

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



Prepared by the Children's Law Center



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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)

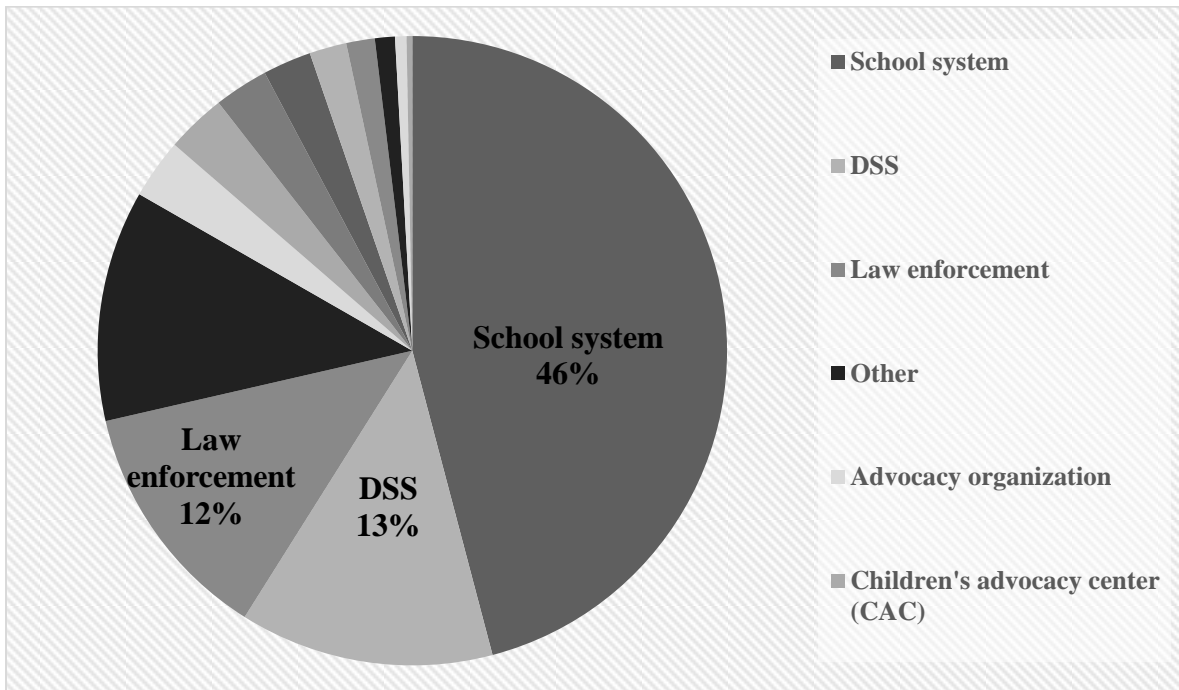
Professions	Number
Counselor	163 (157 or 96% school counselors)
Medical professional	123 (118 or 96% nurses)
Social worker	68
Law enforcement professional	62
Child welfare professional	53
Attorney	50
Program manager/coordinator/director	28
Coroner	23
Advocate	16
Agency/program administrator	12
Educator/teacher/tutor/trainer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

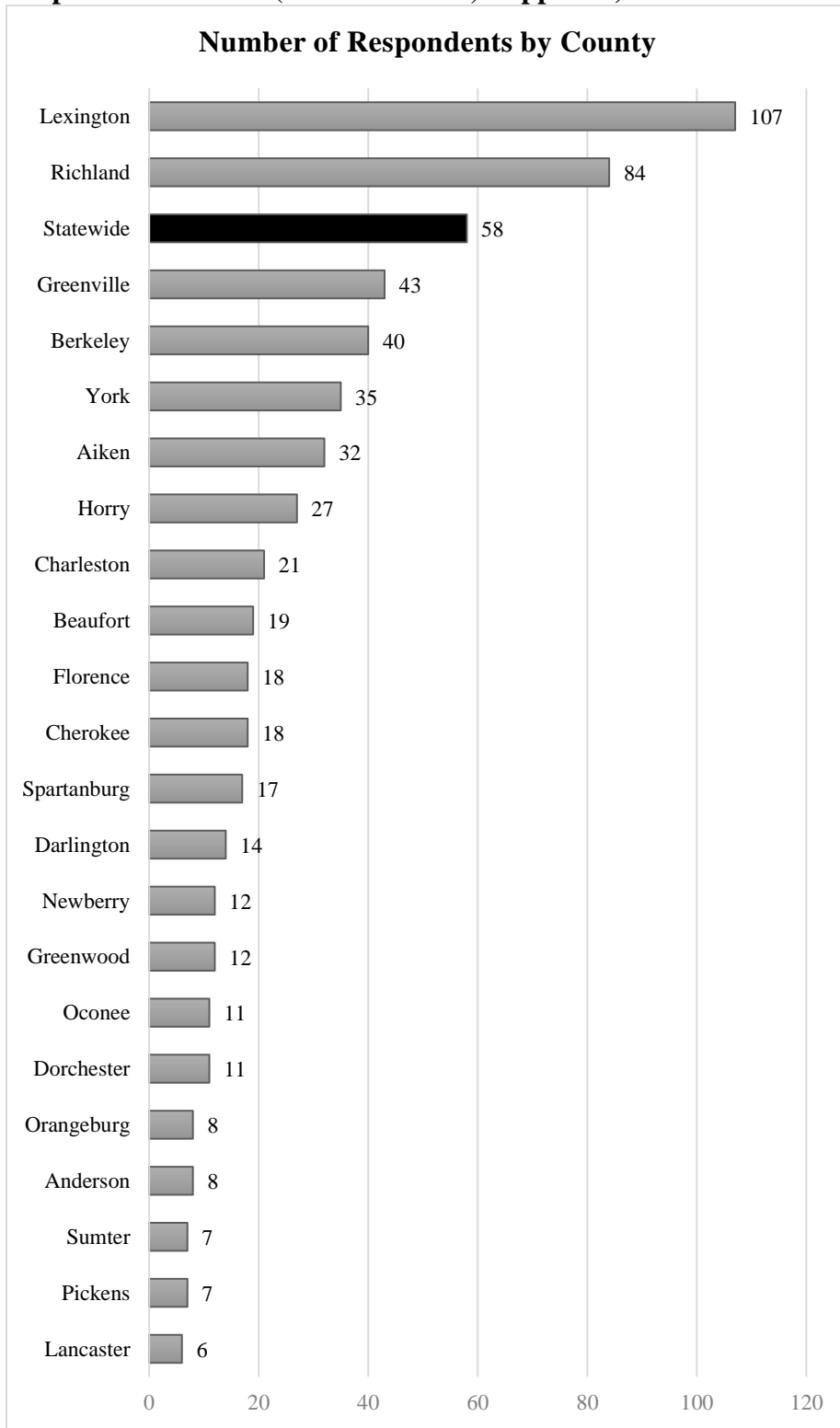
II. Respondent organizations (Answered: 682, skipped: 5)

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)

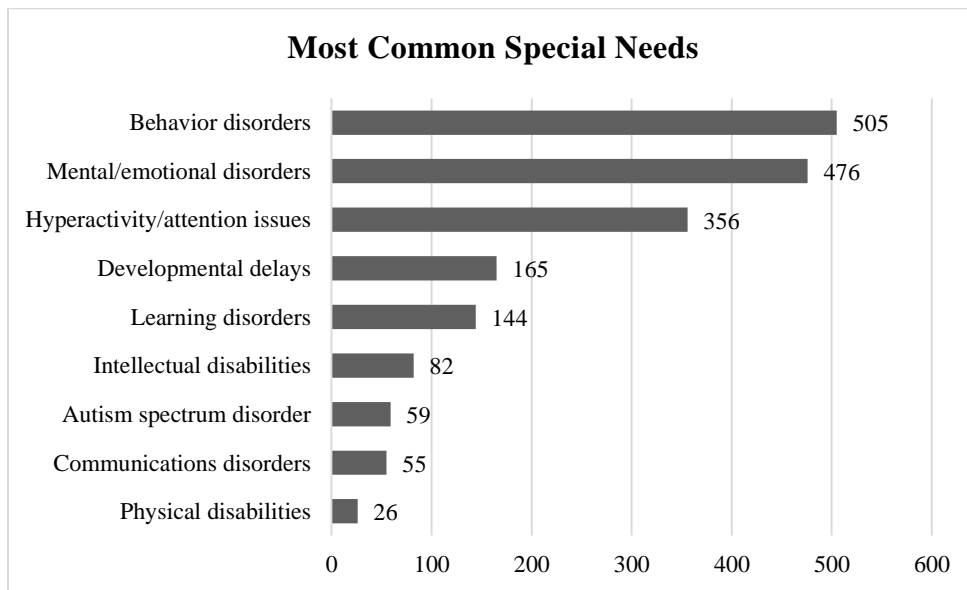


*the remainder of counties had 5 or less respondents

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

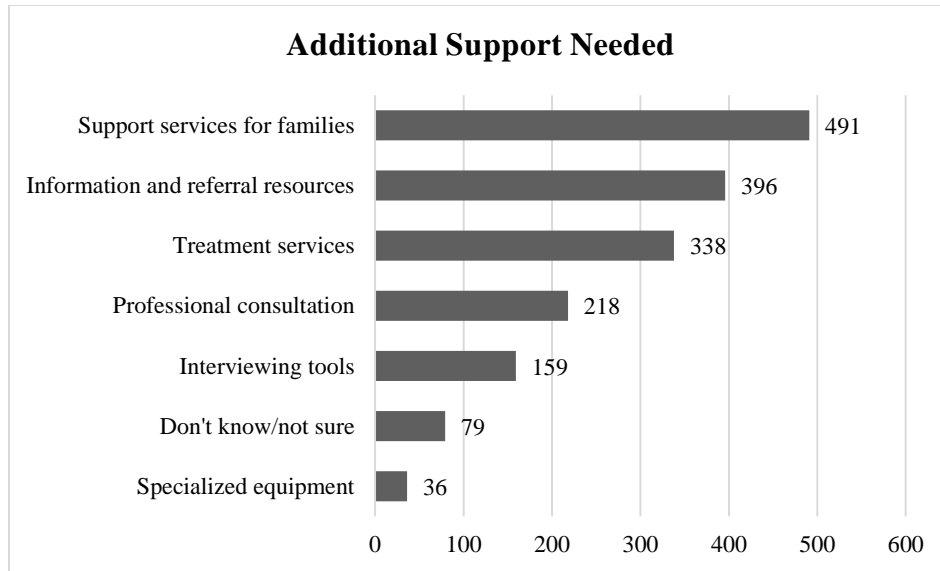
a. What are the three most common special needs that you encounter when working with abused or neglected children?

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%

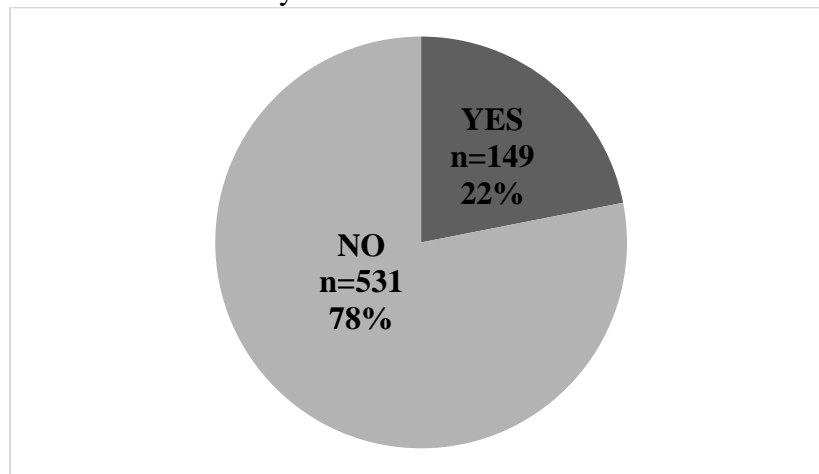


b. What additional supports would you need to work more effectively with children with special needs? (check all that apply) (Answered: 674, skipped: 13)

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?



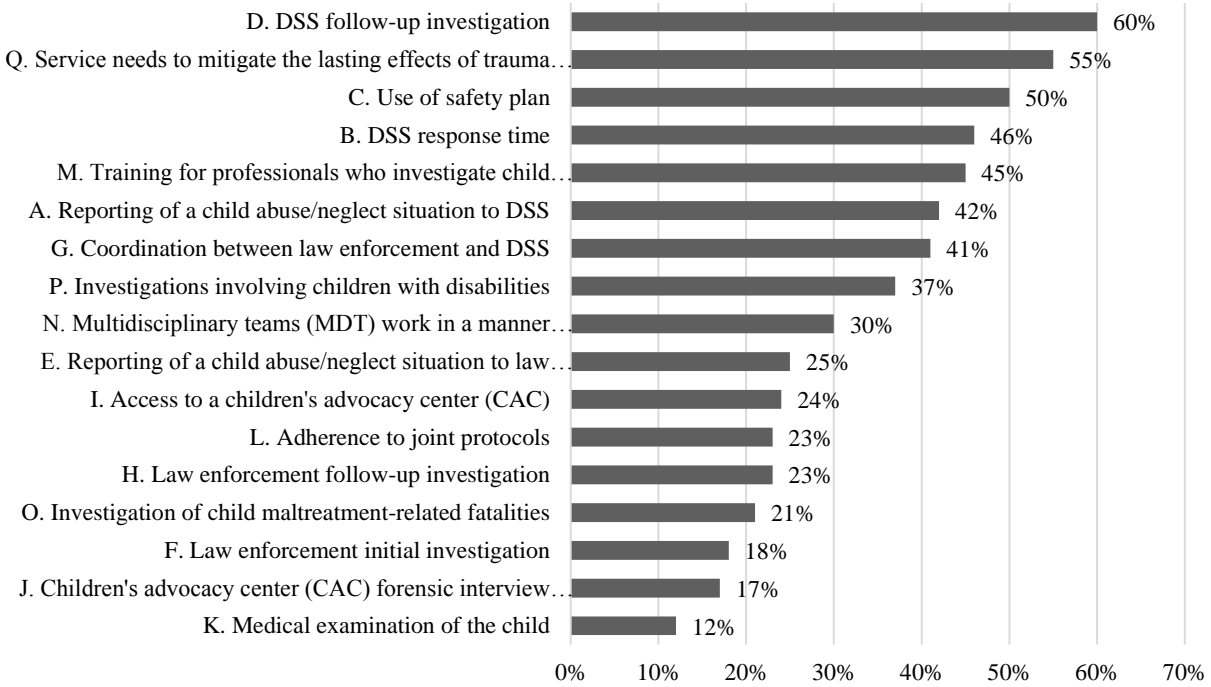
- b. If YES, what systemic problem(s) do you think prohibited protection for the child/children? (110 responses)
- 1) Agency issues (26 responses)
 - 2) Inadequate training and treatment services (23 responses)
 - 3) Faulty monitoring of risk to children and inadequate staff supervision (19 responses)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

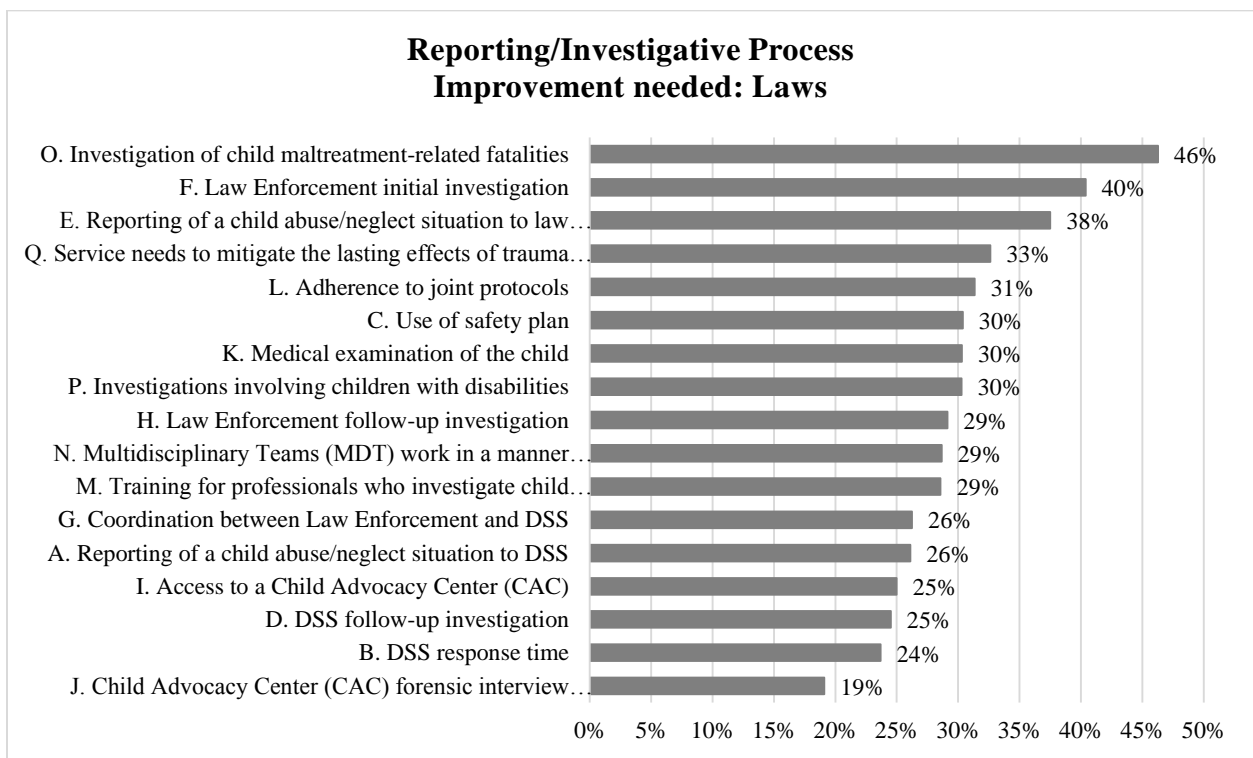
Reporting/Investigative Process Improvement Needed



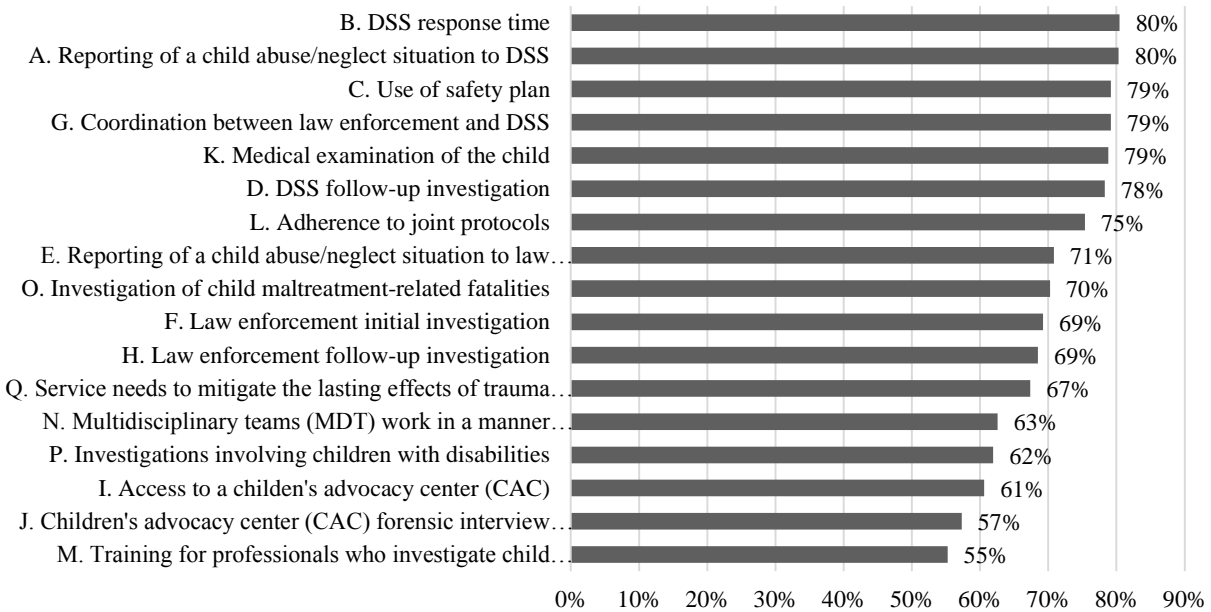
b. For each of the components where you indicated that improvement was needed, please select area(s) of improvement needed. (Answered: 532, skipped: 155)

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

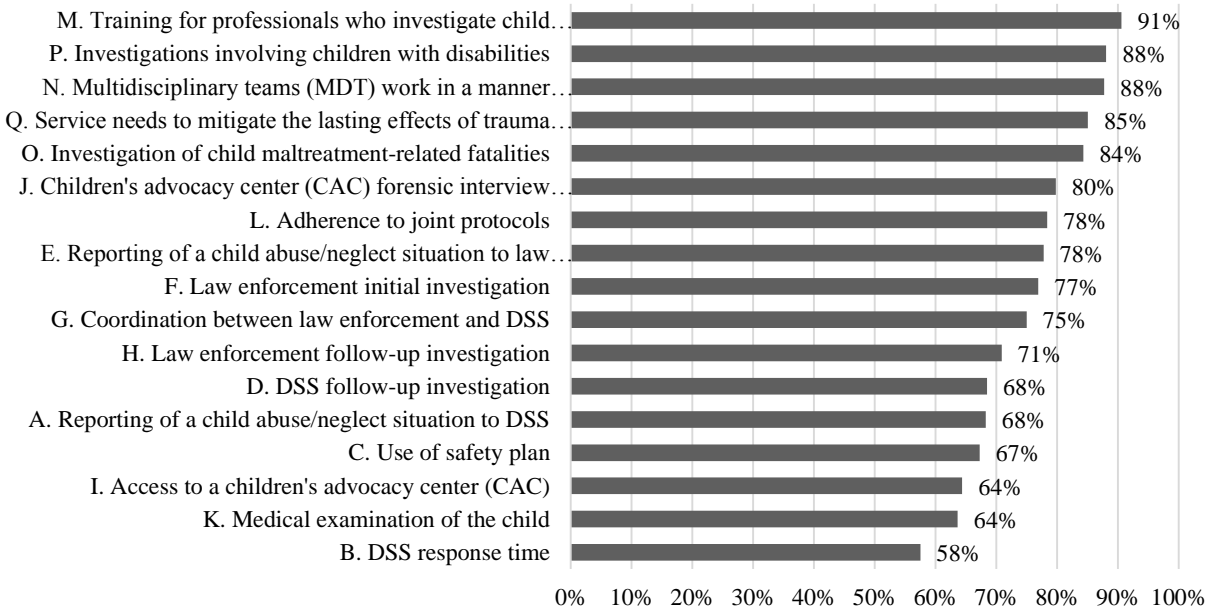
M. Training for professionals who investigate child abuse and neglect	29%	55%	91%	266
N. Multidisciplinary teams (MDT) work in a manner sensitive to all populations, cultures, and race/ethnicities	29%	63%	88%	171
O. Investigation of child maltreatment-related fatalities	46%	70%	84%	121
P. Investigations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



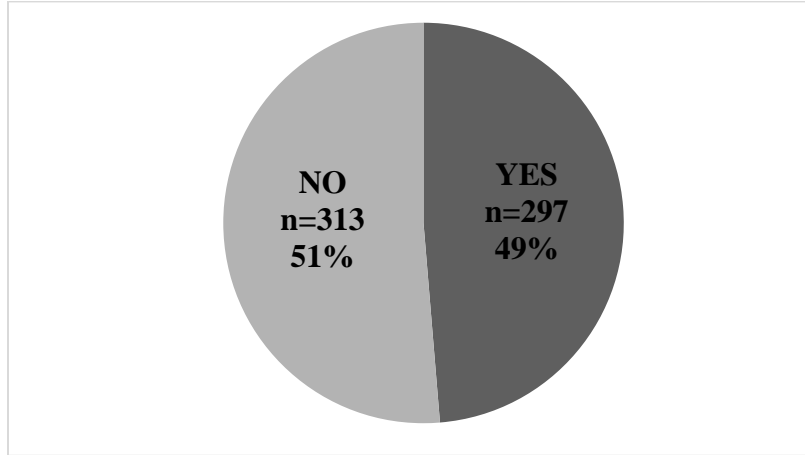
- c. For each of the components of the reporting/investigative process (Family and Criminal) in cases of child abuse and neglect where you indicated that improvement was needed, please explain any specifics that you can:

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

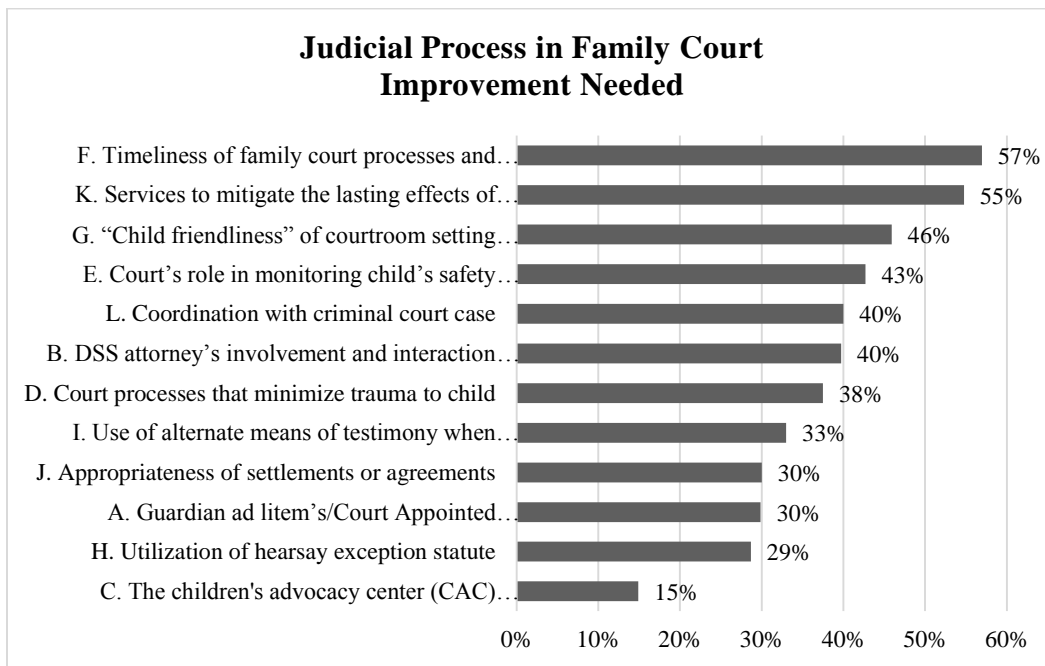
a. Do you have experience with the judicial process in family court in cases of child abuse and neglect? (Answered: 610, skipped: 77)



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

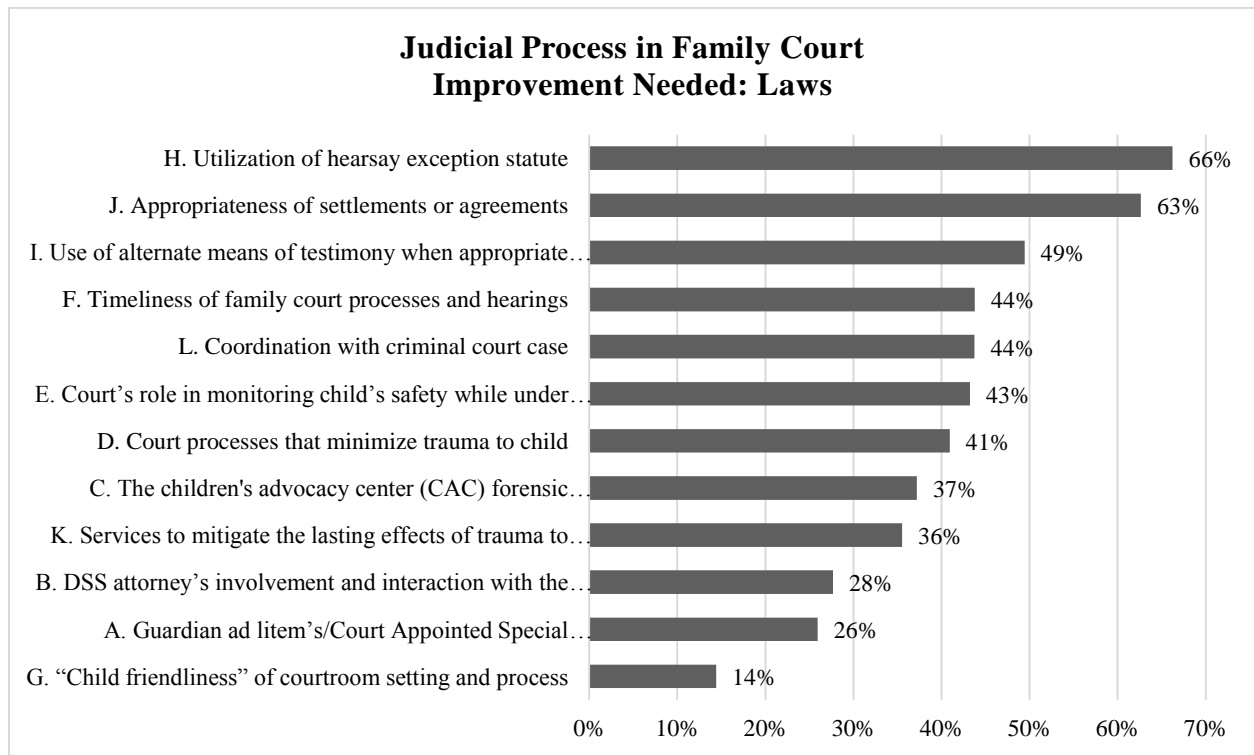
testimony when appropriate (e.g. closed circuit)					
J. Appropriateness of settlements or agreements	30%	44%	6%	20%	293
K. Services to mitigate the lasting effects of trauma to child victims of abuse and neglect are adequately delivered	55%	28%	4%	13%	294
L. Coordination with criminal court case	40%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



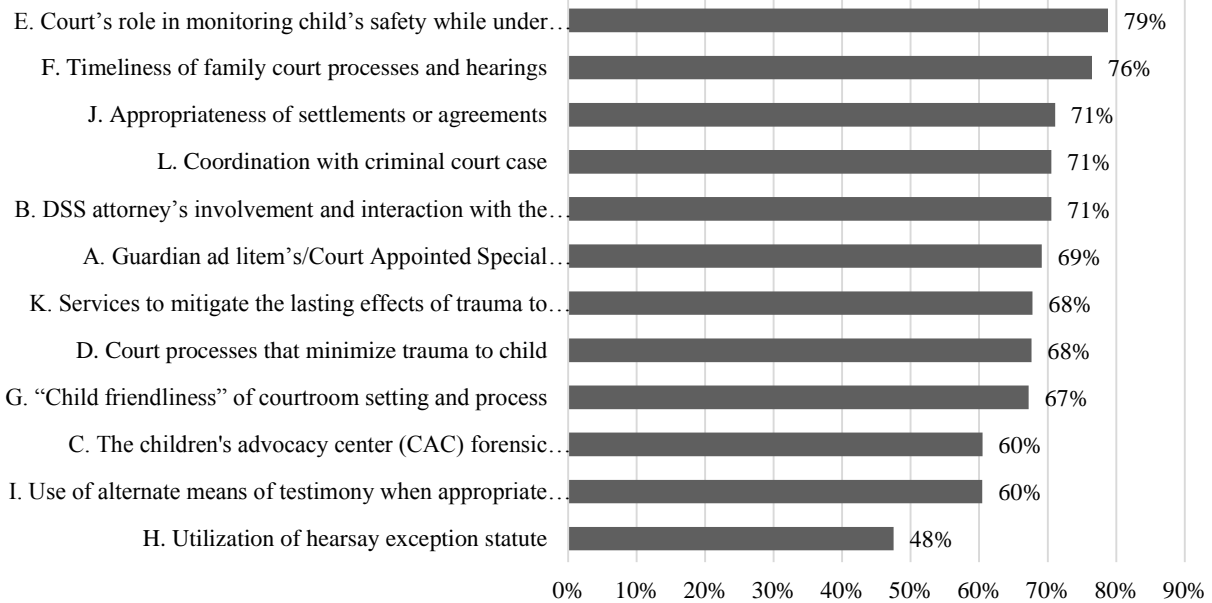
c. For each of the components where you indicated that improvement was needed, please select area(s) of improvement needed. (Answered: 236, skipped: 451)

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

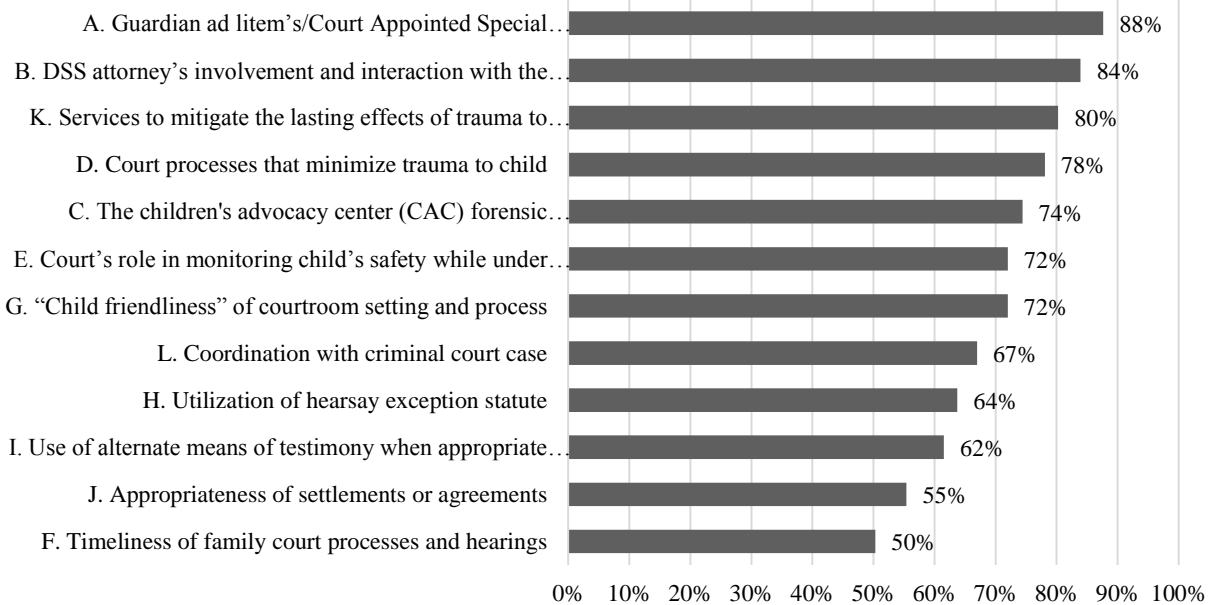
trauma to child				
E. Court's role in monitoring child's safety while under court's jurisdiction	43%	79%	72%	118
F. Timeliness of family court processes and hearings	44%	76%	50%	153
G. "Child friendliness" of courtroom setting and process	14%	67%	72%	125
H. Utilization of hearsay exception statute	66%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



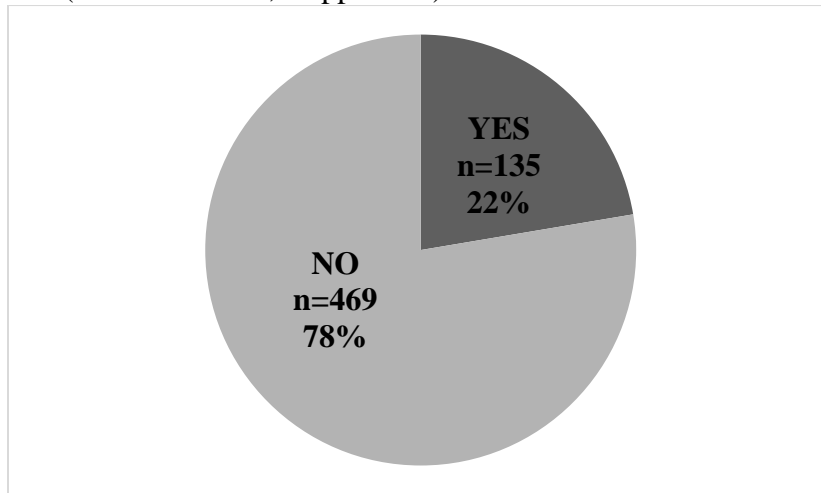
- d. For each of the components of the judicial process in family court in cases of child abuse and neglect where you indicated that improvement was needed, please explain any specifics that you can:

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

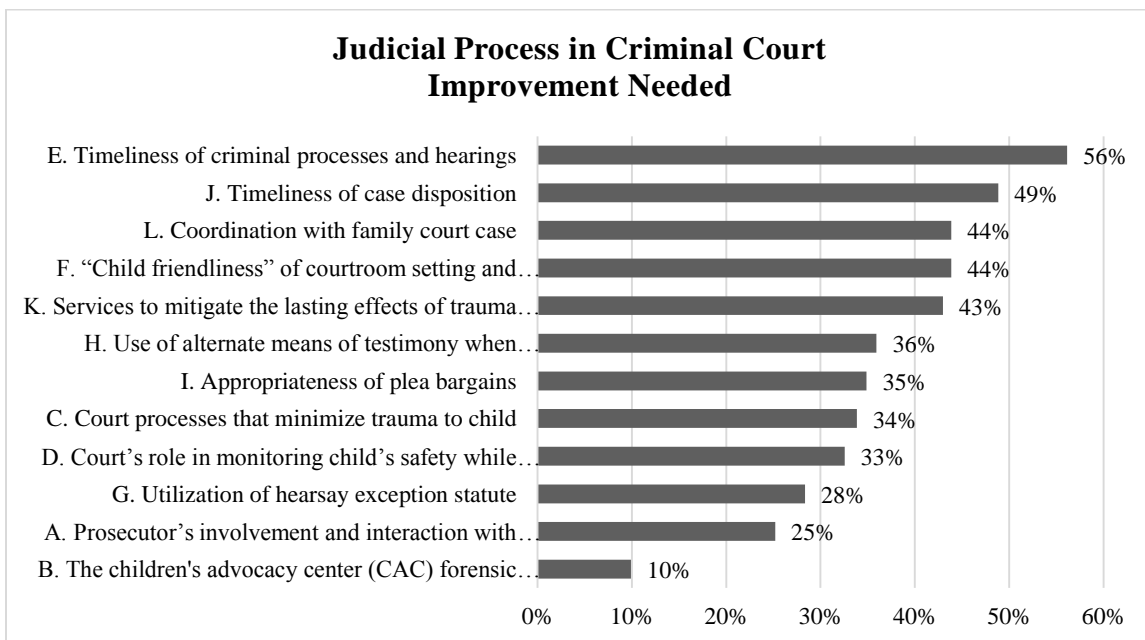
a. Do you have experience with the judicial process in criminal court in cases of child abuse and neglect? (Answered: 604, skipped: 83)



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

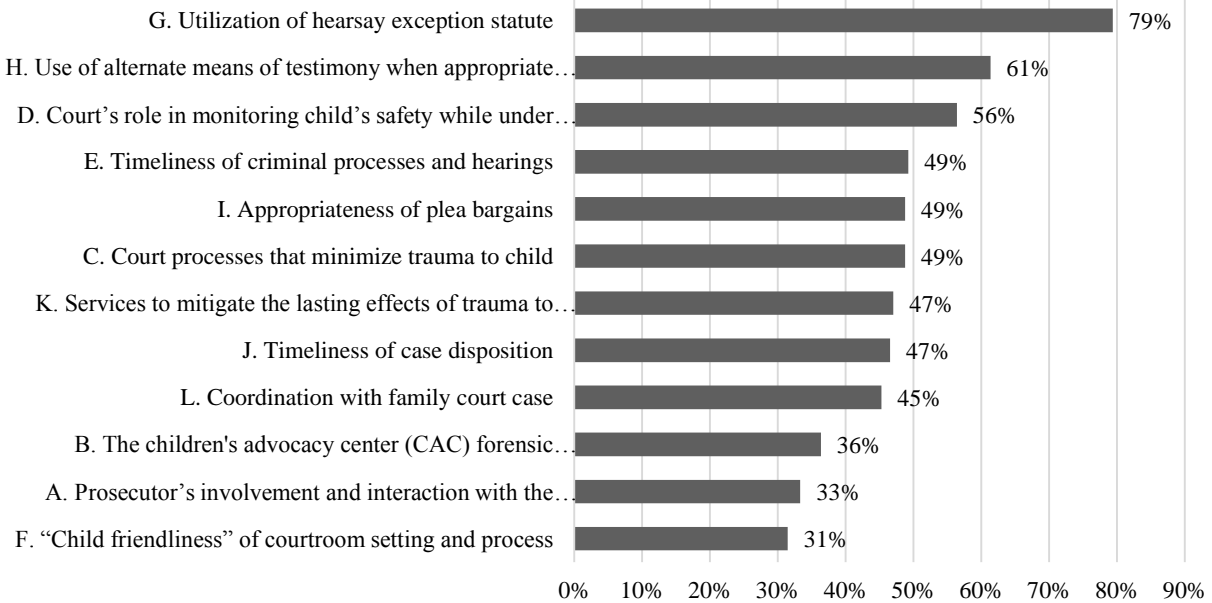
jurisdiction					
E. Timeliness of criminal processes and hearings	56%	35%	5%	4%	130
F. “Child friendliness” of courtroom setting and process	44%	45%	5%	7%	130
G. Utilization of hearsay exception statute	28%	39%	9%	24%	127
H. Use of alternate means of testimony when appropriate (e.g., closed circuit)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



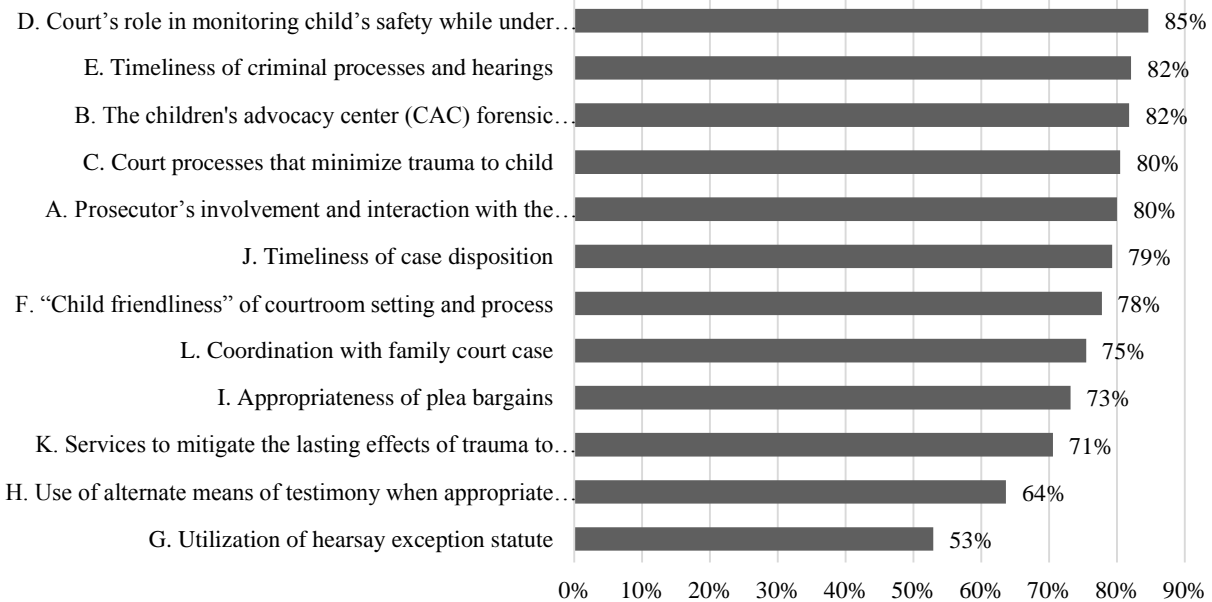
c. For each of the components where you indicated that improvement was needed, please select area(s) of improvement needed. (Answered: 88, skipped: 599)

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

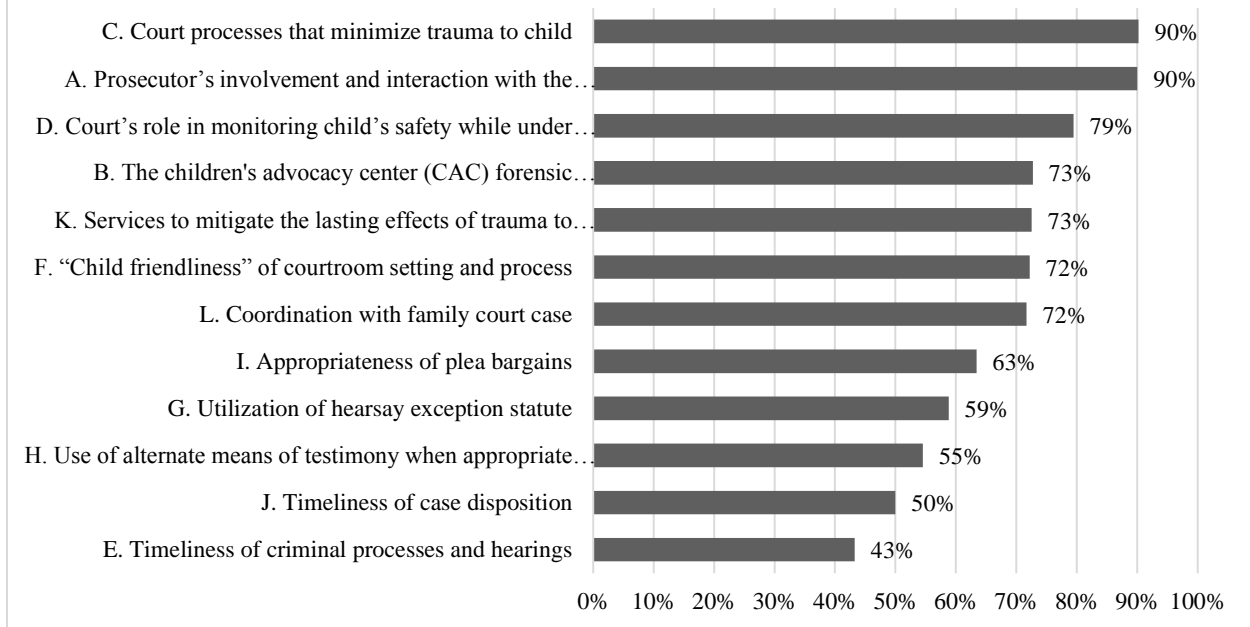
Judicial Process in Criminal Court Improvement Needed: Laws



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)