responses)**
 - More placements/facilities (8)
 - Focus on safety (5)
 - Reduce barriers for foster parents (2)
 - Funding for caregivers (2)
 - Miscellaneous (2)
- 9) Improve court process/timeliness (17 responses)**
 - A more child friendly court process (4)
 - Improving judges' engagement and training (4)
 - Timeliness (4)
 - More criminal prosecutions (2)
 - Miscellaneous (3)
- 10) Laws improvement (17 responses)**
 - Review and revise current laws (9)
 - Define torture as child abuse and neglect (2)
 - Miscellaneous (6)
- 11) Focus on parent support and accountability (17 responses)**
 - More intense services for abusive parents (8)
 - Hold parents accountable (4)
 - Remove abuser (2)
 - Miscellaneous (3)
- 12) Focus on child centered practices (14 responses)**
 - Use of CACs (3)
 - Child friendly practice (4)
 - Put child safety first (7)
- 13) Improve reporting process (12 responses)**
 - Streamline reporting process (4)
 - Be able to contact and report to local office (3)

- Miscellaneous (5)

14) Focus on prevention and early intervention (6 responses)

15) Law enforcement improvements (5 responses)

- Child abuse and trauma to be part of the curriculum for law enforcement when they go through the academy (1)
- Provide training and appropriate monetary compensation for a full-time death investigator (1)
- Better training to school resource officers (SRO) for neglect and abuse that should follow up with services for the family that may include removing children until the home environment is safe. (1)
- Mandating protocols for law enforcement when responding to allegations of abuse or neglect (1)
- Have on-site law enforcement officer liaisons at DSS for a streamlined combined effort for a better flowing working relationship when assessing DSS cases investigated by law enforcement (1)

16) State priority (5 responses)

17) Improve confidentiality and record sharing issues (2 responses)

- Relaxation of confidentiality restrictions
- Need to protect reporters

18) Miscellaneous (18 responses)