

South Carolina Children's Justice Act Task Force
2018 Three-Year Assessment Report



Prepared by the Children's Law Center



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
School of Law

SC Children's Justice Act Task Force 2018 Three-Year Assessment Report

I. Task Force Overview

The federal Children's Justice Act (CJA) 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, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation, in a manner that limits additional trauma to the child victim. This also includes the handling of child fatality cases in which child abuse or neglect is suspected and some cases of children with disabilities and serious health problems who also are victims of abuse and neglect.

To be eligible for CJA funds, states are required to establish and maintain a task force on children's justice. In accordance with federal statutory requirements, membership must be multidisciplinary and must comprise at least one slot for each of a multitude of disciplines. South Carolina has maintained an active Children's Justice Act Task Force since 1994. The purpose and activities of the Task Force, as defined by its bylaws and federal statute, are as follows:

- To conduct an assessment of the state's systems responding to abused and neglected children at three-year intervals;
- To adopt recommendations in each of the CJA categories;
- To work towards implementation of these recommendations;
- To recommend to the state's grantee (S.C. Department of Social Services) projects to be supported by the CJA grant funds; and
- To express positions on legislation or state policy issues, consistent with its mission and recommendations.

The SC Department of Social Services has been designated the state's CJA grantee and contracts with USC's Children's Law Center as recommended by the Task Force. The Children's Law Center receives the CJA funding to support the Task Force and assist in implementation of its recommendations.

II. Accomplishment Highlights for 2015-2018

The following Task Force accomplishment highlights were achieved as a result of the recommendations formed following the 2015 state assessment:

- Brought in a national expert on abusive head trauma to provide free training to law enforcement and prosecutors
- Provided two sessions of a specialized training for school resource officers
- Produced a recorded orientation training for multi-disciplinary team (MDT) members in child abuse investigations

- Provided combined mandated reporter trainings with ACEs training for clergy/faith leaders
- Initiated a new intensive child death training course for coroners
- Hosted trainings to address sexting and social media issues with child abuse professionals
- Released four public awareness campaign images on reporting child abuse
- Distributed and published a letter from the Task Force to attorneys about the harmful impact of court continuances to children
- Initiated a child sex trafficking case/data review project, implementing the findings in Children’s Law Center trainings
- Supported the South Carolina Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers (SCNCAC) and its forensic interviewer peer review/mentorship program
- Supported the operations of the Children’s Law Center to provide applicable resources and trainings

III. Overview of the 2018 Three-Year Assessment Process

Planning for the assessment began in March 2017 by forming an ad-hoc Operations Committee which was facilitated by the CJA Coordinator. The purpose of the committee was to examine the Task Force bylaws and make any amendment recommendations, to examine the three-year assessment processes of the past, and to propose a plan for the 2018 assessment process. The committee reviewed some assessment processes and surveys used by other states. The committee’s recommendation was to administer a statewide survey from the Task Force so that results could be reviewed in January 2018 as part of its assessment. In addition to the CJA survey, other recommendations and strategies from partnering agencies were to be reviewed in an attempt to align efforts.

After a comprehensive review of possible survey questions, a survey was drafted for South Carolina to identify systemic problems in the state’s response to maltreated children. The survey was distributed in October 2017 through Survey Monkey to over 50 organizations who were asked to share the survey with partners who serve child victims. The survey was open for one month and closed in November 2017. A total of 687 participants responded to the survey. Because of the high volume of responses to open ended questions, manual categorizing and organizing was necessary. With the help of the Children’s Law Center, the responses were analyzed and a report summary was released (see attachment).

At the January 2018 meeting, the Task Force members broke out into four work groups for the sole purpose of examining the survey report findings and identifying a few areas for CJA focus. The identified topics were:

- Comprehensive training on conducting trauma assessments at the front end of child abuse investigations
- Improving the implementation of safety plans as well as the related communication with schools

- Reduction of stress/trauma on child witnesses in the court system by addressing the hierarchy of scheduled cases and timeliness of hearings
- Establishment of a statewide collaborative protocol for the response to child abuse and neglect cases that utilizes the Children’s Advocacy Centers (CACs) and the multidisciplinary team approach
- Clarify the role of schools during an investigation
- Improved investigations involving special needs children to include the use of designated experts available to MDTs
- Improve communication and follow-up with schools and other mandated reporters after reports of abuse or neglect are made
- Confidentiality / protection of reporters
- Providing enhanced support for DSS caseworkers

The second portion of the assessment took place in February at a special work day meeting. The Department of Social Services, the Court Improvement Program, and the SC Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers were asked for their priorities/initiatives. Together with the identified survey topics, the Task Force was able to consider alignment with these initiatives in forming CJA recommendations. The following focus areas were given, and then elaborated upon, by an agency representative of each:

DSS Improvement Plan Focus Areas (from Child and Families Service Review):

- Improve safety
- Improve child and family assessment and family engagement
- Timely permanency
- Improve well-being
- Staff development (training, coaching, supervision)
- Improve CQI

Court Improvement Program (CIP) initiatives:

- Implementation of Engaged Participation in Court (EPIC)
- Develop professional standards of practice for Office of Indigent Defense (OID) attorneys appointed for defendants
- Continue to develop and implement training for the state GAL program staff volunteers and legal staff

SC Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers’ initiatives:

- Statewide Protocol
- CAC defining language in statute
- Updating mandatory reporting law to include CAC victim advocates and staff
- CAC comprehensive needs assessment for location and expansion of CAC services
- A statewide CAC database that can link with DSS for referrals
- State funding for CACs

Also considered were some CJA related legislation initiatives by the Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children and some CJA carry-over items from the last cycle.

The gathering of these priority topics took place prior to the meeting so that the Operations Committee could establish three corresponding committees for the 2018-2021 cycle. Members were given an opportunity to select a preference of committee assignment. Based on their preferences, members were assigned to the following committees:

- A. Assessment and Safety Committee
- B. Collaboration Committee
- C. Courts and Special Populations Committee

Committees were assigned on the work day so that recommendations could be formed in their respective committees where the work would be executed. After hearing an overview of the three-year assessment requirements and a recap of the previously identified assessment survey topics, speakers provided an explanation of the assessment information that was to be considered. Committees met for the first time to consider all assessment information and to draft two to five recommendations, considering the desired outcome, activities to be carried out, and how improvement can be measured.

IV. Recommendations for 2018-2021

The following recommendations were developed as a result of the 2018 three-year assessment process which will guide the work of the Task Force over the next three-year period:

Category A. Recommendations for investigative, administrative and judicial improvements, including training:

- 1.A** Provide training to Multidisciplinary Teams (MDT) on assessing **children with limited communication skills** and identify qualified resource professionals available for consultation. (Courts & Special Populations Committee)
- 2.A** Incorporate **Best Legal Practices** (BLP) into ongoing trainings for GAL, OID & DSS attorneys. (Courts & Special Populations Committee)
- 3.A** Provide training with DSS & GAL attorneys on recognizing signs of **stress on children who must testify** and prioritizing the scheduling of those cases accordingly.
(Courts & Special Populations Committee)

Category B. Recommendations for experimental, demonstration and model programs:

- 4.B** Develop an experimental model of a **“Level 2 MDT”** to provide intervention and support up to court for high risk victims for recantation. (Collaboration Committee)
- 5.B** Continue support of the **SC Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers** including organizational capacity and infrastructural resources.

- 6.B Continue support of the operation of the **Children’s Law Center** which is a training and information resource center for professionals involved in child maltreatment proceedings. Operations include implementing the training recommendations in collaboration with the Task Force and providing research and logistical support to the Task Force.
- 7.B Coordinate and provide yearly intensive **training for SC Coroners** on child death investigations.

Category C: Recommendations for reform of state laws, ordinances, regulations, procedures, or protocols:

- 8.C Conduct a comprehensive review of **safety plan protocol** and implementation and support legislation and policy revision to address requirements and limitations for the duration of those plans. (Assessment & Safety Committee)
- 9.C Promote the use of **front-end assessments** to include trauma-informed screenings at CACs and group homes. (Assessment & Safety Committee)
- 10.C Improve **coordination with schools** following a report by school staff by clarifying confidentiality requirements and ensuring timely sharing of safety plans. (Assessment & Safety Committee)
- 11.C Establish a **statewide collaborative protocol** for the response to child abuse and neglect cases utilizing the CACs and the multidisciplinary team approach. (Collaboration Committee)
- 12.C Broaden **collaboration between schools and the CACs** both at the MDT level and in the follow up from a mandated report. (Collaboration Committee)
- 13.C Review and reform the **CAC statute 63-11-310** to support the collaborative response to child abuse and neglect. (Collaboration Committee)
- 14.C Provide support for any **child abuse legislation** that the Task Force deems will improve the state’s response to abused and neglected children including Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) babies.

V. Description of Recommendation Activities

The following preliminary activities are planned to address the recommendations:

- 1. Provide training to Multidisciplinary Teams (MDT) on assessing children with limited communication skills and identify qualified resource professionals available for consultation.** In an effort to decrease the barriers to assessing children with

communication limitations, the Task Force will collaborate to identify appropriate experts in this area. Training will be coordinated for MDTs and address specific causes of limited communication such as speech impairment, intellectual disabilities, sight impairment, and hearing impairment. (Recommendation 1.A)

2. Incorporate Best Legal Practices (BLP) into ongoing trainings for GAL, OID & DSS attorneys: The Best Legal Practice (BLP) guide has been revised and upon final court approval, will need to be distributed and announced accordingly. The Task Force will confer with the state Family Court Bench-Bar Committee and the Children’s Law Center to coordinate trainings and resources. Feedback will be sought from judges regarding attorney use and understanding of these practices. (Recommendation 2.A)

3. Provide training with DSS & GAL attorneys on recognizing signs of stress on children who must testify and prioritizing the scheduling of those cases accordingly: The Task Force will explore current data regarding children who receive forensic interviews as well as how many children ultimately testify. If this data is found to be lacking, the Task Force will request data. The prevalence of closed circuit testifying will also be examined. This information will help with training initiatives and methods for prioritizing cases on the court docket (Recommendation 3.A)

4. Develop an experimental model of a “Level 2 MDT” to provide intervention and support up to court for high risk victims for recantation: In an effort to preserve an effective witness for abuse and neglect and/or criminal justice proceedings, as well as reduce further trauma to the child in high risk recantation situations, an advanced MDT implementation will be plotted. After first being addressed in the desired statewide protocol, a pilot area will then be identified for implementation. (Recommendation 4.B)

5. Continue support of the SC Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers, including organizational capacity and infrastructural resources: The CJA Task Force supports Children’s Advocacy Centers and, together with the Children’s Law Center, will assist their network, which is a state chapter of the National Children’s Alliance. The Children’s Law Center will continue to provide furnished office space for the Executive Director of the SC Network of Children’s Advocacy Centers along with telephone, computer, office supplies, and use of equipment and meeting rooms. Additionally, the Children’s Law Center will provide administrative support and will co-sponsor SCNCAC training events. Trainings and the mentorship program will seek to improve adherence to the ChildFirst SC forensic interviewing protocol within the peer review system and increase opportunities for support and development for forensic interviewers. The Executive Director of the Network is a member of the Task Force and will report regularly on the status and needs of the state’s Children’s Advocacy Centers. The Children’s Law Center will also assist individual Children’s Advocacy Centers by providing legal information and training as requested. This support will promote the expansion of the Children’s Advocacy Center approach throughout the state. (Recommendation 5.B)

6. Continue support of the operation of the Children’s Law Center which is a training and information resource center for professionals involved in child maltreatment

proceedings. Operations include implementing the training recommendations in collaboration with the Task Force and providing research and logistical support to the Task Force: DSS contracts with the Children’s Law Center to support the functions of the Task Force and to operate a training and information resource center for professionals involved in child maltreatment proceedings. The Children’s Law Center is responsible for implementing the training recommendations in collaboration with the Task Force, preparing resource materials as directed by the Task Force, and assisting with accomplishment of policy recommendations. The Children’s Law Center provides research and logistical support for all meetings of the Task Force and its committees. Supporting the operation of the SC Children’s Law Center promotes successful delivery of coordinated and effective training and information for professionals involved in the response to child abuse allegations, investigations, and prosecutions. Measurable outcome goals of training will be identified and tracked to assess and modify any trainings. (Recommendation 6.B)

7. Coordinate and provide yearly intensive training for SC Coroners on child death investigations: The Task Force, in conjunction with the Children’s Law Center, established a model curriculum for coroners and will secure appropriate experts to present at a yearly three-day training. Collaboration will continue with the state’s coroners to best suit their needs. (Recommendation 7.B)

8. Conduct a comprehensive review of safety plan protocol and implementation and support legislation and policy revision to address requirements and limitations for the duration of those plans: The Task Force will review the currently used safety plan document and policy and provide input to the Department of Social Services as they revise and adopt related policy. The Task Force will align its work with the Safety Outcomes as outlined in the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), particularly performance items, 1, 2, and 3 of the CFSR . (Recommendation 8.C)

9. Promote the use of front-end assessments to include trauma-informed screenings at CACs and group homes: In an effort to improve the assessment of children to appropriately address trauma, the Task Force will explore mental health protocols that may be utilized. The Task Force will support and assist with implementation of front end assessments and coordinate training on trauma-informed screening. The Task Force will collaborate with the Office of Child Health and Well-Being at the Department of Social Services to ensure alignment with the health care coordination plan required by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and the federal court overseeing the Final Settlement Agreement in Michelle H. v. McMaster, et.al. (Recommendation 9.C)

10. Improve coordination with schools following a report by school staff by clarifying confidentiality requirements and ensuring timely sharing of safety plans: In an effort to achieve a smoother transition of abuse reporting and safety plan sharing between DSS and schools, the Task Force will clarify with DSS what information can and cannot be shared with schools. They will develop a guide or information sheet to educate school personnel on expectations of what can be shared and when, to alleviate confusion. The Task Force will also incorporate this effort into the revision/review of safety plan policy. (Recommendation 10.C)

11. Establish a statewide collaborative protocol for the response to child abuse and neglect cases utilizing the CACs and the multidisciplinary team approach: In conjunction with the South Carolina Network for Children’s Advocacy Centers (SCNCAC), the Task Force will assemble a statewide stakeholder committee involving all child serving agencies to collaborate on a response protocol. This will also lay the framework for language to be used when reforming the CAC statute. (Recommendation 11.C)

12. Broaden collaboration between schools and the CACs both at the MDT level and in the follow up from a mandated report: In an effort to increase the sharing of information with schools through the utilization of the MDT, the Task Force will examine areas which currently include school personnel in their MDT staffings and identify successful participation methods. Key education professionals will be included in the development of the statewide protocol to also incorporate this inclusion. (Recommendation 12.C)

13. Review and reform the CAC statute § 63-11-310 to support the collaborative response to child abuse and neglect: The Task Force will review the current statute that outlines the role of Children’s Advocacy Centers. After the development of a statewide protocol is adopted, that language can be used to reform the statute to reflect a collaborative response to child abuse investigations. The Task Force will partner with the SCNCAC to confer with appropriate partners, draft statute language, and provide support for legislation moving forward. (Recommendation 13.C)

14. Provide support for any child abuse legislation that the Task Force deems will improve the state’s response to abused and neglected children including NAS babies: The Task Force will monitor and support legislation that will improve the state’s response to abused and neglected children and that is related to CJA topics. Members provide input about such legislation when there is appropriate opportunity. The Task Force will also assist in efforts to educate child service professionals to make them aware of the passage of any applicable legislation during the CJA cycle. (Recommendation 14.C)

South Carolina Children's Justice Act Task Force

2017 Assessment Survey Results



Prepared by the Children's Law Center



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
School of Law

January 2018

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)

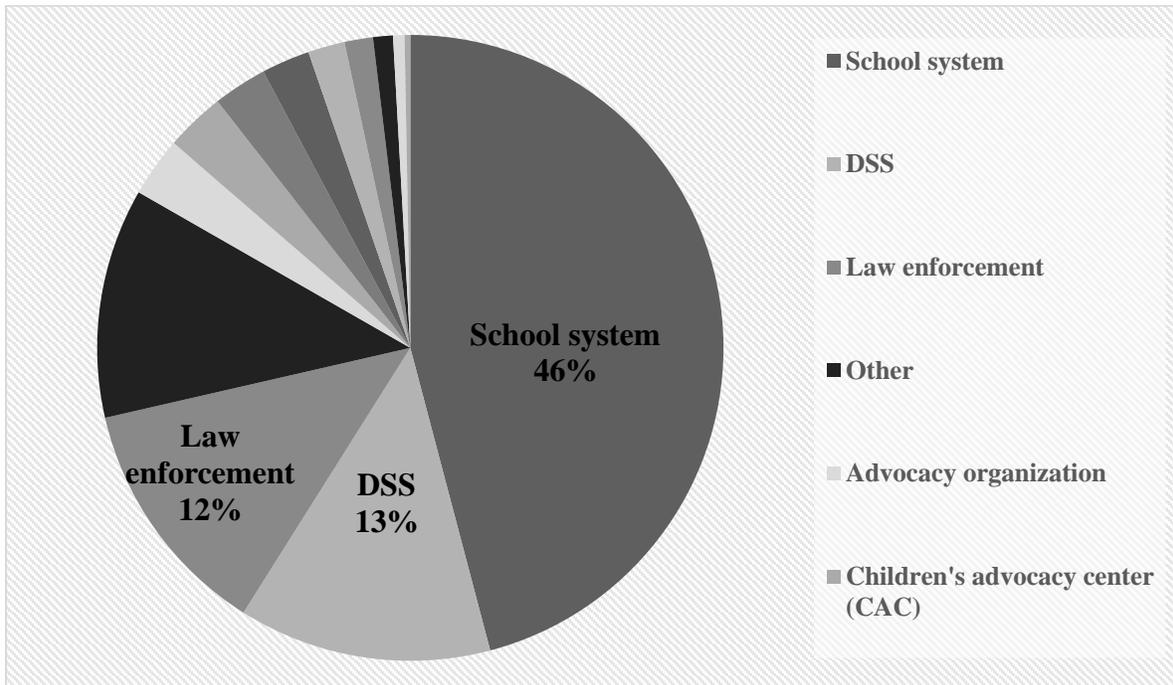
Professions	Number
Counselor	163 (157 or 96% school counselors)
Medical professional	123 (118 or 96% nurses)
Social worker	68
Law enforcement professional	62
Child welfare professional	53
Attorney	50
Program manager/coordinator/director	28
Coroner	23
Advocate	16
Agency/program administrator	12
Educator/teacher/tutor/trainer	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

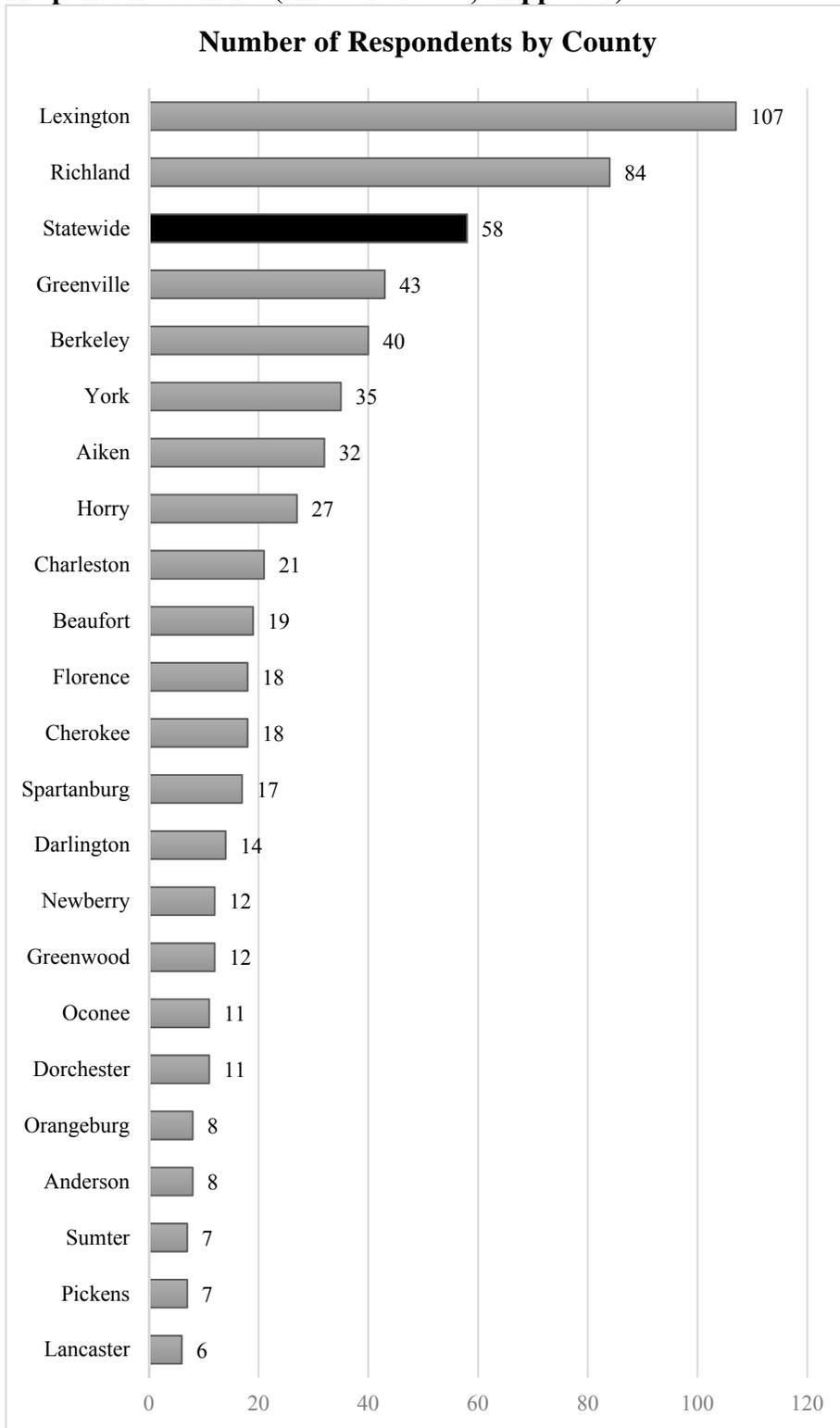
II. Respondent organizations (Answered: 682, skipped: 5)

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)

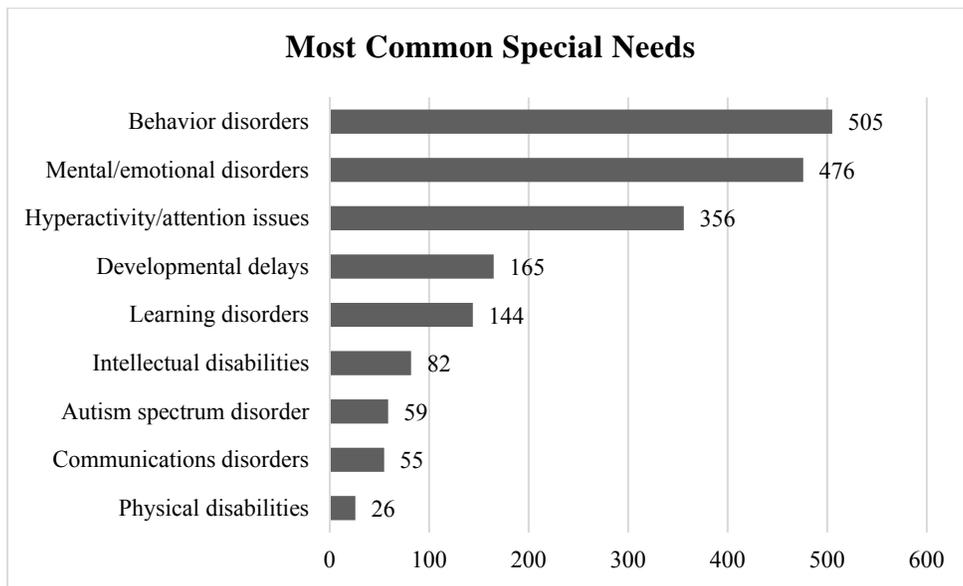


*the remainder of counties had 5 or less respondents

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

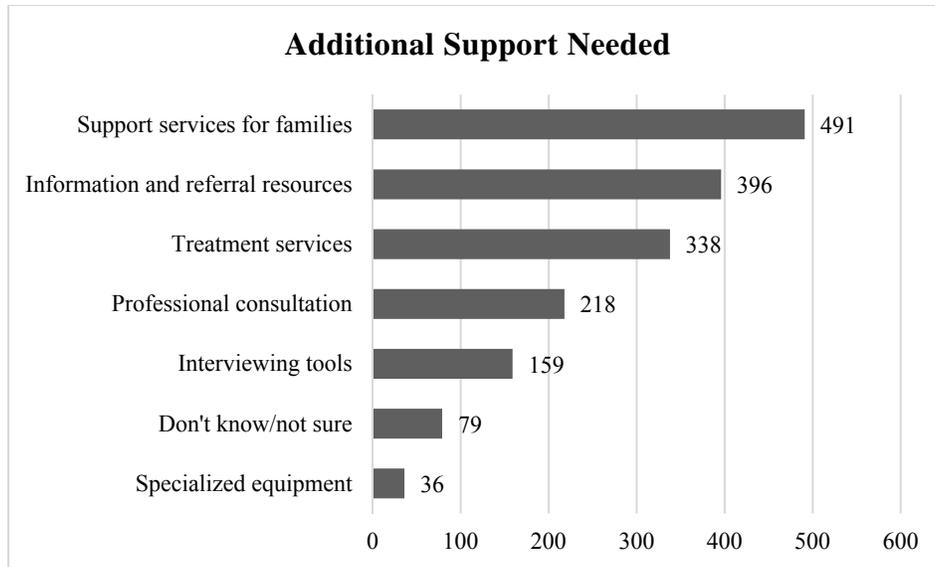
a. What are the three most common special needs that you encounter when working with abused or neglected children?

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%

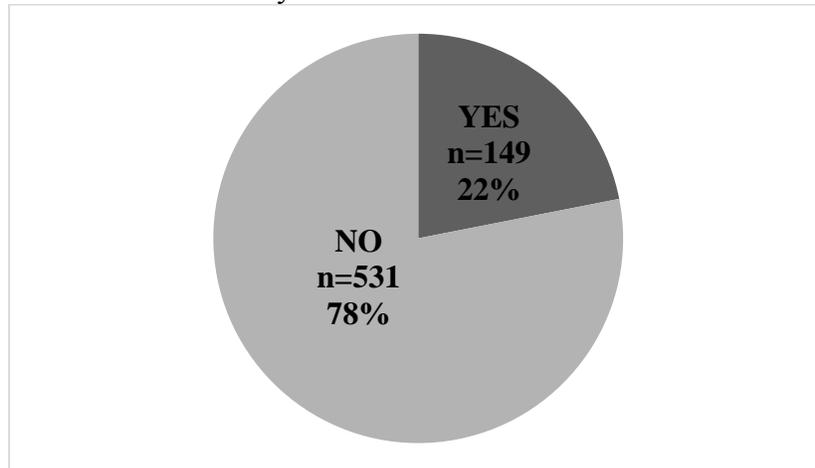


b. What additional supports would you need to work more effectively with children with special needs? (check all that apply) (Answered: 674, skipped: 13)

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?



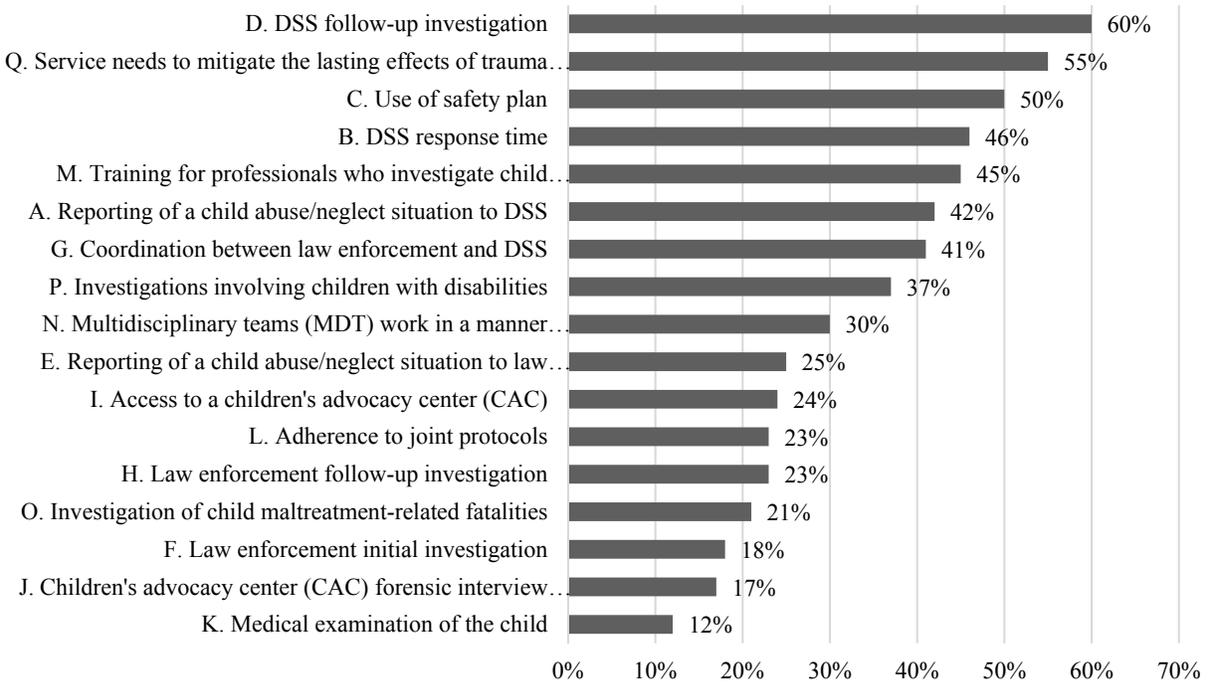
- b. If YES, what systemic problem(s) do you think prohibited protection for the child/children? (110 responses)
- 1) Agency issues (26 responses)
 - 2) Inadequate training and treatment services (23 responses)
 - 3) Faulty monitoring of risk to children and inadequate staff supervision (19 responses)
 - 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

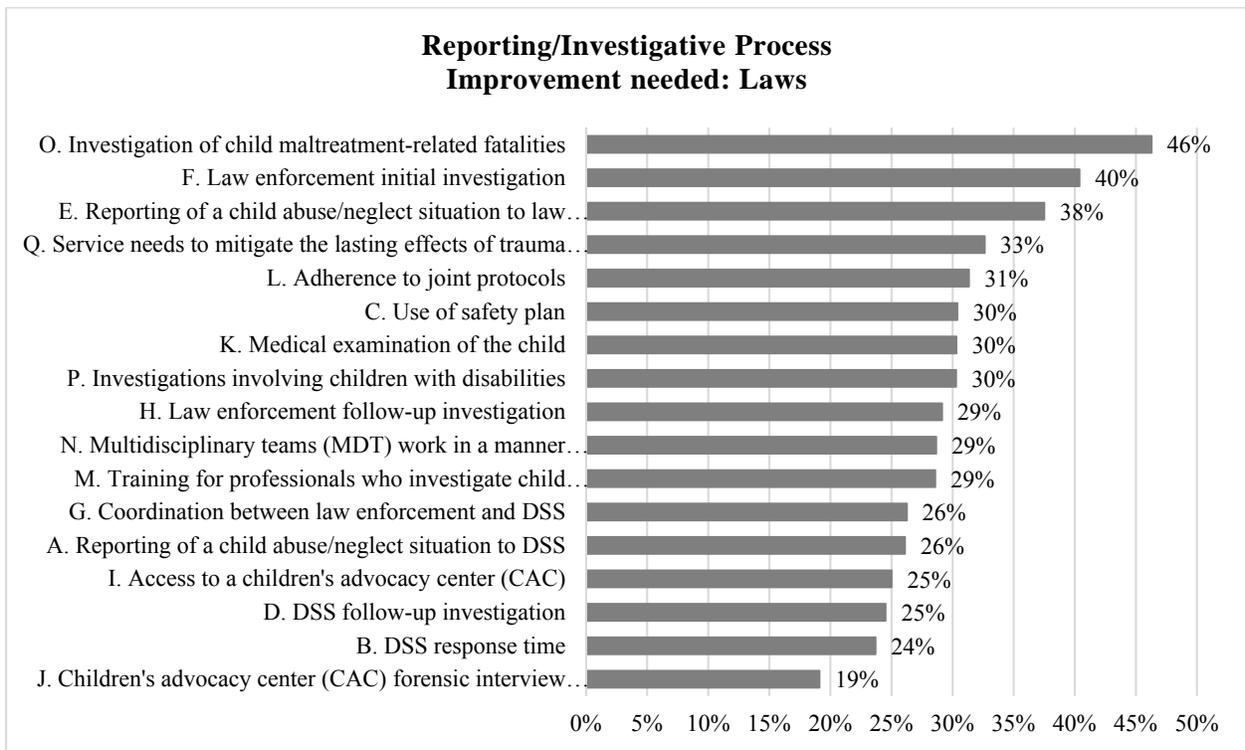
Reporting/Investigative Process Improvement Needed



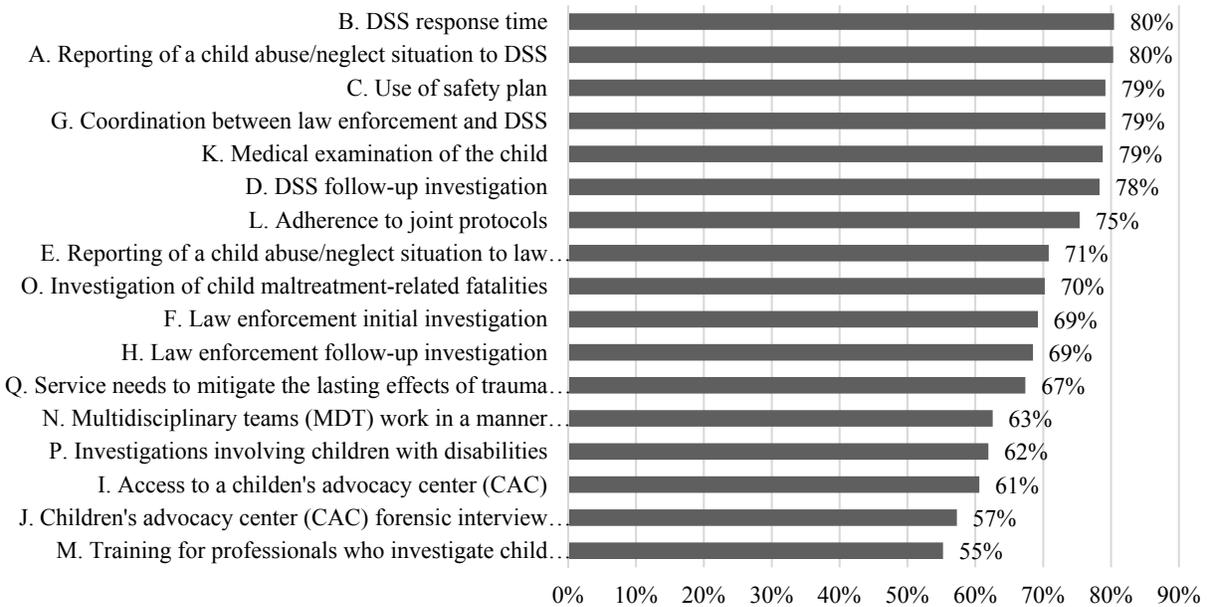
b. For each of the components where you indicated that improvement was needed, please select area(s) of improvement needed. (Answered: 532, skipped: 155)

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

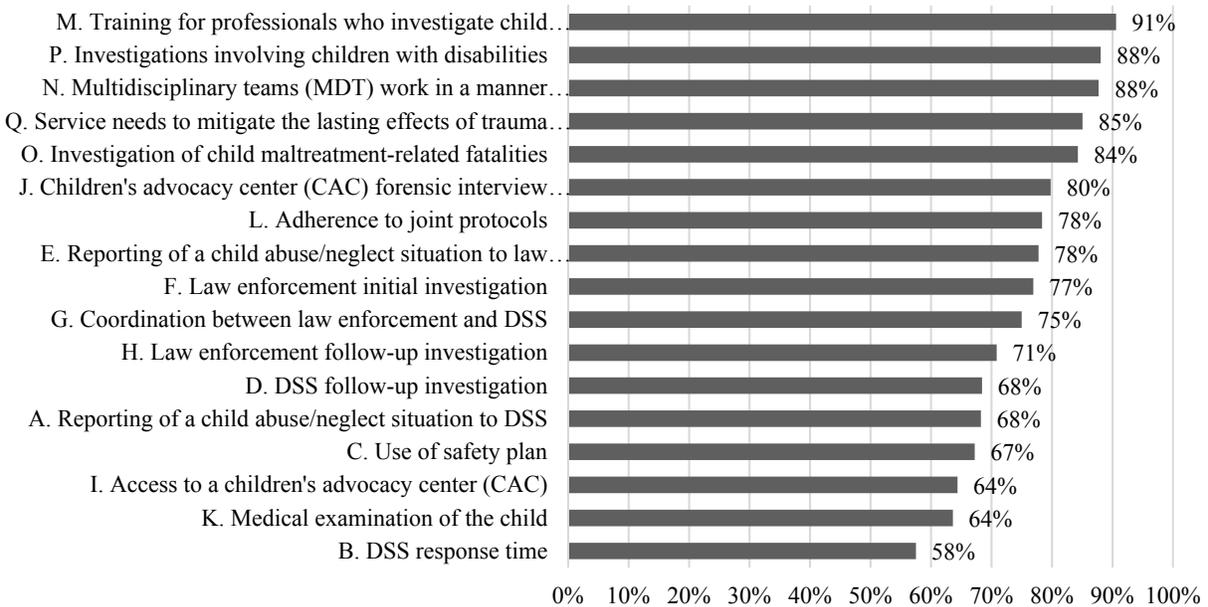
M. Training for professionals who investigate child abuse and neglect	29%	55%	91%	266
N. Multidisciplinary teams (MDT) work in a manner sensitive to all populations, cultures, and race/ethnicities	29%	63%	88%	171
O. Investigation of child maltreatment-related fatalities	46%	70%	84%	121
P. Investigations 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



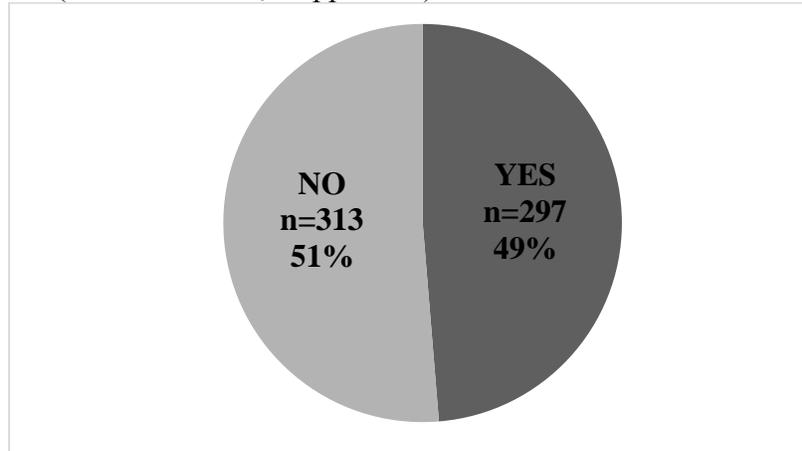
- c. For each of the components of the reporting/investigative process (Family and Criminal) in cases of child abuse and neglect where you indicated that improvement was needed, please explain any specifics that you can:

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

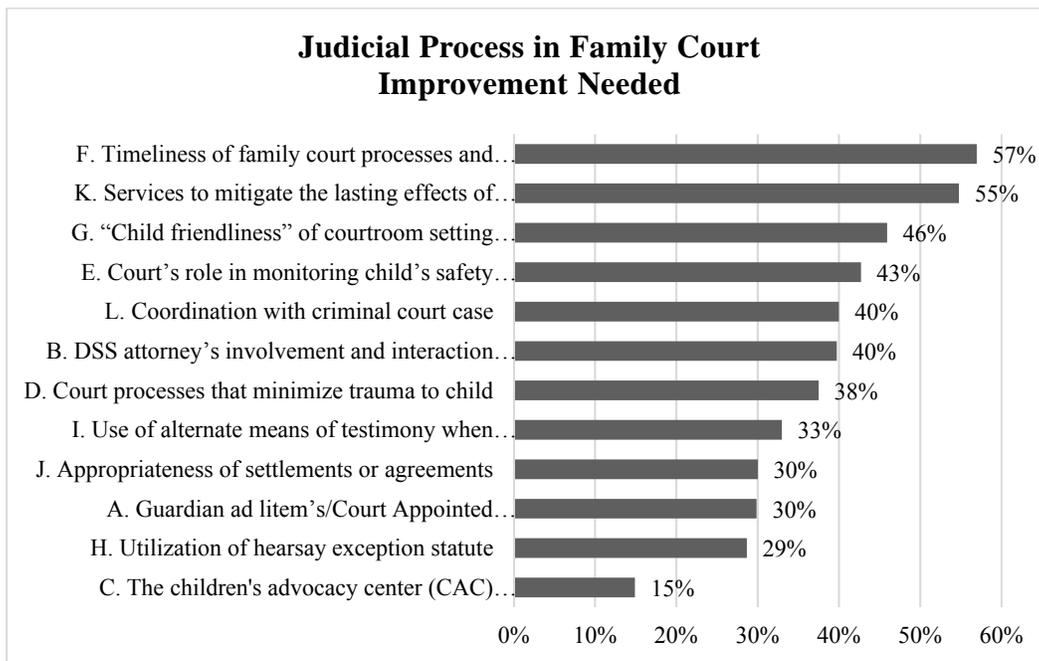
a. Do you have experience with the judicial process in family court in cases of child abuse and neglect? (Answered: 610, skipped: 77)



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

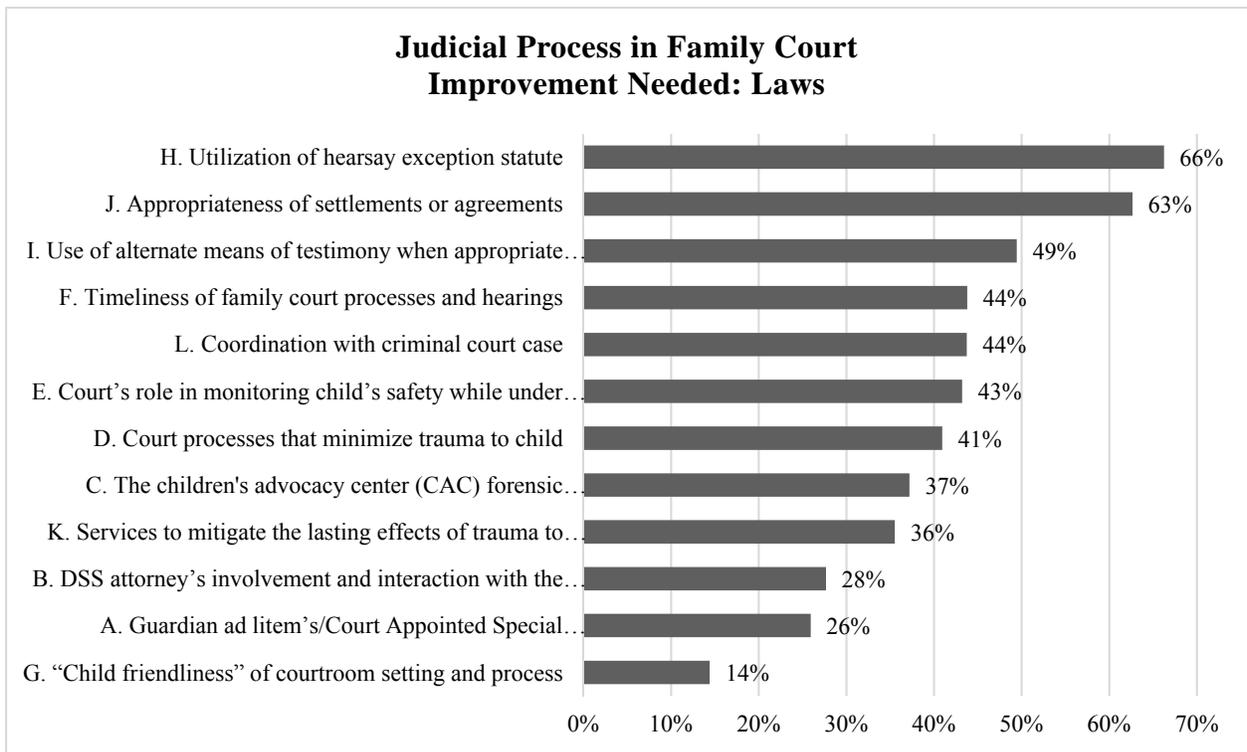
testimony when appropriate (e.g. closed circuit)					
J. Appropriateness of settlements or agreements	30%	44%	6%	20%	293
K. Services to mitigate the lasting effects of trauma to child victims of abuse and neglect are adequately delivered	55%	28%	4%	13%	294
L. Coordination with criminal court case	40%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



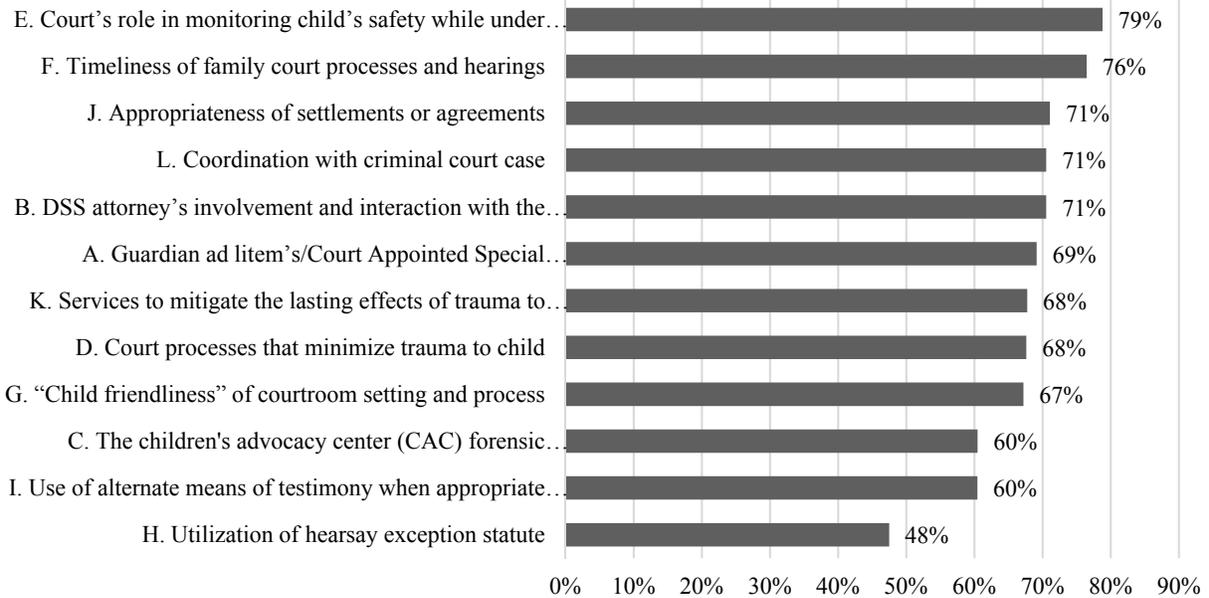
c. For each of the components where you indicated that improvement was needed, please select area(s) of improvement needed. (Answered: 236, skipped: 451)

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

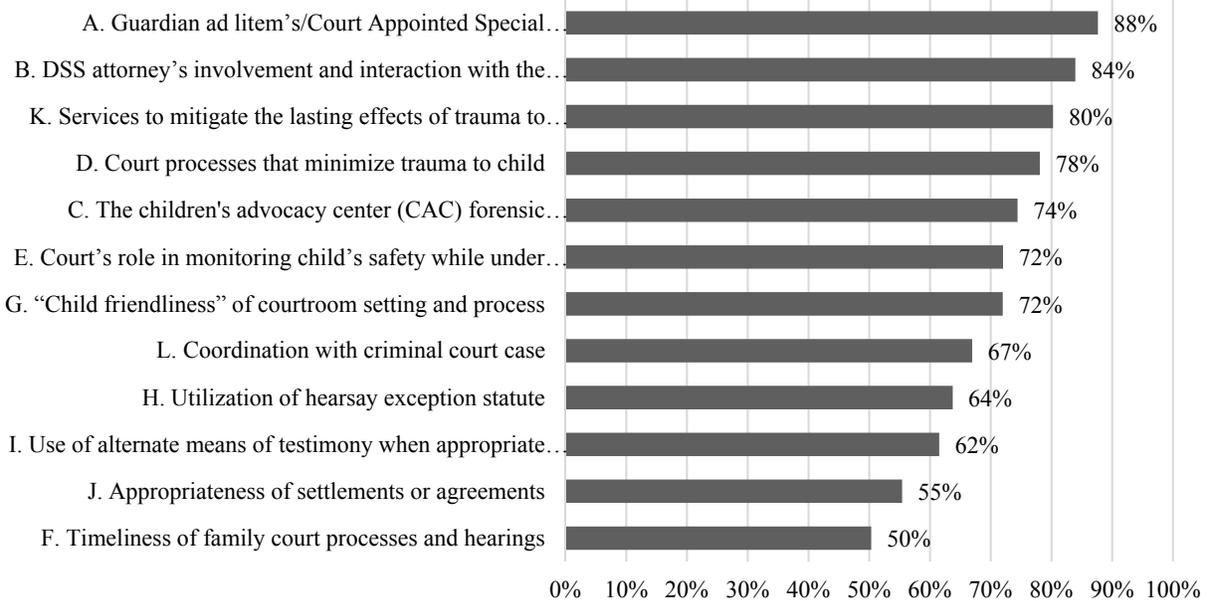
trauma to child				
E. Court’s role in monitoring child’s safety while under court’s jurisdiction	43%	79%	72%	118
F. Timeliness of family court processes and hearings	44%	76%	50%	153
G. “Child friendliness” of courtroom setting and process	14%	67%	72%	125
H. Utilization of hearsay exception statute	66%	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



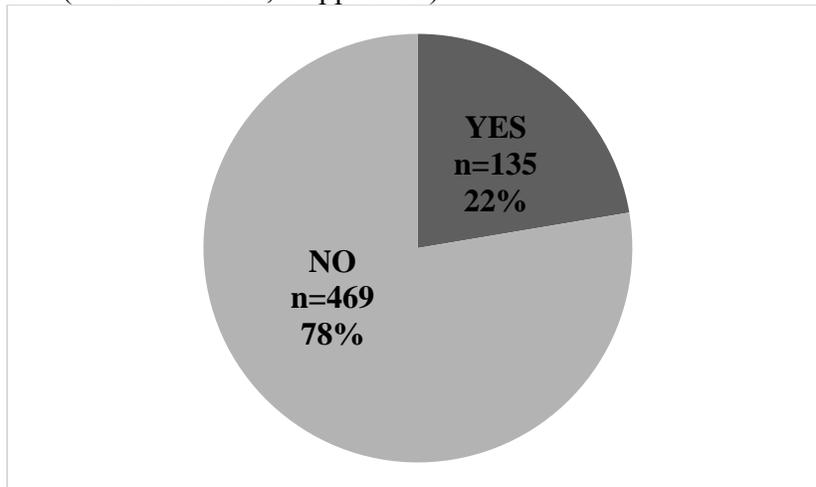
- d. For each of the components of the judicial process in family court in cases of child abuse and neglect where you indicated that improvement was needed, please explain any specifics that you can:

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

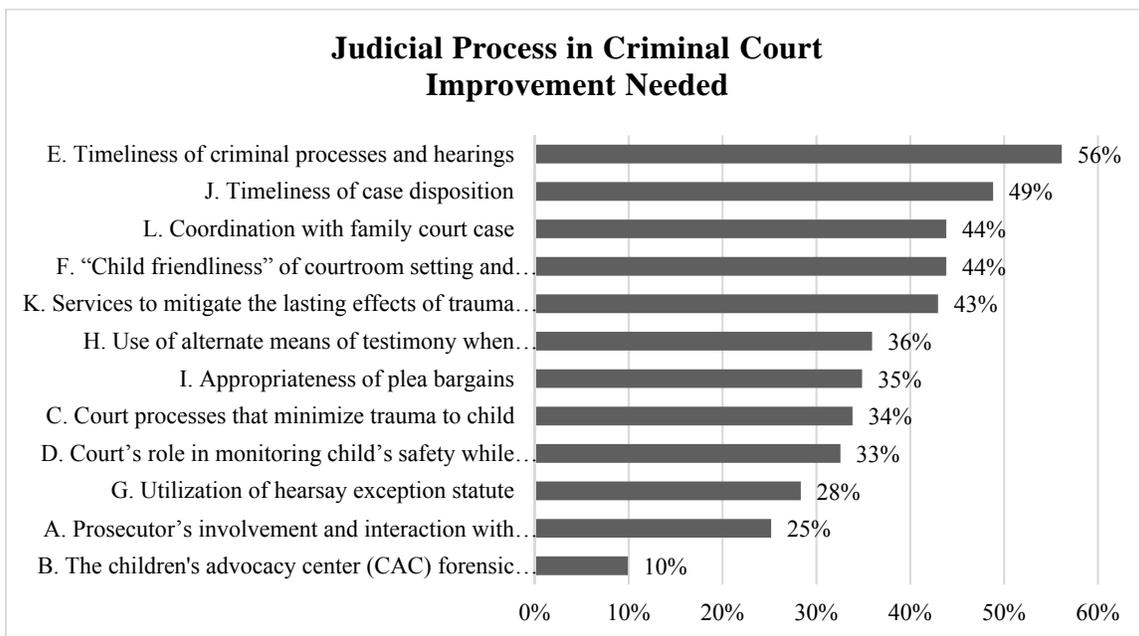
a. Do you have experience with the judicial process in criminal court in cases of child abuse and neglect? (Answered: 604, skipped: 83)



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

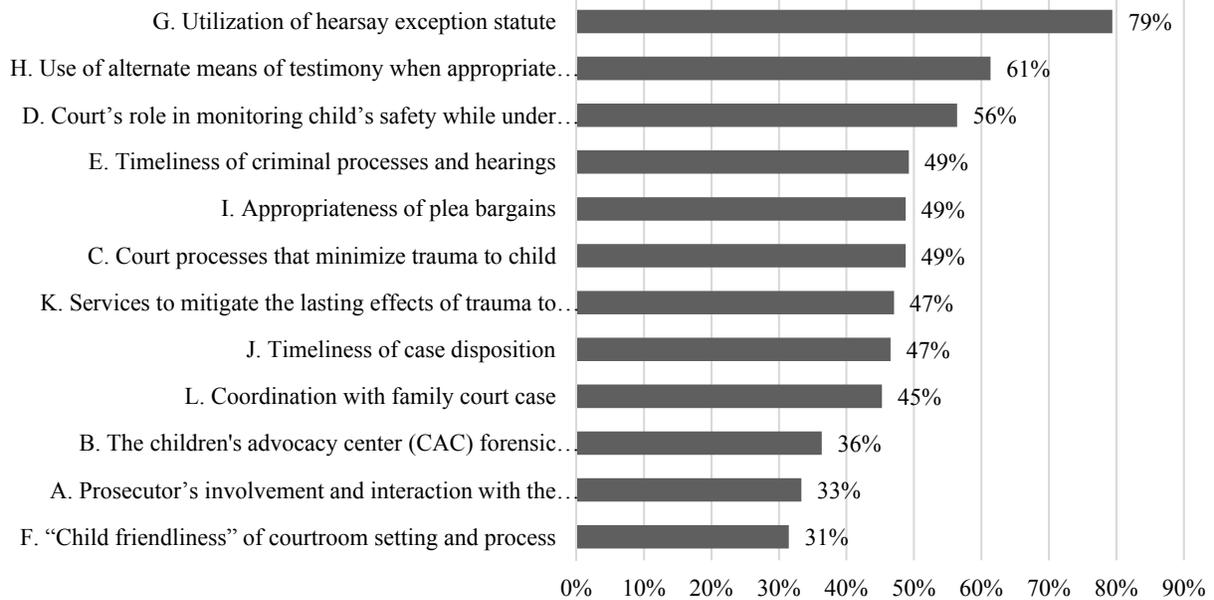
jurisdiction					
E. Timeliness of criminal processes and hearings	56%	35%	5%	4%	130
F. “Child friendliness” of courtroom setting and process	44%	45%	5%	7%	130
G. Utilization of hearsay exception statute	28%	39%	9%	24%	127
H. Use of alternate means of testimony when appropriate (e.g., closed circuit)	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



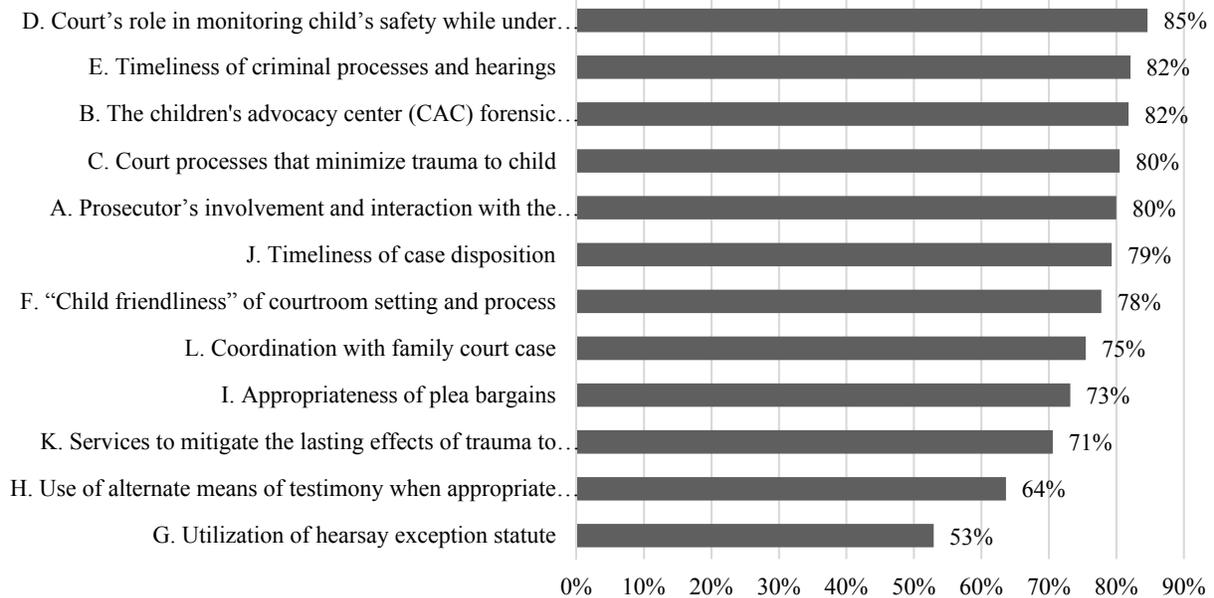
c. For each of the components where you indicated that improvement was needed, please select area(s) of improvement needed. (Answered: 88, skipped: 599)

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

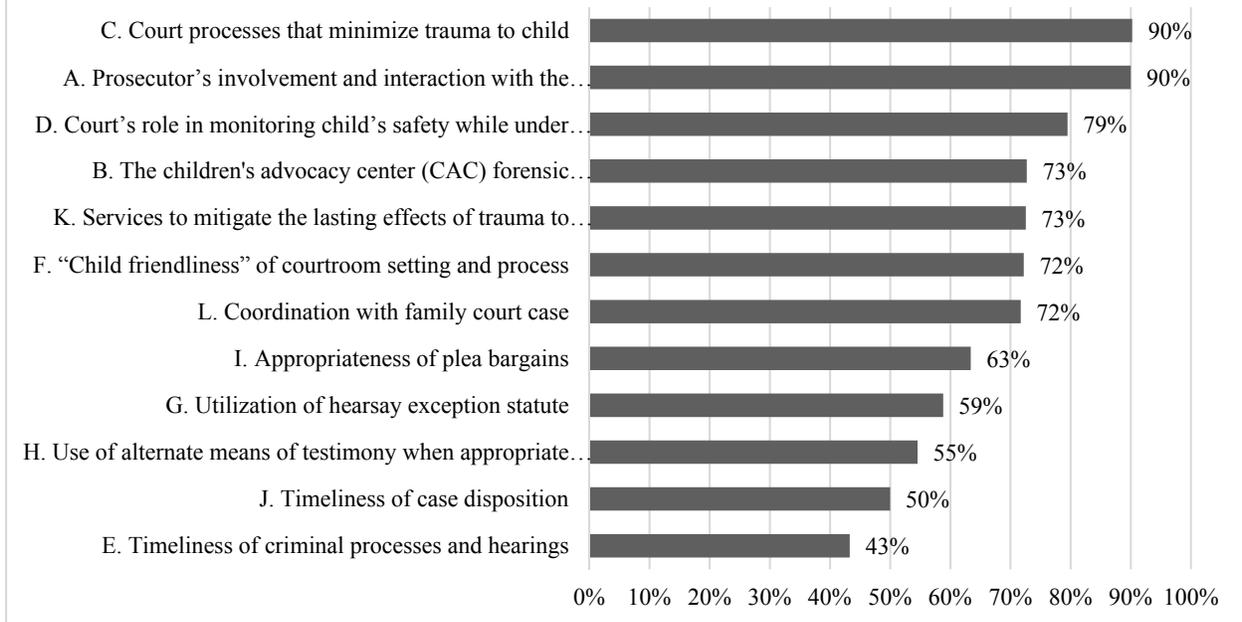
Judicial Process in Criminal Court Improvement Needed: Laws



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)