

# ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE



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Equal Opportunity Employer and Service Provider

Our most important job is to help Ohio's families protect, promote and ensure the safety and well-being of their children and youth. We recognize that our state's families—their situations, their strengths and their challenges—are unique. There is no one "right" solution for every family.

In order to meet the individual needs of Ohio's children and families, caseworkers need the flexibility to use a variety of tools and strategies to respond to a range of situations. For some families, the traditional child protective services response is necessary to determine if abuse or neglect has occurred and to ensure child safety and well-being. For many others, however, a more appropriate approach involves working with families to identify concerns, applying solutions that can help keep families together and providing them with the services and supports they need to keep their children safe.

## Protecting Children by Strengthening Families

Alternative Response is a family-engagement approach designed to keep children and families together whenever possible. Alternative Response builds collaborative connections among the child protection agency, community agencies and families to identify issues and meet families' needs using available supports and services.

Research has shown that Alternative Response results in increased child safety, increased family involvement and greater family satisfaction. Alternative Response can keep families strong and prevent them from receiving more than one report of alleged child abuse and neglect.

### Alternative Response is an approach that:

- Involves families
- Creates partnerships between workers and families
- Fosters collaboration
- Focuses on identifying concerns and finding solutions
- Forms connections with community-based agencies

## Partnering with Families to Promote and Ensure Well-Being

In Alternative Response, families play a critical role in assuring their children's safety and well-being. They are involved in the decision-making process from the beginning, including the initial determination of whether Alternative Response is right for them. If they decide it is not, then it is the responsibility of Child Protective Services to investigate the report of child abuse and neglect. The caseworker has the responsibility to engage the family in an assessment process that identifies their concerns and needs and, from those, finds and accesses the supports and services needed to help keep children safe.

## Child Safety as a Community Responsibility

Alternative Response is built on the belief that child safety is a community responsibility. It connects families to community organizations and service providers to address and resolve concerns as they arise. Identifying concerns early on and working with families as equal partners can help alleviate the stresses that often lead to abuse and neglect. This can help keep families together and prevent foster care placements. It is intended to give families the supports and services they need to stay together safely.