

Child Abuse



For a look at more data and discussion, go to page 29.

The Family and Children First Council, in its implementation of the Results-Based Accountability™ model (see page 11), is currently tracking 35 Community Indicators. Each one

of them has a story to tell, a story that can help explain its historical trend as well as suggest ways to turn it toward – or keep it going in – the desired direction. Some speak their stories loudly, such as People Receiving Public Assistance (pg. 60) and Unemployment (pg. 62). The financial crisis of ten years ago and the subsequent recovery can easily be seen in the ups and downs of those trend lines.

Other stories, however, may be more subtle, requiring more attention. An example is Child Abuse (pg. 29). Up until the 2016 Report, we had been tracking the number of substantiated reports of child abuse per 1,000 children under 18 years old. Several years ago, we began noting that Ohio’s piloting of something called “Alternative Response” (see below) might be having an effect on that indicator. The pilot has ended and, as Figure 1 shows, Ohio’s overall use of Alternative Response (AR) has grown dramatically over the last five years. However, the rate at which individual counties use AR varies widely. To pick just two examples, Franklin County’s use of AR from 2012 through 2017 has never been below 40%, while Hamilton County’s use of AR has never been above 17%.

Generally, those counties that are using AR for a higher percentage of reports have a decrease in the number of substantiated reports. (See Figure 2.) However, a decrease in the number of substantiated reports does not necessarily mean fewer instances of abuse. Therefore, because we want to keep the focus of this indicator’s story on abuse and not on the process of responding to reports of abuse (Traditional Response vs. AR), we are now revising its definition (see pg. 29) to be more comprehensive.

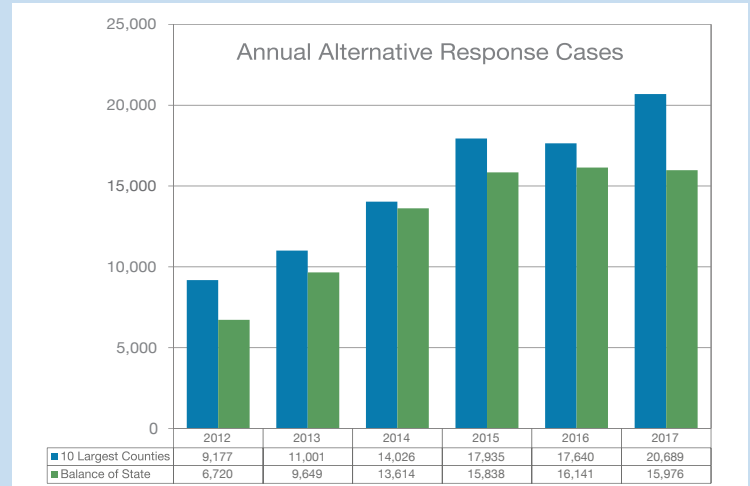


Figure 1. The use of AR in Ohio has more than doubled in five years. In 2012 the AR pathway was used in 19.6% of Ohio’s 81,177 accepted reports of abuse and neglect. By 2017 that had grown to 42.7% of 85,863 accepted reports. Source: Analysis of data from SACWIS (State Automated Child Welfare Information System)

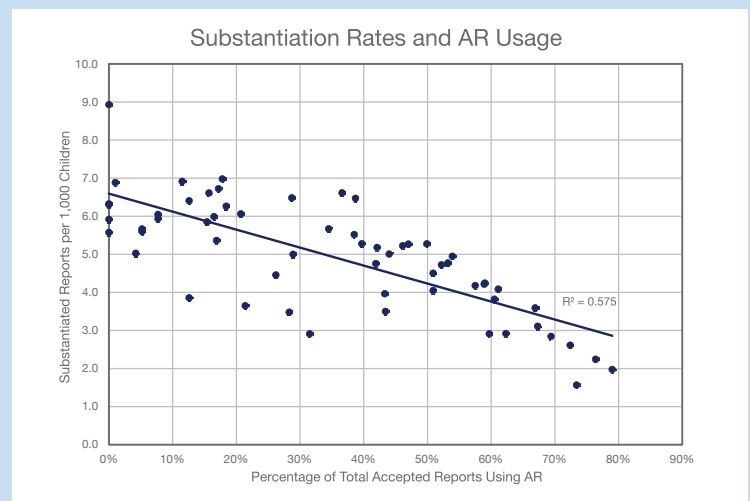


Figure 2. Each point represents annual data from one year between 2012 and 2017 for one of Ohio’s ten largest counties. There is a moderate correlation between the proportion of accepted reports using the AR pathway and the number of substantiated reports per 1,000 children, such that over half (57.5%) of the difference between any two rates of substantiation can be explained by differences in the use of AR. Source: Analysis of data from SACWIS (State Automated Child Welfare Information System)



Ohio’s Differential Response System provides child welfare agencies two options for responding to accepted reports of child abuse and neglect – the Traditional Response and an Alternative Response. In some instances, a traditional child protection response is needed in order to determine whether abuse or neglect has occurred and to ensure child safety and well-being. However, for many other families, an alternative approach may be more appropriate. Ohio’s Alternative Response pathway provides a second response option in which caseworkers partner with families and ensure that they are connected with the services and supports they need to keep their children safe.¹

¹ <http://jfs.ohio.gov/ocf/DifferentialResponse.stm>, accessed on Feb. 23, 2018.