

Subjects of Child Protective Investigations: Survey Results and Case Characteristics

December 1998

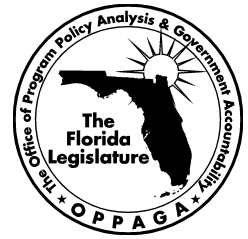


The Florida Legislature

OFFICE OF PROGRAM POLICY ANALYSIS AND GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

John W. Turcotte, Director

December 1998



The President of the Senate,
the Speaker of the House of Representatives,
and the Joint Legislative Auditing Committee

I have directed that a review be made of the effect of child protective investigations on families. This report provides supplemental analyses about survey results and child abuse/neglect case characteristics and is a follow-up to our initial report, *Review of the Effect of Child Protective Investigations*, Report No. 97-69, published in April 1998. The results of this review are presented to you in this report. This review was conducted by Sabrina Hartley and Mary Stutzman.

We wish to express our appreciation to the staff of the Department of Children and Families for their cooperation and assistance in completing this review.

Sincerely,

John W. Turcotte
Director

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Executive Summary

Subjects of Child Protective Investigations: Survey Results and Case Characteristics

OPPAGA conducted a survey of 203 individuals investigated by the Department of Children and Families for allegations of child abuse/neglect and analyzed 600 randomly selected closed child protective investigation cases to respond to legislative questions about the effects of child protective investigations on families. Responses to specific questions about the effects of child protective investigations on parental authority and children's behavior were presented in OPPAGA's *Review of the Effect of Child Protective Investigations on Families*, Report No. 97-69, April 1998. This report presents additional case information, an explanation of methodology and instrument development, and expanded survey responses.

Overall findings indicate that child protective investigations generally do not have a negative effect on families. Respondents were consistent in their opinions about the investigation and related issues. Those that viewed the experience negatively were likely to characterize related questions negatively. Likewise, those reporting a positive experience were generally pleased with specific aspects of the child protective investigation.

Section 1

Introduction

Purpose

This report provides information about families that have been investigated by the Department of Children and Families for child abuse or neglect. The Joint Legislative Auditing Committee directed the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability to survey adult family members investigated for child abuse or neglect to determine whether the child protective investigation affected parent's authority to control and discipline their child or their child's behavior. OPPAGA published initial findings in April 1998.¹ The first report concluded that child protective investigations did not have widespread adverse effects on parental authority or children's behavior. The first report also noted that investigated individuals questioned whether the department focuses on appropriate cases and are dissatisfied with a lack of case closure notification.

Report Contents

To assess the effects of child protective investigations on families, we randomly selected 600 closed investigation cases, gathered data about investigated individuals and alleged victims from these cases, and attempted to interview the individual accused of the abuse or neglect. The sample of 600 was selected from 26,258 cases closed between April 1 and June 30, 1997. We excluded 4,612 cases in which the issue of child abuse or neglect was resolved by a circuit court, not the department alone, or in which families were not involved in the abuse or neglect allegation.

Section 2 Investigation and Case Information

Section 2 provides descriptive data about the child protective Services Investigation process. It includes a description of characteristics of the child protective investigation process: who reported the case, characteristics of the alleged perpetrators, characteristics of the victims, types of

¹ *Review of the Effect of Child Protective Investigations on Families*, Report No. 97-69, April 1998

maltreatments reported, outcome of allegations, provision of services, and length of time to close the case.

Section 3 Survey Results Overview

Section 3 provides an overview of the survey results. The survey results are based on both telephone interviews and mail responses. Of the 600 cases, 345 individuals had either a working phone number or current mailing address. We successfully surveyed 203 (59%) of these 345 reachable individuals.² The majority of completed surveys were done by phone (158), and a smaller number (45) were completed by mail.

Appendix A Survey Methodology and Study Approach

This appendix contains the study approach and survey methodology. The sampling error for this survey is plus or minus 7% for the sample of 203 respondents. This means that 95 times out of 100, the results for any question will fall within plus or minus 7% of what would have been answered if individuals from all of the 26,258 cases closed between April 1 and June 30, 1997, had been interviewed.

Appendix B Survey Instruments

The telephone and mail survey instruments are found in Appendix B.

Appendix C Open-Ended Responses

The telephone survey allowed us to probe and gather information about why respondents answered questions the way that they did. Several mail respondents also submitted unsolicited comments. The results of the open-ended responses are reported in Appendix C.

Appendix D Cross-Tabulations of Survey Responses

Appendix D contains the cross-tabulation of survey questions and case characteristics. This analysis identifies whether specific factors appear to influence the way respondents answered survey questions.

Appendix E Glossary of Terms

Appendix E provides definitions of terms used in this report and policy area.

² Report No. 97-69 reported results of 204 completed surveys. One case was eliminated as a result of incomplete survey data. As such, the results of 203 completed surveys are presented in this report.

Section 2

Investigation and Case Information

The Investigation Process

The purpose of child protective investigations is to ensure the safety and well-being of children (anyone under 18 years of age). Florida law requires any person who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child is abused, abandoned, or neglected to report this knowledge or suspicion to the Florida Abuse Hotline Information System operated by the Department of Children and Families.

The Florida Abuse Hotline Information System operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week and is staffed by trained professionals. Hotline counselors screen incoming calls using criteria developed from both statute and department policy and procedure. Using these criteria, counselors assess whether there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been harmed or is believed to be threatened with harm from a person responsible for their care.

Florida law requires the department to initiate a child protective investigation within 24 hours after receipt of an abuse/neglect report. If it appears that the immediate safety or well-being of the child is endangered, that the family may flee the state, or the facts otherwise warrant, the department starts an investigation immediately, regardless of the time of day or night. Otherwise, reports are forwarded to the appropriate district staff to begin the investigation within 24 hours.

The law requires that a child protection investigation begin within 24 hours of accepting an abuse or neglect report unless the case facts warrant immediate investigation.

For a hotline counselor to accept a report of abuse or neglect there must be a means to locate the child and the child must be found in Florida. Reports alleging abuse or neglect by someone other than the child's caretaker are electronically referred to a local law enforcement agency for criminal investigation.

Upon accepting a report, the hotline counselor documents the allegation narrative (description of alleged maltreatments to the

child) as provided by the reporter. Other key elements of the hotline abuse report include

- the date and time the report was received;
- a list of other persons living in the home;
- a list of victims and children living in the home;
- any prior abuse/neglect reports;
- any current or previous service providers;
- the reporter name and contact information, if given; and
- the report response priority.

Upon starting an investigation, an investigator must see the alleged victim and interview or make a good faith effort to locate the alleged perpetrator. The child must be observed in every reported case of abuse or neglect. The investigator must document the condition, appearance, and development of each child named in the report as well as all other children in the home. The investigator must also interview the parents and adult household members, and inform the alleged perpetrator of the allegations and the department's authority to investigate.

This section reports characteristics of the child protective services process for 600 randomly selected cases. By analyzing information found in the case reports, we were able to describe case reporting, the investigation process, and outcomes. Chart 2-1 diagrams the variables we examined.

Chart 2-1
Characteristics of Child Protective Services' Sample Cases

INVESTIGATION PROCESS			
Case Reported <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Institution/agency ▪ Family ▪ Other 	Alleged Perpetrator <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gender ▪ Relationship to victim ▪ Prior contact with department 	Allegation of Abuse, Neglect, Harm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Per case ▪ Total victims 	Outcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Length of Time ▪ Findings verified <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verified Some Indication No Indication ▪ Findings by maltreatment ▪ Services ▪ Removal from home
	Victim <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Age ▪ Household Composition 		

Case Characteristics

While the law requires any person who knows or suspects a child is being abused, neglected, or abandoned to report this information to the Department of Children and Families, only non-professional reporters, such as family members, neighbors, or members of the public may anonymously report abuse or neglect. Professional reporters, such as medical and mental health workers, teachers, law enforcement officers, and others defined by law are required to provide their name and a means of contact when making an abuse or neglect report. Table 2-1 displays the source of the report for the 600 cases we sampled.

Table 2-1
Reporter of Suspected Child Abuse Cases

Nearly half of the abuse reports were filed by individuals in institutions or agencies. A person in an institutional setting is most likely to make an abuse/neglect report.

Type of Reporter	Count	Percentage of 600 Cases
INSTITUTION/AGENCY	271	45.2%
School	78	13.0%
Social Services Agency	75	12.5%
Law Enforcement/Legal	64	10.7%
Medical	43	7.2%
Other Official	11	1.8%
FAMILY	109	18.1%
ANONYMOUS	78	13.0%
FRIEND/NEIGHBOR	70	11.7%
OTHER	72	12.0%
TOTAL	600	100.0%

Characteristics of Alleged Perpetrators

The random sample of 600 cases provides insight into the Child Protective Services process. This section describes the characteristics of individuals accused of abuse, neglect, or harm. For the 600 cases examined, there were 711 alleged perpetrators. As depicted in the following tables, these individuals were predominantly female and parents of victims. Most investigated families did not have any previous contact with the department. Prior contacts with the department are not necessarily reports of abuse or neglect. Previous department contacts could be abuse/neglect reports or referral or recipient of services.

The majority of alleged perpetrators were female. More than half of the alleged perpetrators in the 600 cases were female.

Table 2-2
Gender of Alleged Perpetrator

Gender of Alleged Perpetrator	Percentage of Individuals	Number of Individuals
Female	62%	439
Male	38%	267
Total	100%	706

Parents are alleged perpetrators of abuse or neglect. Over 80% of the alleged perpetrators were parents. A majority of the alleged perpetrators were mothers. Relatives or other individuals accounted for only a small proportion of individuals accused as alleged perpetrators.

Table 2-3
Relationship of Alleged Perpetrator to Victim

Relationship of Alleged Perpetrator	Percentage of Individuals	Number of Cases
Parents	84%	596
Mother	54%	384
Father	23%	163
Stepfather	6%	40
Stepmother	1%	9
Other Relatives	8%	57
Grandmother	4%	29
Grandfather	1%	8
Uncle	1%	8
Aunt	1%	6
Other Relative	1%	4
Sibling	0%	2
Other	8%	58
Paramour	5%	35
Other	2%	14
Significant Other	1%	4
Guardian	0%	2
Sitter	0%	2
Unknown	0%	1
Total	100%	711

Investigated families are not likely to have had previous department contact.

Only 30% of the families had previous contact with the department. These contacts may not have been previous reports of abuse or neglect. Contacts with the department include referrals or receipt of services as well as prior abuse/neglect reports.

Table 2-4
Prior Contacts with Department

Previous Number of Department Contacts	Number of Cases	Percentage of Cases
No Prior Contact	421	70%
1	77	13%
2	37	6%
3	21	4%
4	14	2%
5	11	2%
6	6	1%
7	3	1%
8	1	0%
10	2	0%
11	1	0%
Missing	6	1%
Total	600	100%

Previous contact could refer to previous abuse/neglect reports or just referrals and/or services.

Characteristics of Victims

When an investigator goes to a household to investigate a case, he interviews all of the children and alleged victims. One abuse report is filed which contains the age of the victim, the number of other children in the household not alleged to be victims. The following tables present information about the number of victims per report, other children in the household, and the age of victims.

Table 2-5
Alleged Victims Per Case

Nearly 60% of the cases list only one alleged victim in the investigation. Two alleged victims were investigated in 23% of the cases. The average number of alleged victims per case was 1.7.

Number of Alleged Victims	Number of Cases	Percentage of Cases
1	351	59%
2	136	23%
3	56	9%
4	33	5%
5	11	2%
6	3	1%
7	2	0%
8	1	0%
Missing	7	1%
Total	600	100%

Average = 1.7 victims per case

The majority of cases involved one child. Most cases (66%) had only one alleged victim in the investigation and 20% of the cases had one other alleged victim .

Table 2-6
Number of Children in Household

Number of Other Children in Household	Number of Cases	Percentage of Cases
No Other Children	395	66%
1	114	19%
2	59	10%
3	17	3%
4	4	1%
5	3	1%
6	2	0%
Missing	6	1%
Total	600	100%

There is a range of ages with no clear majority of infants or teens. The average age of the alleged victims in the sample cases was 8.3 years old.

Table 2-7
Age of Alleged Victims

Age of Alleged Victim	Number of Cases	Percentage of Cases
1 year and below	73	7%
2 years	46	5%
3 years	66	7%
4 years	65	6%
5 years	73	7%
6 years	81	8%
7 years	75	7%
8 years	63	6%
9 years	72	7%
10 years	63	6%
11 years	58	6%
12 years	54	5%
13 years	46	5%
14 years	46	5%
15 years	45	5%
16 years	35	4%
17 and older	48	5%
Missing	3	1%
Total	1,011	101%

Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.

Allegations of Abuse, Neglect, and Threatened Harm

Case reports contain information about the type of incident for each of the victims in the household. An incident of abuse, neglect or threatened harm is called a "maltreatment." Allegations made are characterized as abuse, neglect or exploitation, or threatened harm. Abuse refers to non-accidental infliction of physical, mental, or sexual injury or the failure to prevent the occurrence of injury to a child. Excessive corporal punishment or sexual abuse are examples of abuse maltreatments. Neglect is the failure to provide the care and services necessary to maintain the physical and mental health of a child. Maltreatments such as inadequate shelter or hazardous health conditions are considered neglect. Threatened harm occurs when acts or omissions of those responsible for a child's welfare have fostered conditions where the child's physical or mental health is placed in jeopardy. Statutory definitions of harm include physical injury; sexual abuse; inadequate supervision, food or medical care; environmental neglect; threatened harm; or mental injury. The glossary in Appendix C contains definitions of terms commonly used in Child Protective Services.

The 600 sample cases provide information about the types and prevalence of different types of allegations made. The 600 cases we reviewed had a total of 1,011 alleged victims. We coded up to nine alleged maltreatments for each victim listed in the household. In our sample, there were 1,929 allegations of maltreatments reported for these 1,011 victims.

Table 2-8
Allegations Made in Cases

Of the 600 cases, no one category of maltreatment accounts for most allegations.

Category of Alleged Maltreatment	Number of Allegations	Percentage of Allegations
Abuse	323	39%
Neglect	282	34%
Threatened Harm	223	27%
Total	828	100%

Nearly three-fourths of the maltreatments reported for the 1,011 alleged victims were charges of neglect.

Table 2-9
Maltreatment Types Across All 1,011 Alleged Victims

Category of Alleged Maltreatment	1,929 Maltreatments Reported	Percentage of 1,011 Alleged Victims
Abuse	668	66%
Neglect	737	73%
Threatened Harm	524	52%
Total	1,929	

Among all allegations made, neglect was the most prevalent.

Table 2-10
Maltreatment Findings for 1,101 Alleged Victims

Category of Alleged Maltreatment	Total Number of Allegations	Percentage of Total Allegations
Neglect	600	39%
Physical	417	27%
Substance Abuse	167	11%
Sexual	158	10%
Family Violence	125	8%
Mental	55	4%
Other	24	2%
Total Allegations	1,546	101%

Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.

The majority of allegations are neglect or physical abuse. Maltreatments such as substance abuse, sexual abuse, family violence, and mental injury are less prevalent.

Table 2-11
Specific Types of Allegations for 1,101 Alleged Victims

1,930 ALLEGATIONS	Count	Percentage of 1,011 Victims
NEGLECT	767	75.9%
Conditions Hazardous to Health	207	20.5%
Inadequate Supervision - Parent Present	172	17.0%
Inadequate Supervision - Parent Not Present	111	11.0%
Inadequate Food	109	10.8%
Medical Neglect	54	5.3%
Inadequate Clothing	43	4.3%
Failure to Protect From Inflicted Injury	37	3.7%
Inadequate Shelter	22	2.2%
Abandonment	6	0.6%
Malnutrition	3	0.3%
Failure to Thrive	3	0.3%

(Table continued on next page)

Table 2-11 (Continued)

1,930 ALLEGATIONS	Count	Percentage of 1,011 Victims
<i>PHYSICAL</i>	611	60.4%
Bruises/Welts	182	18.0%
Other Physical Injury	122	12.1%
Beatings	116	11.5%
Excessive Corporal Punishment	95	9.4%
Cuts/Punctures/Bites	52	5.1%
Deadly Weapon Injury	16	1.6%
Asphyxiation/Suffocation/Drowning	13	1.3%
Burns/Scalds	12	1.2%
Bone Fracture	2	0.2%
Internal Injuries	1	0.1%
<i>SUBSTANCE ABUSE</i>	175	17.3%
Substance Exposed Child	163	16.1%
Substance Misuse	11	1.1%
Physically Drug Dependent Newborn	1	0.1%
<i>SEXUAL</i>	170	16.8%
Sexual Molestation	91	9.0%
Sexual Battery - Not Incest	29	2.9%
Sexual Abuse Other Child	20	2.0%
Sexual Battery - Incest	18	1.8%
Sexual Exploitation	12	1.2%
<i>FAMILY VIOLENCE</i>	125	12.4%
Family Violence Threatens Child	125	12.4%
<i>MENTAL</i>	57	5.6%
Other Mental Injury	57	5.6%
<i>OTHER</i>	24	2.4%
Confinement/Bizarre Punishment	23	2.3%
Poisoning	1	0.1%

Outcomes

Upon conclusion of the investigation, the investigator assigns one of three findings to each alleged maltreatment.

- **Verified** -- There is a preponderance of credible evidence that the specific injury, harm, or threatened harm was the result of abuse or neglect.
- **Some Indication** -- There is credible evidence that provides some indication that the specific injury, harm, or threatened harm was the result of abuse or neglect.
- **No Indication** -- There is no indication of abuse or neglect (i.e., when evidence is insufficient to yield a finding of some indication or verified).

After assigning a finding to each allegation an assessment regarding the need for further services is also made. If the child protective investigator determines that a child requires immediate or long-term protection through department services or other provider, such services are first offered on a voluntary basis to the child's parents or person responsible for the child's welfare. If there is reasonable doubt that the parents, guardian, or custodian will cooperate fully with the department in providing needed services, the investigator must file a petition with the circuit court pursuant to law. According to the department, most children identified as abused or neglected remain with their immediate or extended families where services are provided to help keep the family intact while protecting the child.

If the investigator determines that the child's care or safety cannot be assured, the department may consider removing the child from the home. Before removing a child, the department must ensure that there is probable cause to suspect that abuse or neglect has occurred and that, without removal, abuse or neglect will recur. Prior to removing a child from the home, the investigator must consider offering other interventions such as protective services supervision, intensive crisis counseling, or removal of the alleged perpetrator.

The outcomes found in the 600 cases examined are reported below.

Cases generally lasted longer than 30 days.

Table 2-12
Length of Investigation

Case Length	Number of Cases	Percentage of Cases
30 days or less	138	23%
30 or more days	462	77%
Total	600	100%

The overall case outcome was no indication of abuse or neglect.

Table 2-13
Final Outcome of Allegation

Overall Finding	Number of Cases	Percentage of Cases
No indication of abuse/neglect	346	58%
Some indication of abuse/neglect	206	34%
Verified abuse/neglect	41	7%
Missing	7	1%
Total	600	100%

No one type of maltreatment was more likely to be verified. For example, the proportion of verified allegations of neglect (40%) is about the same as the proportion of neglect cases that had some indication (38%) or no indication (39%). The other maltreatment categories follow this pattern of similarity between the proportion of verified, some indication and no indication.

Table 2-14
Final Allegation Outcome by Maltreatment

Type of Maltreatment	Verified	Percentage of Verified	Some Indication	Percentage of Some Indication	No Indication	Percentage of No Indication
Neglect	34	40%	160	38%	406	39%
Physical	23	27%	109	26%	285	28%
Substance abuse	8	10%	45	11%	114	11%
Sexual	13	15%	35	8%	110	11%
Family violence	4	5%	55	13%	66	6%
Mental	0	0%	16	4%	39	4%
Other	2	2%	6	1%	16	2%
Total	84	99%	426	101%	1,036	101%

Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.

One-half of the cases were investigated and closed after assessment with no services needed.

**Table 2-15
Need for Services**

Case Disposition	Number of Cases	Percentage of Cases
Assessed and Closed /No Services Needed	302	50%
Received Services	36	6%
Referred	179	30%
Voluntary/Continued Services	31	5%
Services Offered But Rejected	37	6%
Missing	15	3%
Total	600	100%

Few children were actually removed from the home.

**Table 2-16
Placement of 1,011 Alleged Victims After Investigation**

Child Placement	Number of Cases	Percentage of Cases
Detained with Relative	1	0%
Released to Relative	8	1%
Emergency Shelter	3	0%
Not Placed	999	99%
Missing	6	1%
Total	1,011	101%

Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.

Section 3

Survey Results Overview

The telephone and mail surveys were designed to gather information about investigated individuals' perceptions of their overall experience, their thoughts on the investigation process, and their general views about child protection and the Department of Children and Families. Included in the surveys were specific questions posed by the Joint Legislative Auditing Committee: whether the child protective investigation effected parental authority to discipline and control and whether the investigation affected children's behavior.

We asked telephone respondents follow-up questions about many of their answers. Although this follow-up was not feasible on mail surveys, several mail respondents submitted unsolicited comments about a variety of investigation issues. These comments were combined with the telephone respondent comments. As such, all comments, whether made by a telephone or mail respondent, are presented in this report.

This section provides an overview of the survey results. The survey instruments can be found in Appendix B and the open-ended responses can be found in Appendix C. Appendix D contains cross-tabulations of the survey questions.

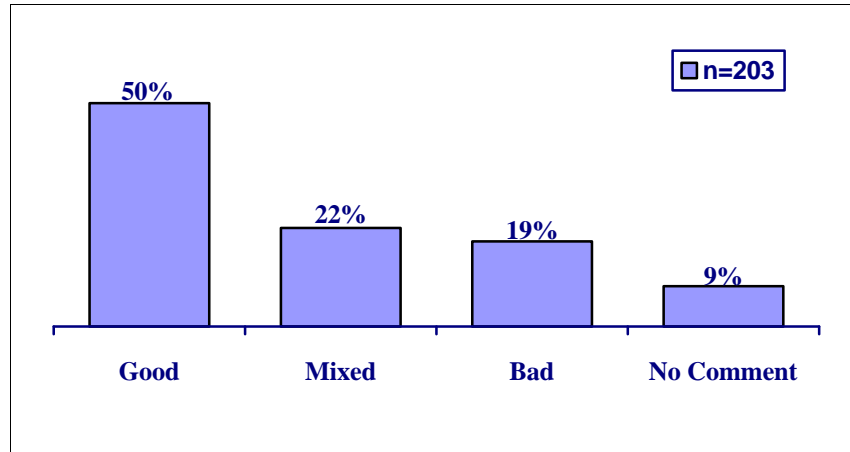
Respondents Characterize the Investigation Experience

We asked respondents to characterize their experience with the child protective services. For phone respondents, the question was asked in an open-ended manner first; then more specific questions were asked about whether the experience was good or bad. For mail respondents, the question was asked in a closed-ended format. As Figure 3-1 illustrates, about half of the respondents (50%) reported that the child protection investigation was a 'good' experience. This positive characterization was attributed to the investigator's conduct. Almost equal numbers of respondents characterized the experience as 'bad' (19%) or 'mixed' (22%). Respondents who reported a negative experience primarily cited reasons related to the investigation's adverse effect(s) on the family. Of

the remaining responses, 4% had no comment and 4% represent case error. (See page 42 for detailed responses.)

Figure 3-1
Most Respondents Characterized Their Experience with the Child Protection Investigation as "Good"

Looking back at the child protection investigation, would you say that your family's experience was generally GOOD or BAD?



Respondents Report Their Perceptions of the Investigation Process

Respondents were generally pleased with child protective investigators and report that investigators were courteous, fair and objective, listened, and explained the investigation process. However, respondents were not satisfied with the lack of formal case closure notification.

As illustrated in Figure 3-2, most respondents (87%) perceived both the investigator and the investigation process favorably. Although respondents reported that the investigator was courteous, their comments reflect both positive and negative opinions of investigators. Some respondents recalled the investigator being nice, helpful, and professional, but others reported that the investigator was rude, cold, and nasty. (See page 42 for detailed comments.)

Figure 3-2
The Investigation Process

Respondent's Perception of Investigators and the Investigation Process	Yes	No	Don't Know	Responses
Did the investigator listen to you?	87%	11%	2%	194
Did the investigator treat you and your family with courtesy?	87%	12%	1%	192
Was the investigator fair and objective?	85%	11%	4%	189
Did the investigator explain the investigation process so you knew what to expect?	76%	21%	3%	192
Do you know if your case was closed?	48%	48%	4%	203

The majority of respondents reported that the investigator explained the investigation process, listened, and conducted the investigation fair and objectively. Respondents who reported that the investigator was not fair and objective were asked to provide examples of what the investigator should have done differently. Several respondents stated that the investigator should have been more fair and objective and did not provide details or examples of what should have been done differently. Other respondents cited investigation techniques such as follow-up visits and methods used to interview children and neighbors as areas to improve investigator's fairness and objectivity. Those who reported that the investigator was fair and objective were not asked for additional comments. (See page 44 for detailed comments.)

Respondents were generally pleased with the conduct of the child protective investigator, but they were not satisfied with the lack of case closure notification. As shown in Figure 3-2, almost half did not know if and when their case had been closed. Respondent's comments indicate that those who knew their case had been closed were most often verbally notified. Although some respondents reported receiving written notification of case closure, the department does not have a standard notification policy. The department, in its response to our first report on child protective investigations, agreed that families should be notified of case outcome and is amending its operating procedures to require notification as well as documentation of the notification in the case file. (See page 46 for detailed comments.)

When the investigation did affect the family, it was likely to be positive. For the most part, child protective investigations had a minimal effect on the families we contacted. We asked respondents whether the investigation affected their parental authority to discipline and control their child and whether the investigation affected their child's behavior. Because we were able to elaborate on the difference between the issues of discipline (authority to impose family rules) and control (the authority to impose a punishment) for telephone respondents, the questions were asked separately. The concepts were combined on the mail survey since this explanation and distinction was not possible.

As Figure 3-3 shows, 59% of respondents reported that the child protective investigation had no effect on their parental authority to discipline and control their child. About one-quarter (22%) of respondents reported a positive effect, while 10% reported that the investigation had a negative effect on parental authority. Parents reporting positive effects cited examples such as an improved family environment and improved child cooperation, while those reporting negative effects cited such things as their child threatening to call the abuse hotline and use the system against them.

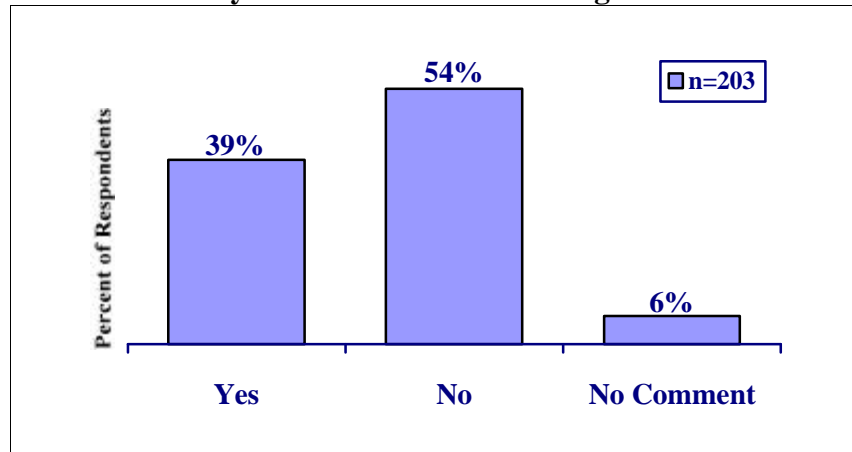
Figure 3-3
Effects of Investigation on Parental Authority

No Effect	59%
Authority to discipline and control remained the same	
No effect on either discipline or control	
Some Positive Effect	22%
Authority to discipline and control got better	
Either discipline or control got better	
Some Negative Effect	10%
Authority to discipline and control got worse	
Either discipline or control got worse	
Mixed Effect	0%
One (discipline or control) got better, the other got worse	
Don't Know If Investigation Had an Effect	9%
Don't know if authority to discipline or control was affected	
TOTAL	100%

As in the case of parental authority, children's behavior was minimally affected by the child protective investigation and when affected was likely to improve. Figure 3-4 presents the responses of both telephone and mail respondents regarding the investigations effect on their child's behavior. Parents noted positive effects on their children's day-to-day behavior and general attitude. However, respondents who reported a negative effect stated that their child misbehaved at school and home, and was generally disrespectful. (See page 51 or detailed responses and comments.)

Figure 3-4

**(Q9) Since the investigation, has
your child's behavior changed?**



Respondents Report Their Perceptions of Investigation Effect(s)

In addition to asking respondents specifically about parental authority to discipline and control and their child's behavior, we asked telephone respondents if the investigation affected their family in any other way. This open-ended question was not asked of mail respondents because we could not follow-up on answers to ensure that we understood the comment(s). Over half of the telephone respondents reported that the investigation had no additional effect(s) on their family (57%). In those cases where the investigation did affect the family, comments most often referred to disruption and fear associated with the child protective investigation. Interestingly, the second largest number of responses (13) concerning investigation effects on the family referred to positive family impacts such as bringing the family closer together and improving family communication. (See page 54 for detailed comments.)

Respondents Report Their Views on Child Protection and the Department of Children and Families

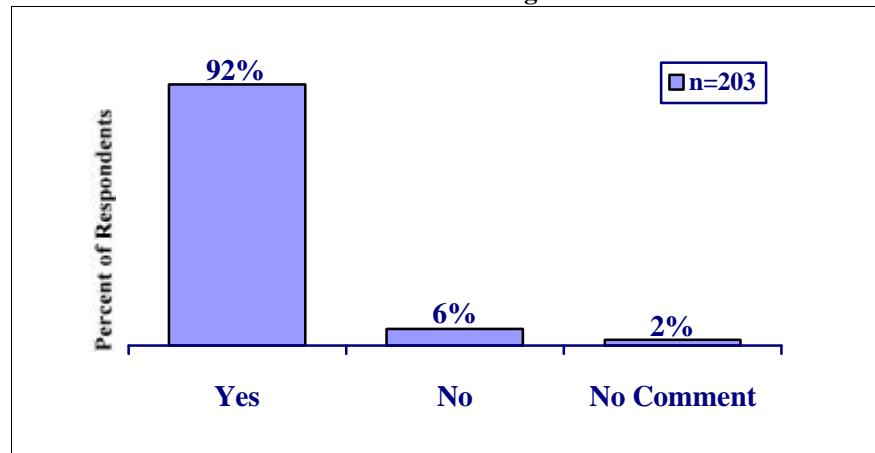
Almost all respondents (92%) believed the state has a responsibility to protect children. Respondents' generally asserted that the Department of Children and Families should be the agency charged with fulfilling this responsibility. However, respondents questioned whether the department focuses on appropriate cases and made suggestions for improving the investigation process and investigator actions and behavior.

We asked both telephone and mail respondents about their perception of the state's role in protecting children, their perception of whether the department focuses on appropriate cases, and whether they had suggestions to improve the investigation system. Additionally, we asked telephone respondents for suggestions to reduce family disruption during the course of a child protective investigation. We did not ask mail respondents for suggestions to reduce family disruption due to the inability to follow-up on answers.

We asked respondents whether the state has a role in protecting children to determine whether negative survey responses reflect an experience with the Department of Children and Families or a general negative view of government social programs. As Figure 3-5 shows, almost all respondents (92%) believed that the state has a responsibility to protect children from abuse and neglect. Respondents generally asserted that this responsibility should rest with the Department of Children and Families. Most comments expressed a preference for the Department of Children and Families to work in conjunction with other social service agencies including the courts and local law enforcement to fulfill this responsibility. (See page 47 for detailed comments.) Based on the high number of respondents who believe the state has a responsibility to protect children, negative survey answers may reflect the investigation experience rather than a general negative view of government services.

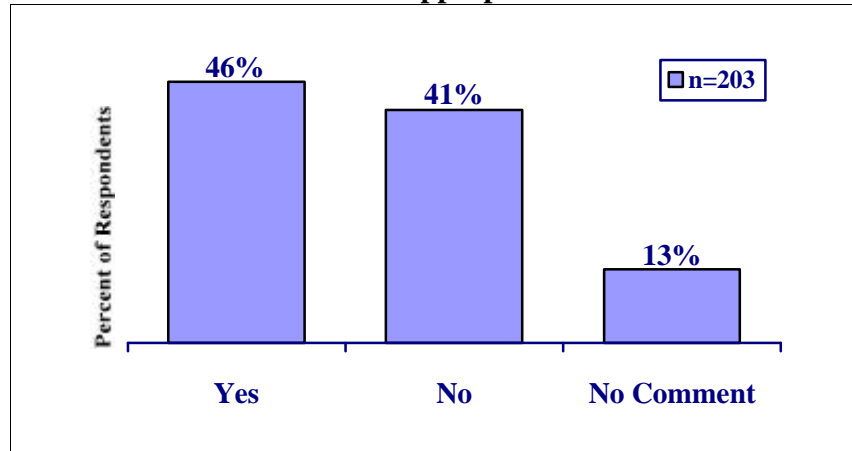
Figure 3-5

(Q6) In general, do you think that state government should be responsible for protecting children from abuse and neglect?



Respondents were almost evenly divided about whether the Department focuses on appropriate cases. (See Figure 3-6.) We purposefully did not define what constitutes an ‘appropriate’ case to obtain the respondent’s perception of what the department should be addressing or what they believe the department is erroneously addressing. Respondents believed that the department devotes too much attention to cases that are false, not severe, or inappropriate. The department asserts that until an investigation is completed, the amount of evidence or lack thereof is unknown and each case must be investigated to determine the degree of evidence and seriousness. It should be noted that we did not ask respondents, nor did they provide comments, about what constitutes a ‘serious’ report and how to distinguish these from ‘non-serious’ reports. (See page 48 for detailed comments.)

Figure 3-6
(Q7) Do you think child protection investigations
focus on appropriate cases?



At the close of each survey, we asked respondents for suggestions to improve the child protective investigation program. The area most cited for improvement was the investigation process (n=20), closely followed by investigator actions and behavior (n=19). (See page 55 for detailed comments.) While most respondents had no improvement suggestions, this may be because they had no time to prepare an answer. Given the opportunity to think longer about the question, more respondents may have given suggestions. If respondents asked for such an opportunity, they were given the toll-free OPPAGA phone number and asked to report any additional thoughts or comments. To date, no additional comments have been received.

Appendix A

Survey Methodology and Study Approach

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The Sample

Because department personnel reported that investigated families are frequently transient, we identified and selected recently closed cases for sampling. We selected cases from the annual quarter, April 1 to June 30, 1997. Of the 26,258 cases closed in this quarter, 4,612 were excluded from the random selection of cases. The following case categories were excluded from the sample:

- judicial dispositions such as foster care placement and termination of parental rights as a result of serious abuse or neglect in which a circuit court was the decision maker (n=2,105) and/or the child was removed from the home. We excluded these cases because respondent's perceptions were more likely to be influenced by court involvement than by the child protective investigation experience.

- institutional settings such as day care centers where the alleged perpetrator was not a family member (n=847). The target population was investigated families and institutional settings fall outside this target.
- special condition cases that involved neither abuse nor neglect but parents were involuntarily absent due to death, incarceration, or hospitalization, or when parents voluntarily requested department intervention (n=1,830). These cases were not relevant to families investigated for abuse or neglect.
- cases involving the death of a child (n=34). These cases represent extreme cases of abuse or neglect and are also handled by the courts. It is likely that survey responses from this population would be influenced by this court adjudication and not reflective of the child protective investigation experience.

We selected 600 cases for our sample for two reasons. First, we anticipated that using a sample of 600 would return a reliable response rate. Second, administering 600 surveys represented a manageable workload and financial commitment. We reviewed the sample selection to verify that case selection was random and that the sample was representative of the population from which it was drawn. The department provided a list of the 600 randomly selected cases and their order of selection as well as printed copies of the cases, available for inspection and data collection on the premises. In addition to the hard copy of the report, the department provided the date received, the date closed, and the type of reporter for each case. This information allowed us to calculate the length of time between case initiation and closure, and to analyze case factors by the type of reporter. Only categories of reporters such as anonymous, medical, school personnel, etc., could be provided, as reporter identity is confidential and the department is prohibited from releasing this information.

Data Collection

We designed data collection to avoid knowing the specific allegations of abuse or neglect before interviewing individuals accused of the allegations. This design aimed at reducing surveyor bias and allowed the team to assure respondents of confidentiality by having no foreknowledge of case specifics. We collected data from the sample of 600 closed investigations in two phases.

During the first phase, we collected information on up to three adults involved in the investigation: the alleged perpetrator, a parent in the home, or another adult residing in the home. Each individual listed in the report was interviewed during the course of the investigation. The individual's address and phone number were collected as well as the adult's relationship to the alleged victim(s). For each of the adults we collected the individual's initial role to the victim (e.g., alleged perpetrator, parent in the home), the final role as determined by the investigation (e.g., parent in the home, parent not in the home), and the individual's relationship to the victim (e.g., mother, father, step-parent). Additionally, the district assigned to investigate the case was noted.

During the second phase of data collection, we collected information from the 600 closed child protective investigations about the alleged child victim(s) and other children in the home, including

- number of victims per case;
- the age of the victims;
- number of other children in the home **not** alleged to be victims;
- the age of the youngest child in the home, **not** alleged to be a victim;
- alleged maltreatments (individual accusations of abuse and/or neglect, e.g., burns/scalds, medical neglect, bizarre punishment, etc.);
- the type of maltreatment (abuse, neglect, or threatened harm);
- the finding per maltreatment (verified, some indication, no indication);
- whether there was an interim placement (the child was at least temporarily removed from the home);
- case disposition (whether services were needed, the case was closed after assessment, or referrals made); and
- the number of prior contacts with the department and whether these contacts resulted in verified abuse or neglect.

By collecting information on both the adults and children involved in child protective investigations, we were able to develop a profile of investigated families and analyze whether

particular case factors appear to have affected individual survey responses. This adult and child information also enabled us to compare populations to ensure that the 203 survey respondents were representative of the 600 sample cases and the 600 sample cases were representative of the 21,646 cases from which they were drawn.

The Target Population

To assess the effects of the child protective investigation on the family, we sought to interview the alleged perpetrator or the individual accused of the abuse or neglect. If the alleged perpetrator was unavailable, we sought to interview a parent in the home. If neither the alleged perpetrator nor a parent was available, we attempted to interview an adult involved in the investigation residing in the home. To ensure confidentiality, we used the victim's name and the adult's relationship to the victim to screen the call and ensure that we spoke to the correct adult. For example, if the victim's name was John Smith and the alleged perpetrator was the father, we asked the respondent if he was the father of John Smith. If the individual stated that he was indeed the father of John Smith, we proceeded with the interview. If the individual stated that he was not the father of John Smith, we terminated the call and, not having identified the purpose of the call, confidentiality was maintained.

We made a minimum of five attempts at different times (morning, afternoon, evening, and weekends) to contact the target population. Following the initial round of attempts, we mailed to the district offices a list of those individuals we were unable to contact with a request that staff check the district file and note any differing or more current addresses and/or phone numbers. We used the information from the districts to make a second round of telephone calls to those individuals that we were previously unable to reach.

For those individuals we could not reach by phone, we sent a mail survey. We asked individuals to complete and return the survey in a self-addressed stamped envelope. We used certified mail to ensure confidentiality and that the intended party received the survey.

Survey Instrument Development

The survey instrument was designed to answer the questions posed by the Joint Legislative Auditing Committee about investigation effects on parental authority and children's behavior as well as previously identified department problems and family concerns. These department problems and family concerns were reported by the University of South Florida's Florida Mental Health Institute in its evaluation of the implementation of the Family Services Response System (FSRS). The FSRS is a community response system intended to offer a non-adversarial response to child abuse and neglect. In 1993, the Legislature provided statutory authority to implement FSRS and required the department to report on the program's impact and effectiveness. The department contracted with the Florida Mental Health Institute in 1996 to complete this evaluation.

As part of the evaluation, the Florida Mental Health Institute used focus groups consisting of family subjects and protective investigators to gain insight into the perceptions of FSRS consumers. Through these focus groups, the evaluation identified the following areas of concern:

- child protective investigators;
- service effectiveness;
- disruption of family life;
- communication and follow-up;
- investigation techniques;
- school interviews; and
- overall department perceptions.

Focus groups are not necessarily representative of the population as a whole, but they can identify significant issues and common perceptions. By building on the Florida Mental Health's work, we were able to get a better understanding about the problems perceived by some families. While we did not specifically ask about interviewing children at school, respondents made related comments in response to some survey questions.

We asked telephone respondents a total of 13 questions and mail respondents 9. (See Appendix B for the telephone and mail survey instruments.) The first question we asked on both

surveys was for respondents to characterize their child protective investigation experience as good, bad, or mixed. We asked this introductory question prior to inquiring about specific aspects of the experience to avoid leading or biasing responses. Having no knowledge of the specific survey questions to follow, telephone respondents' answers were not influenced. Also, as an introductory question, requesting the individual to characterize their experience was non-threatening and required minimal explanation. We placed this question with the intent of gathering valid impressions of respondents' investigation experience as well as encouraging the respondent to complete the entire survey.

Though the mail survey instrument was patterned from the phone instrument, there are differences between the two. The primary difference was that we were able to expand upon phone respondent answers with follow-up and probe questions. This ability to follow-up on questions was not an option with the mailed survey instrument. While the mail survey instrument asked an open-ended question for suggestions to improve the program, there were two open-ended questions asked of phone respondents that were not asked of mail respondents. Specifically, phone respondents were asked for suggestions to prevent child protective investigations from disrupting families and whether the investigation effected the family outside of parental control and children's behavior. Though most comments were provided by telephone respondents, some mail respondents wrote comments to close-ended questions. These comments were combined with like phone respondent comments where appropriate. Therefore, all respondent comments are presented in this report.

Another difference between the two survey instruments is the format used to ask respondents whether their ability to control and discipline their child was effected by the child protective investigation. We asked phone respondents about the two issues separately, while the concepts were combined on the mail survey instrument. The advantage of being able to explain the distinction between control (the authority to make the child follow family rules), and discipline (the authority to impose a penalty for not obeying the family rules) to phone respondents allowed the questions to be asked separately. This distinction and explanation was not an option on the mail instrument and the issues of control and discipline were combined into one question. As such, the results of these questions are presented separately.

Surveying the Target Population

We were generally successful in our aim to interview alleged perpetrators. Of the 203 individuals surveyed, 160 (79%) were initially identified in the investigation report as the alleged perpetrator or the individual responsible for the abuse or neglect allegations. However, only 12 (6%) of these individuals were actually found to be the caretaker responsible for the abuse or neglect allegations. Following the investigation of the allegations, most individuals were identified by the department as a parent in the home and not a caretaker responsible for the allegations. (See Table A-4, page 33.)

Response Rates

We attempted to contact investigated individuals using a combination of telephone and mail surveys from September through December 1997. We first sought to survey the person named in the report as the alleged perpetrator living in the home. If this person was unavailable, we next attempted to interview a parent or other responsible adult residing in the home. For those we could not contact by telephone, we sent certified mail surveys to their last known address. We used certified mail to protect the identity of survey subjects and the confidential nature of their involvement with child protective investigations. We obtained valid phone numbers or a deliverable address for 345 of the 600 subjects, and obtained responses from 203 subjects (an overall reachable response rate of 58%). Table A-1 summarizes our experience with various survey techniques.

Table A-1
Nearly 60% of the Reachable Population Was Surveyed

(n = 600)	Number	Percentage
Total Reachable Population	345	58%
Survey Phone Completions	159	46%
Survey Mail Completions	45	13%
Delivered With No Response	141	41%
Non-Reachable Population	255	43%

Note: Some figures may add to more than 100% due to rounding.

Source: Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability

Sampling Error

The sampling error for this survey is plus or minus 7% for the sample of 203 respondents. This means that 95 times out of 100, the results for any question will fall within plus or minus 7% of what would have been answered if all individuals from the population of cases closed between April 1 and June 30, 1997, had been interviewed. This sampling error is based on a 50/50% split in responses. The sampling error is less when the responses are more homogenous. For example, the sampling error falls to plus or minus 5% when 85% respond similarly to a question.

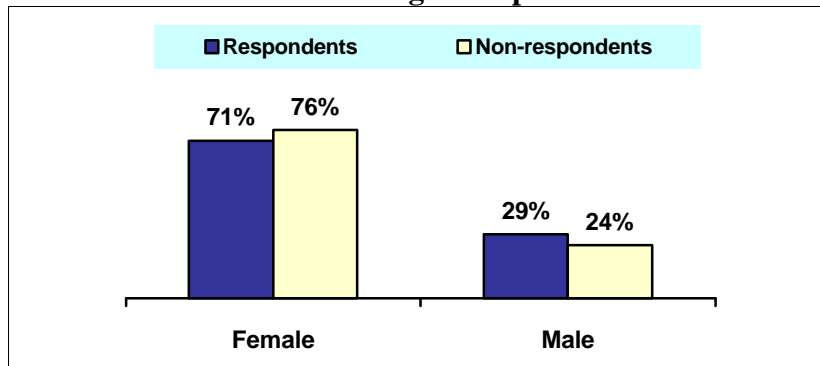
Characteristics of Respondents

Survey respondents reflected non-respondents and were representative of the 600 sample cases. We compared a variety of case factors such as the gender of the targeted respondent, the respondent's initial and final role to the victim, case length, and disposition, to ensure that survey respondents were not different from those we were unable to reach or did not respond to our survey efforts. It appears that our respondents were reflective of a random sample selection and survey results can be generalized to the 600 sample. Tables A-2 through A-9 compare the 203 sample respondents to the 397 non-respondents. As these tables indicate, the respondents are similar to non-respondents with respect to specific case characteristic.

As Tables A-2, A-3, and A-4 show, both respondents and non-respondents are likely to be female, alleged to be the perpetrator of abuse or neglect, and involved in cases lasting more than 30 days. Table A-5 illustrates that the child protective investigator found the majority of all accused individuals to be parents in the home and not guilty of abuse or neglect. Finally, Table A-6 reports that respondents were no more likely to participate in or reject services than were non-respondents.

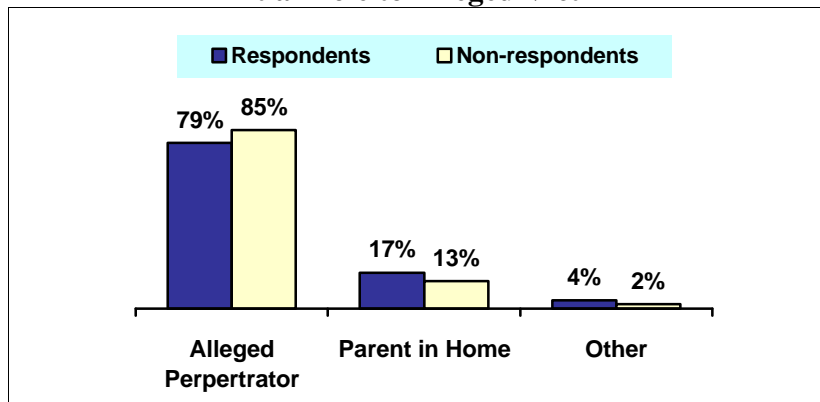
Both respondents and non-respondents tend to be female.

Table A-2
Gender of Alleged Perpetrator



Alleged perpetrators were interviewed in almost equal proportions to those we were unable to reach or interview.

Table A-3
Initial Role to Alleged Victim



Over 85% of the respondents and the non-respondents were determined to be parents in the home upon completion of the case.

Table A-4
Final Role to Alleged Victim

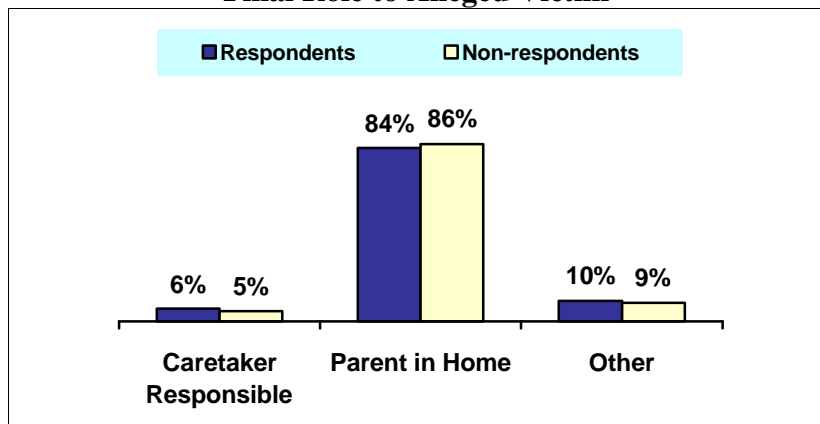
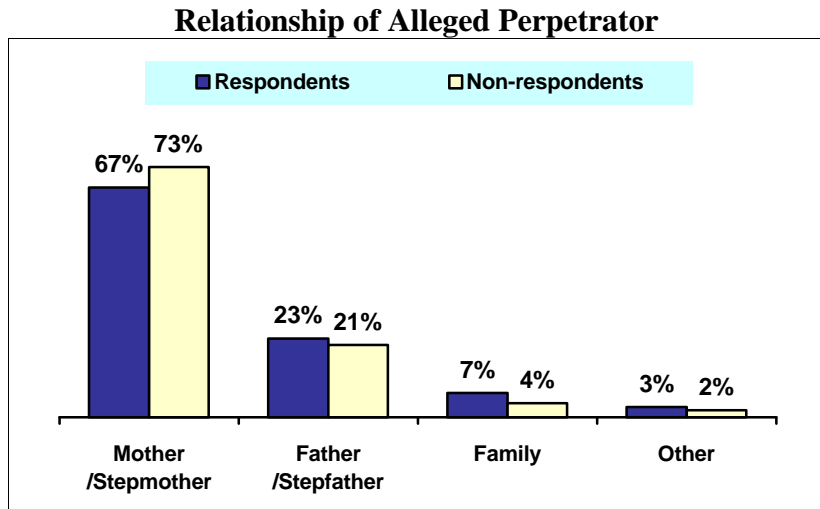
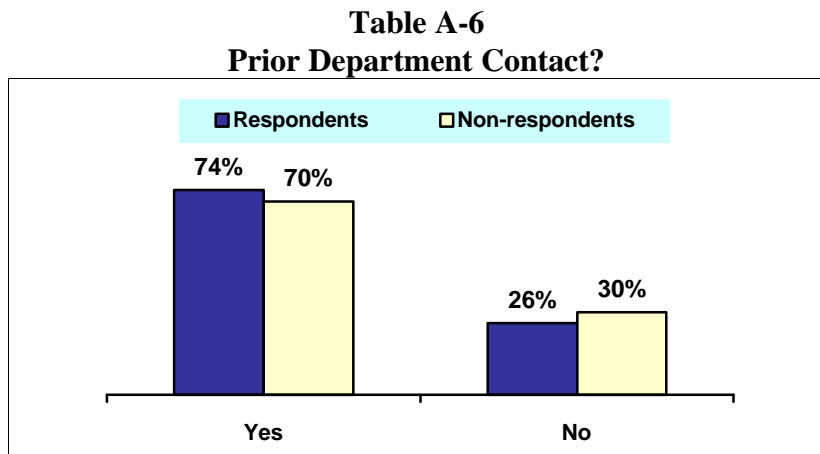


Table A-5

There is no difference between respondents and non-respondents with respect to the relationship of the alleged perpetrator to the alleged victim.



Prior contact with the department does not affect who responded to the survey.



Case length was the same for respondents and non-respondents.

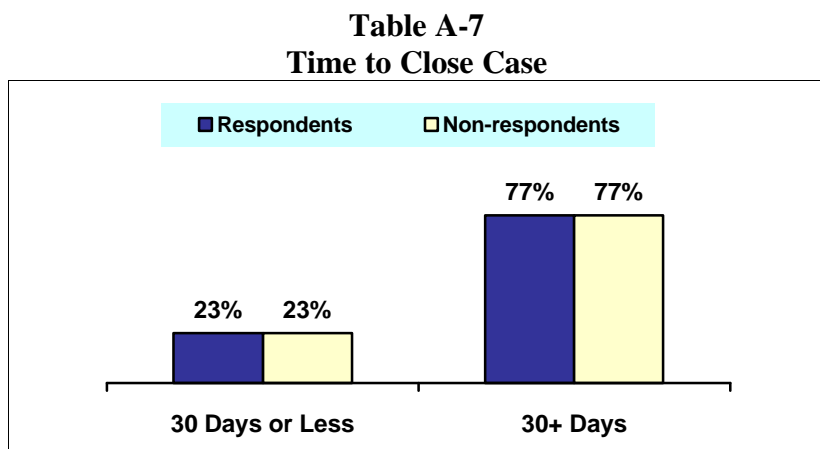
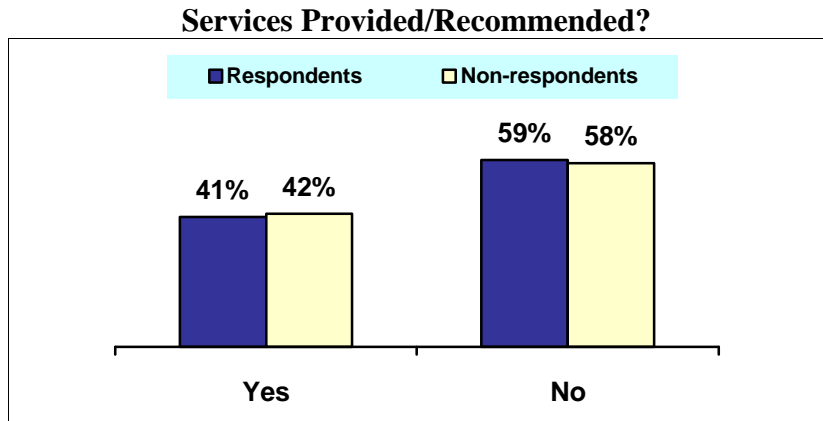
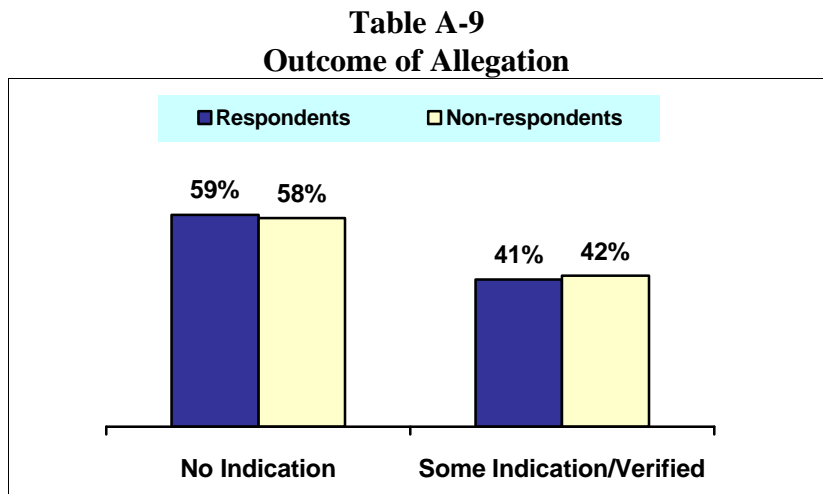


Table A-8

The provision of services was about the same for both respondents and non-respondents.



The outcome of the allegation does not appear to affect who responded to the survey.



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Appendix B

Survey Instruments

<i>Telephone Survey Instrument</i>	<i>Page 35</i>
<i>Mail Survey Instrument</i>	<i>38</i>

Telephone Survey Instrument

OPPAGA ID: _____

SUBJECT ID: _____

The questions focus on two things; first, your experience with the child protection investigation and second, how the investigation affected your family. To begin,

1. Looking back at the child protection investigation, would you say that your family's experience was generally **GOOD** or **BAD**? (**Please Check and Probe**)
 - ☐ **GOOD**——Ask: what made it good for you or your family?
 - ☐ **BAD**——Ask: What made it bad for you or your family?
 - ☐ **SOME GOOD/SOME BAD**——Ask: Please explain what was good and what was bad.
 - ☐ **NO COMMENT/DON'T KNOW.**

2. Did the investigator treat you and your family with courtesy?
 - ☐ **YES**
 - ☐ **NO**——Can you think of any specific examples when you weren't treated with courtesy?

3. Did the investigator. . . :

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
(Ask and record; Do Not Read Responses)			
a. Explain the investigation process so you knew what to expect?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Listen to you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Overall, was the investigator fair and objective?
 - ☐ **YES**
 - ☐ **NO**——What do you think the investigator should have done differently?

5. Do you know if the case was closed?

☐ **YES**—Ask: How were you informed the case was closed?

☐ **NO**—Ask: Is this a problem for you ? Do you care?

6. In general, do you think that state government should be responsible for protecting children from abuse and neglect?

☐ **YES**—Ask: Should the state department of children and families, formally known as HRS, be responsible or some other government agency; for example local law enforcement or the court system?

☐ **DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN & FAMILIES**

☐ **OTHER**

Ask: What government agency do you think should be responsible?

☐ **DON'T KNOW**

☐ **NO**—Ask: Should anyone be responsible for protecting children from abuse and neglect in the home?

☐ **YES**

Ask: What government agency do you think should be responsible?

☐ **NO**

☐ **DON'T KNOW**

7. Do you think child protection investigations focus on appropriate cases?

☐ **YES**

☐ **NO**—Ask: Would you say they investigate: **READ CHOICES:**

☐ **TOO MANY TYPES OF CASES**

☐ **NOT ENOUGH TYPES OF CASES**

☐ **CASES THAT SHOULD NOT BE INVESTIGATED**

Please explain/ give examples

8. Do you have any suggestions to prevent child protection investigations from being disruptive to families?

Now I'm going to move to some questions about how the investigation affected your family.

9. Since the investigation, has your child's behavior changed?

- ☐ **YES—Has it gotten . . .**
- ☐ **BETTER**——Please explain in what way(s) it has improved? Examples:
- ☐ **WORSE**——Please explain in what way(s) it has gotten worse? Examples:
- ☐ **NO**
- ☐ **DON'T KNOW**

10. I'd like to ask you specifically about controlling your child. By control I mean the authority to make your child follow family rules. Since the investigation, would you say you can **CONTROL** your child (please read choices and check):

- ☐ **BETTER**——Please explain.
- ☐ **WORSE**——Please explain.
- ☐ **OR ABOUT THE SAME**
- ☐ **NOT APPLICABLE/DON'T KNOW**

11. Okay, and since the investigation, when your child does not obey your family rules, do you feel your authority to **DISCIPLINE** them has gotten (please read choices and check):

- ☐ **BETTER**——Please explain.
- ☐ **WORSE**——Please explain.
- ☐ **OR STAYED ABOUT THE SAME**
- ☐ **NOT APPLICABLE/DON'T KNOW**

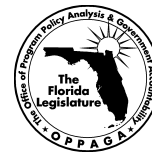
12. Finally, did the investigation affect your family in any other way that we haven't discussed?
Please explain:

Mr/Ms _____, that's all the questions I have but I'm interested to know if you have any suggestions or comments to improve child protection investigations that we haven't covered?

Note any suggestions/comments

**Mr/Ms _____, you've been very helpful. Thank you for taking the time to share your views.
Good bye.**

Mail Survey Instrument



The Florida Legislature
Child Protective Investigations Review
Conducted by the
Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability

This survey is intended to determine the effect upon families by Florida's Child Protective Investigations program. Please check (✓) your answer for each statement. Please complete this survey within **TEN** days and return it in the enclosed self-addressed, postage-paid envelope or via fax. If you have questions regarding this survey, please call Sabrina Hartley or Gene Bowers at 1-800-531-2477. *Thank you for your help.*

1. Has your family ever been the subject of a Child Protective Investigation?

☐ **YES**
☐ **NO** *If NO (Please Skip to Question 7)*

2. Would you say that the investigation's effect on your family's situation was:

☐ **Good**
☐ **Bad**
☐ **Some Good, Some Bad**
☐ **No Comment**

3. Did the investigator who contacted you:

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Don't Know</i>	<i>Not Applicable</i>
A. Treat you with courtesy?				
B. Explain the investigation process?				
C. Listen to you?				
D. Involve you in decisions?				
E. Handle your complaints?				
F. Handle the case fairly and objectively?				

4. **As a result of the child protective investigation**, has your child's behavior gotten:

☐ **Better**
☐ **Worse**
☐ **Stayed About the Same**

5. Since the investigation, has your ability to control and discipline your child gotten:

- ☐ **Better**
☐ **Worse**
☐ **Stayed About the Same**

6. Do you know if your case was closed?

- ☐ **YES** If **YES**, were you notified: (Check (✓) all that apply.)
☐ In Writing
☐ By Phone
☐ In Person
- ☐ **NO**

7. Do you think government should be responsible for protecting children from abuse and neglect?

- ☐ **YES** If **YES**, check the organization you think should be **primarily** responsible.
☐ Department of Children and Families (formerly HRS)
☐ The Court System
☐ Local Law Enforcement
☐ Other Agency _____
- ☐ **NO**

8. Do you think child protective investigations focus on:

- ☐ **Appropriate Kinds of Abuse and Neglect Cases**
☐ **Inappropriate Kinds of Cases**

If **inappropriate**, please explain.

9. If you have any comments or suggestions about how to improve the program, please write your response below or attach another sheet.

Thank you for your assistance. FAX or Mail:
OPPAGA FAX (850) 487-3804 P.O. Box 1735 Tallahassee, Florida 32302

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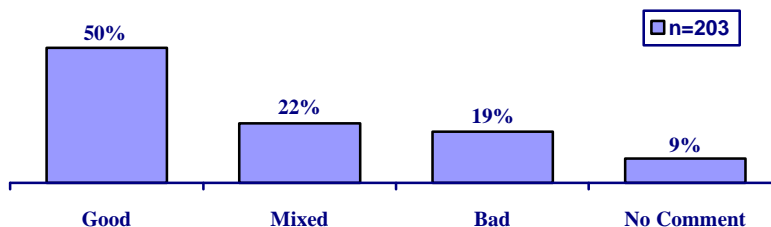
Appendix C

Open-Ended Survey Responses

This appendix provides all respondent comments to survey questions and issues. As discussed in Appendix A – Survey Methodology (pp. 28-29), telephone respondents were given more opportunities than mail respondents to provide additional comments. This was due to the team’s ability to follow-up on telephone respondent comments to ensure understanding. While this lack of follow-up ability reduced the number of open-ended questions asked of mail respondents, many mail respondents provided comments on their returned instrument or, in some cases, attached a separate letter. All comments, whether provided by telephone or mail respondents are represented in the following illustrations.

Q1

Looking back at the child protective investigation, would you say that your family's experience was generally good, bad, or mixed (both good and bad)?



Comments provided by 155 telephone respondents:

GOOD

What made it good for you and your family?

Conduct of Investigator	68	Family Relationships	14
Good, fine, nice, courteous, thorough, professional	49	Now better family communication	4
Understanding and fair	6	Children learned more about right and wrong/knows boundaries	2
Listened	5	Helped me to deal with child.....	2
Spoke to all parties	2	Did not hurt family.....	1
Did not jump to conclusions.....	2	Brought to light family problems of which respondent was unaware	1
Asked appropriate questions	1	Educated us to be more thoughtful.....	1
Did not talk to child.....	1	Child's behavior has improved	1
Easy on child/questioned gently	1	Focused on well-being of child	1
Investigator not intimidating	1	Ensured family safety	1
General Positive Department Comment	22	Exonerated/Case Outcome	12
Good Investigation.....	7	Exonerated/cleared/turned out well	12
Prompt response	4	Child's Behavior	1
Department helpful.....	2	Determined child lying and using the system	1
Reasonable and helpful.....	2	Other	1
Quick and easy	1	Could have been worse under the circumstances.....	1
Not a witch hunt.....	1		
Investigation was no big deal	1		
Personal contact.....	1		
Respondent felt it was good	1		
Good that they checked on children.....	1		
They try to cut down on child abuse	1		
Services	15		
Support and services received.....	9		
Was able to talk to somebody.....	3		
Report by daycare led to diagnosis of child's serious illness.....	1		
Daycare changed.....	1		
Got financial help for daycare	1		

BAD

Family Trauma	38
Traumatized	10
Scared / upset / embarrassed family	5
Presumed guilty.....	5
Unpleasant - HRS there	4
Kids taken	3
Background check-now a problem re job.....	2
Respondent did not know what was going on	2
Strained relationships with neighbors	1
Felt confidentiality was violated	1
Now owes legal fees	1
Had to have psychological evaluation/anger management ...	1
Investigation was a nuisance	1
Felt that children have more rights than families.....	1
Trouble handling anger	1

Reporter	35
False Allegation	21
Harassment by spouse /ex-spouse/neighbor/others	8
Reporter protected by anonymity.....	5
School reported child home alone / or abuse	
Allegation should be critiqued prior to investigation	1

Investigation Technique	24
Spoke to child first outside presence of parent/ or at school.....	9
Did not follow up	4
Investigator slow to/never showed up to talk to respondent.....	4
Investigator visited unannounced/without permission.....	2
Investigator tried to get personal information from school ..	1
Investigator tried to lead child to make allegations	1
Investigator should have contacted respondent	1
Investigator did not identify himself.....	1
Investigator came to job - humiliated	1

Investigator's Conduct	14
Investigator dishonest	4
Investigator overbearing	3
Investigator rude / abrupt.....	2
Dictated how to care for child - offended	2
Investigator didn't communicate well	1
Investigator did not appreciate situation.....	1
Investigator incompetent.....	1

Discipline and Control	11
Child unruly/uncontrollable/runaway/on the street/abusive/troubled	9
Better legislation needed to protect parents.....	1
Agency threatens you when you try to discipline child.....	1

Other	4
Law enforcement upsetting.....	3
Child made allegation at school	1

MIXED (experiences both good and bad)

Conduct of Investigator	1
Did not spend enough time with family.....	1

Outcome	3
Harsh at first, but OK afterwards.....	1
Results good, but whole thing unnecessary.....	1
Disruptive, but investigator courteous	1

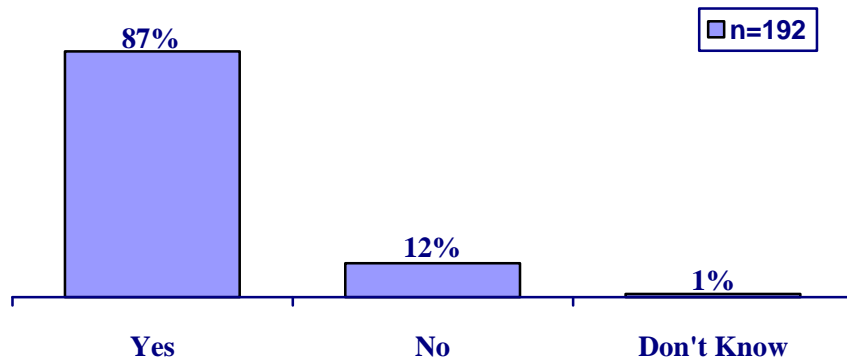
Reporter	1
Mostly good; felt badly for person responsible	1

Other	2
Custody case	1
Did not have much experience with investigator	1

Source: Results of OPPAGA survey

Q2

Did the investigator treat you and your family with courtesy?



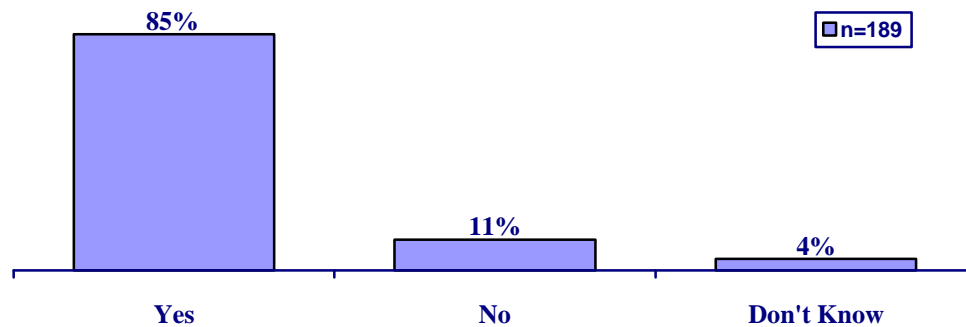
Comments provided by 150 telephone respondents:

YES	16	NO	15
Investigator handled it very well/nice/helpful/professional.....	10	Investigator rude/nasty/cold.....	4
At end treated with courtesy	2	Investigator treated respondent badly/was threatening	3
Polite but did not handle case well	2	Investigator assumed guilt.....	3
Investigator treated kids nicely too	1	Investigator provided no explanation	2
Pointless in meeting/no follow up.....	1	Investigator made unreasonable demands	1
		Not helpful concerning controlling child.....	1
		Poor training/investigators do not care about the kids	1
DON'T KNOW	2		
No contact - investigator visited and removed child	1		
No contact with investigator at the time.....	1		

Source: Results of OPPAGA survey

Q4

Was the investigator fair and objective?



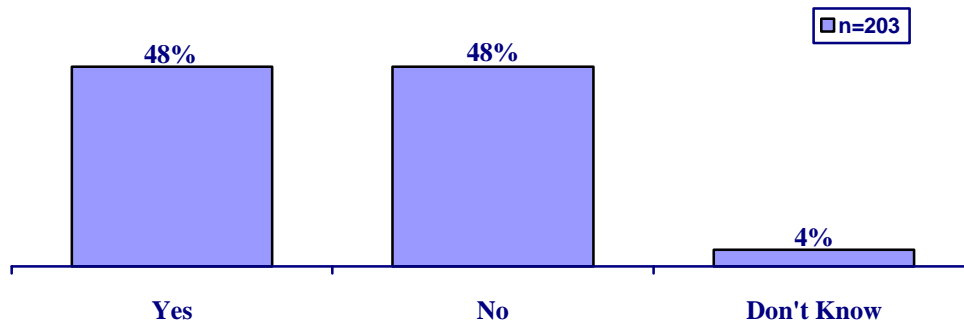
Comments provided by 148 telephone respondents:

YES		24	
Should have been more fair and objective.....	7	Should not have suggested an adoption agency	1
Should follow through after interview/should give closure (come by to check up, keep informed).....	3	Should make contact immediately, not wait 2-3 weeks...	1
Investigator and CPI should keep families better informed about what is going on.....	1	Should clearly identify who he/she is and who he/she is with	1
Should inform parents about when they will interview children.....	1	Should try to better understand the child's behavioral problems.....	1
Should be consistent with comments from interviews and those put in report.....	1	Felt investigator should have had more training	1
Should also interview neighbors and family members.....	1	Investigator/those involved should have done more to help control child	1
Should have helped respondent more	1	Should have conducted investigation before calling law enforcement	1
		Should have allowed more time for the appointment.....	1
		Should talk to respondent before talking to kids	1

Source: Results of OPPAGA survey

Q5

Do you know if the case was closed?



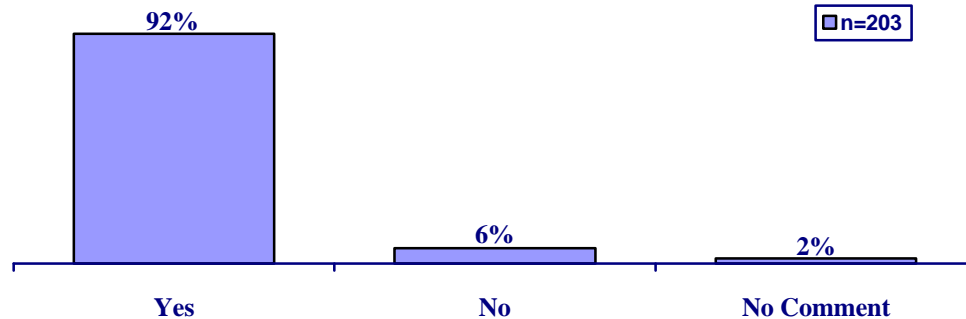
Comments provided by 197 mail and telephone respondents:

YES	67	NO	79
Phone/verbally notified	21	No communication, not informed or notified	
Letter/in writing.....	18	formally to know if case is closed or not.....	26
Face to face with CPI	10	Not satisfied wants to know what has happened	14
Told by a case worker	5	Not a problem/doesn't care	12
Judge	4	Nothing formal although caseworker stated that it	
Court action	2	was or will be soon or respondent heard that it was	7
Personal contact	2	Wants a copy of report or something formal	
Dropped immediately after interview and was told then...	2	saying investigation was closed	4
Requested the report showing case was closed.....	2	Don't know.....	3
Investigator stated case would close automatically		Case remains open or thinks is still open.....	3
in 30 days	1	Concerned, nervous, and worried because of	
		no feedback.....	3
		Felt it didn't matter since there was a record of the	
		case regardless	2
		CPI didn't really investigate case well enough.....	1
		Upset because feels no one is doing anything	
		about case	1
		Are wondering if the CPI will come back	1
		Thinks not knowing could become a problem	1
		Respondent feels they are being harassed because	
		CPI came again	1

Source: Results of OPPAGA survey

Q6

In general, do you think that state government should be responsible for protecting children from abuse and neglect?



Comments provided by 156 telephone respondents:

If YES, should the state Department of Children and Families, formerly known as HRS, be responsible or some other government agency, for example local law enforcement or the court system? **59**

Together with other agencies that work with DCF (courts, law enforcement).....	21
Law enforcement with DCF.....	13
Another agency created just for child protection/other special agency	4
Not local law authorities	3
Special law enforcement not local law enforcement	2
Local investigators rather than the state.....	2
Very busy, need help.....	2
Court system.....	1
The state should be responsible if child is in serious danger.....	1
Everyone should participate.....	1
A mediator should act along with DCF.....	1
Not sure, depends on type of report	1
Social services agencies for less severe cases.....	1
The feds and local police.....	1
Feels parents should be ultimately responsible	1
The pediatrician, psychiatrist.....	1
School.....	1
Parents need to cooperate	1
Not court system	1

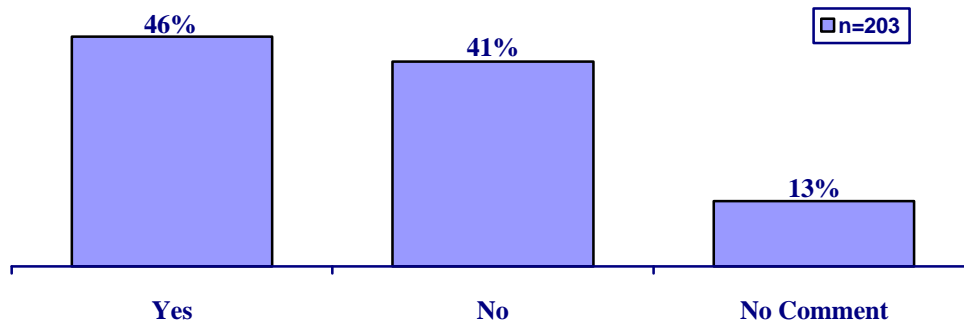
If NO, should anyone be responsible for protecting children from abuse and neglect in the home? **8**

Parents	6
A mental health organization if investigation involves mental problems	1
Intervention should be done on a local or or county level	1

Source: Results of OPPAGA survey

Q7

Do you think child protection investigations focus on appropriate cases?



Comments provided by 136 telephone respondents:

If NO, would you say that they investigate too many types of cases?	13
There should be firm evidence before an investigation is begun.....	5
Reporters need to be screened to determine if they are vindictive	3
There is too much harassment with unfounded cases	1
Case workers are overburdened.....	1
CFS should investigate abuse but not false allegations.....	1
Cases that involve teens calling hotline and falsely alleging abuse.....	1
Cases that are not severe or are inappropriate.....	1
If NO, would you say that they investigate not enough types of cases?	6
Should investigate all -- better safe than sorry	2
Needs to investigate cases where parents beat children or where children really need help	2
Needs to help families with ungovernable children.....	1
People with money don't really get their cases investigated and they should.....	1
If NO, would you say that they investigate cases that should not be investigated?	44
Feels CFS not spending enough time on certain cases that really need it and too much on those that are false	10
Cases that are not severe or are inappropriate.....	10
Feels CFS has more important cases to look into than to false allegations that result from custody disputes	4
Cases that are reported by people that have no idea of incidence of previous injuries or medical conditions	4
Older children/teens that reach a certain age and are out of control.....	3
CPI tries to find things in cases where there is nothing	3
Cases that involve teens calling hotline and falsely alleging abuse.....	3
Cases where there is no evidence of abuse.....	3
Cases where a person did something wrong before pregnant or knowledge of pregnancy.....	1
Mental abuse is too hard to judge.....	1
Cases where there is an anonymous reporter, feels reporter should have to give name.....	1
Cases that are obvious harassment calls.....	1

Source: Results of OPPAGA survey

Q8

Do you have any suggestions to prevent child protection investigations from being disruptive to families?

Comments provided by 158 telephone respondents:

Family Contact/Interviews	49
Case - firm/solid evidence before starting investigation/reporting.....	16
Investigator should not go to school to interview child without parent's permission	10
Call before visiting.....	5
Explain to child before removing from home/investigate more or don't remove child	5
Inform families about what is happening.....	4
Investigator - check out home/talk to families/talk to family before child.....	3
Neighbor should not be involved - privacy	2
Check the accused and the situation prior to contacting family	1
A more professional way to question children as children -- not always reliable	1
People should talk to neighbor about concerns before reporting.....	1
Inform child about what is happening before pulling out of school	1
Reporter	26
HRS - screen calls to weed out harassment calls/calls - custody or divorce cases	10
Prosecute false accusers/strengthen enforcement on this	6
Schools - examine teacher reporting abuse/children using system against parents.....	5
Background checks on reporter and accused regarding crime/violence; check both stories	3
School should contact parent before reporting	1
Allow accused and accuser to meet to reduce false reports	1
Process	20
Arrange convenient meeting times for working parents	4
When innocent, investigations should not show up on one's record.....	3
More intensive investigation for something major.....	3
Check out report before removing child from home.....	3
Power to remove child scary	2
Process should be speedier	2
Unfounded past cases should not be brought up	1
Improve initial investigation	1
School personnel should accompany child if pulled out of school	1
Investigators	18
Investigators should be courteous/professional/discreet/not use legal jargon	9
Training personnel regarding appropriate criteria/assessment before investigating parents	3
Hire more people to get job done right.....	1
Investigator should be required to testify with families in court.....	1
Investigators should have a moral code-accessible to all parties and in lay terms	1
There should be trained/professional persons investigating	1
Investigator should make you feel process is fair/not presume guilt	1
Investigator should not visit home at night	1
Positive	16
Suspected abuse should be investigated regardless of disruption	16

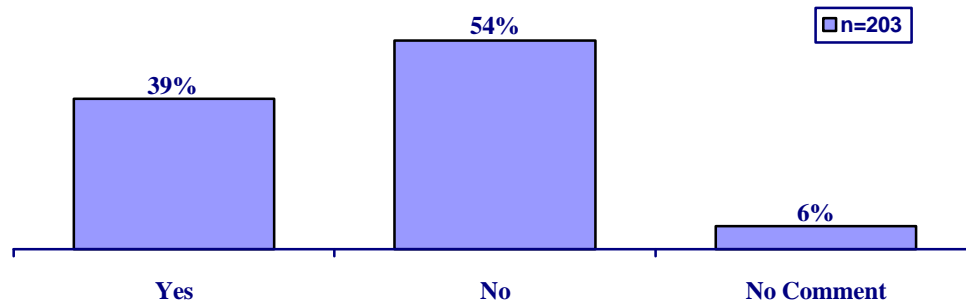
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Parent Rights	8
Ensure due process for parents/allow parents to have rights/listen to parents.....	5
Department should distinguish between discipline and abuse.....	2
HRS should be supportive to parents with children with behavior problems.....	1
Services	6
Offer parent skills counseling/managing problem children.....	4
Rehabilitation programs/counseling needed for problem children.....	2
Other	6
Law enforcement should handle investigation as they have knowledge of the law.....	2
Too many social service agencies telling what to do.....	1
Unannounced visits - good.....	1
Drug abuse/alcohol abuse/neglect should be investigated, not minor things.....	1
Do not jail parents (creates hardships for family).....	1

Source: Results of OPPAGA survey

Q9

Since the investigation, has your child's behavior changed?



Comments provided by 57 telephone respondents:

Yes, behavior has gotten better

Better - Attitude/Behavior	31
Child behaves better at home/but stealing on street.....	10
Better attitude/more cooperative/better behavior.....	9
Better - getting older	2
Behavior better from day to day	1
Child's behavior is more stable	1
Child nicer to parent.....	1
Happier with father/some problems (e.g., lying).....	1
Better relationship now	1
Child realized the lie he told could devastate his life....	1
Child more careful and responsible.....	1
Child now stays inside school.....	1
Child realized life at home not so bad.....	1
Some improvement.....	1
Better - Services	15
Counseling, better behavior-false allegations, etc.....	7
Better since counseling after molestation	1
Drug rehabilitation	1
More open/truthful after counseling/boot camp	1
Visit to detention center helped improve behavior.....	1
Has to do drug testing.....	1
Don't want to go to foster homes again	1
Behavior improved due to mother getting medication...	1
Better due to services received.....	1
Better - Situation	9
Since change of school/doing better in school.....	3
Child more relaxed since perpetrator left the home	2
Behavior better but not due to investigation	2
Influence of new babysitter	1
Better as situation changed	1
Better - Parent Rights/Authority	2
Police side with parent	1
State should not tell parent what to do/take authority ...	1

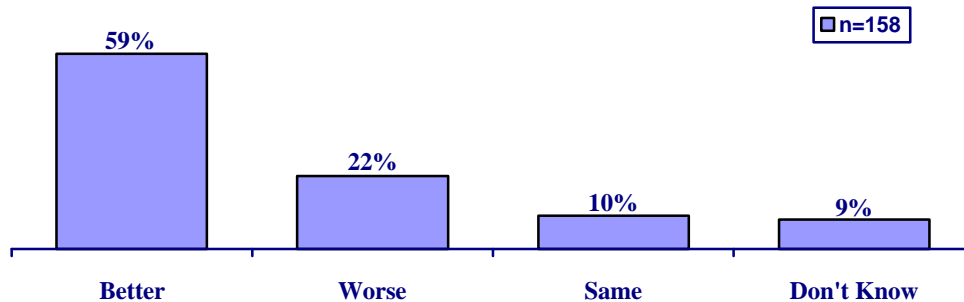
Yes, behavior has gotten worse

Worse - Attitude/Behavior	23
Child/ren threaten to call HRS if they misbehave/face punish.....	4
Child fearful that someone will take him/her away	3
Child less respectful to parent-marijuana/HRS investigation	2
Child can't control temper	2
Child does not want restrictions	2
Child rebellious	1
Youngest (was removed) - stopped talking	1
Hits little brother and sister.....	1
Misbehaves at school/at home.....	1
Does not listen	1
Emotionally disturbed, difficult to control	1
Child feels free to do anything he wants	1
Child ran away/on streets	1
Child hit parent.....	1
Child disrespectful.....	1
Worse - Other	2
Untrained investigators create family problems/stay too long	1
Police would say nothing wrong and go away	1
Worse - Parents Rights/Authority	2
School counselor advised child that parent cannot spank him.....	1
Feel that I cannot raise my kids	1
Worse - Situation	1
Worse as husband has moved to area.....	1

Source: Results of OPPAGA survey

Q10

Since the investigation, would you say you can control your child better, worse, or about the same?



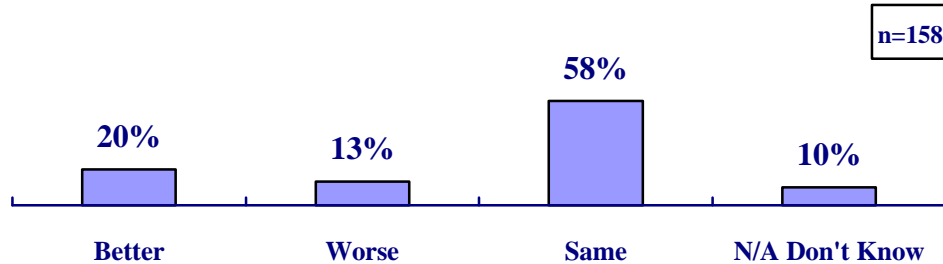
Comments provided by 41 telephone respondents:

BETTER	32	WORSE	17
Active parenting classes/family builders/counseling have improved situation	7	Child is less respectful- doesn't listen, yells, disobeys, uncontrollable, etc.....	4
Improved communication and listening.....	7	Children are fearful.....	1
Child listens better, follows rules, and is more respectful	3	Problems with kids running away, etc.	1
Child's health is better.....	1	Child threatens to call the abuse hotline, use state/system against parent	4
Parent thinks about her actions and what she says now/controls anger better	2	Child is more manipulative in order to get his way	3
Parent now has more control over children	3	Due to custody dispute, parent feels can't really discipline, afraid child will want to live with other parent	1
Better because disruptive child has moved.....	1	Afraid to discipline in public, fear people turn in parent for abuse.....	1
Child is older and more mature	2	Worse because of sexual abuse incident	1
Parent feels empowered to stand up to ex-spouse.....	1	At first family very concerned not to let child get any bruises, etc. for fear of being reported	1
Was better briefly, after counselor stopped coming reverted back to old behavior.....	1		
Child has an interest in improving herself- doesn't want more counseling	2		
Respondent focused more on parenting.....	1		
Situation has changed.....	1		

Source: Results of OPPAGA survey

Q11

Since the investigation, when your child does not obey your family rules, do you feel your authority to discipline them has gotten better, worse, or stayed about the same?



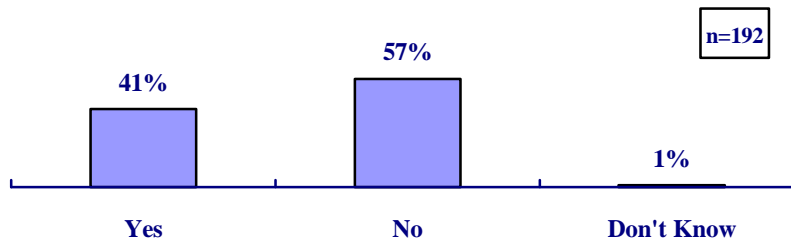
Comments provided by 41 telephone respondents:

BETTER	31	WORSE	18
Child understands discipline can be imposed and is lawful	7	Parent more apprehensive, feels child will use system against her	2
Parent now feels can threaten child with calling CFS.....	1	Child now threatens to use system against parent	5
Parents more strict about making child follow rules.....	1	Parent has no control or discipline.....	2
Parent uses verbal discipline rather than corporal	3	Child now uses violence against parent	1
Counseling helped child control behavior	3	Parent feels if disciplines, CFS will investigate or take children away.....	3
Child is now older and more mature	2	Parent is afraid to discipline, is not sure of appropriate level of discipline.....	1
Child abides by rules better.....	3	Hesitant to use physical discipline, fears the system	2
Parent better trained after counseling	5	Fears if disciplines child will want to live with other parent	1
Child is more reasonable and understanding.....	1	The system prevents normal parental discipline.....	1
Parent is more firm with discipline.....	3		
Child recognizes authority of parents	2		

Source: Results of OPPAGA survey

Q12

Did the investigation affect your family in any other way that we haven't discussed?



Comments provided by 161 mail and telephone respondents:

If Yes, how did the investigation effect your family?

Parent Authority/Rights 8

- Parent afraid to discipline children in public..... 2
- Feels right as a parent has been violated..... 2
- Respondent feels investigators are telling him/her what to do and doesn't like it..... 2
- Parent feels authority to discipline children in public has been taken away..... 1
- Parent now cannot impose judgment on child 1

Outcome 8

- Felt that privacy was invaded 2
- The system did not help child..... 1
- Social worker could empathize after seeing child's attitude ... 1
- Investigation removed one of the parents from the home 1
- Investigation made parent more careful and is cleaning up his/her act 1
- Children placed with relative, respondent lost everything (car/home) to be near children 1
- Investigation showed children that abusers can get away with things that are against the law..... 1

Child's Behavior -Attitude 6

- Subject child(ren) now threaten parents with system (call CFS or police when parent tries to discipline)..... 2
- Child and other children in home were enlightened as to what can happen..... 2
- Respondent/children no longer trusts school personnel 2

Disruptive/Traumatic..... 36

- Respondent/family was shocked and upset by investigation 10
- Family relationships/reputation strained due to investigation10
- Investigation affected significant other/spouse's feeling toward respondent/strained relationship..... 5
- Child(ren) was scared by investigation/traumatic experience 4
- Emotional for respondent, made question some things such as ability to parent..... 3
- Parents upset that daycare reported bruises as abuse..... 1
- Investigation scary due to threat of children being taken away1
- Waiting time between report and by time the investigator came was nerve racking..... 1
- Parent afraid to take child to ER for accidents, fear they will take away child 1

Source: Results of OPPAGA survey

Positive 13

- Investigation brought family closer and allowed them to work through their problems (better communication)..... 8
- Investigation was no big deal..... 3
- Respondent was grateful for the help 1
- Family grateful bruises were reported due to a discovery of dangerous disease 1

Relationships 4

- Respondent doesn't know who to trust (neighbors, investigators, etc.)..... 2
- Investigation had little impact but affected family's lives..... 1
- Respondent no longer trusts the confidentiality of relationship with psychologist 1

Process..... 5

- Doesn't like the fact that old, past reports are being opened 2
- Feels CFS places all the responsibility for child rearing on the mother 1
- Respondent upset that reporter couldn't be revealed/confirmed..... 1
- There was no closure of the case by the investigator and the family left hanging 1

Other 5

- Costs too much money for court costs and institution/legal costs..... 4
- Law enforcement was very threatening and intimidating 1

Misuse of System 1

- Ex-spouse falsely accused custodial parent to have children taken away 1

Q13

Do you have any suggestions or comments to improve child protection investigations that we haven't covered?

Comments provided by 149 telephone respondents:

Process	20
• CFS should screen report/multiple reports to distinguish between real reports and harassment reports.....	3
• The name of people that report abuse should be public knowledge.....	2
• CFS needs to focus on serious cases only.....	2
• CFS should not waste time on minor or unfounded cases.....	2
• CFS should investigate those that report abuse to determine if they have any ulterior motives	1
• Kids do lie and CFS should be able to determine when they are.....	1
• When a report of physical abuse is made, CFS should pull child out of the home	1
• Upset that even cases that are closed due to false reports are public and on record	1
• Parents should be notified about results of investigation	1
• Hotline should screen out harassing reports	1
• Law enforcement should arrest the abuser, not remove child from environment.....	1
• Standards used to judge families are not realistic for all	1
• Hard to set standard for what cases should be dropped and what should be followed through on.....	1
• CFS and DJJ should cooperate for the good of the child(ren).	1
• Law enforcement should handle reports of abuse not CFS	
Parent Rights-Authority	17
• Parents are afraid of CFS/fear they will take away children	4
• Parents should have more parenting rights	3
• Some of the laws need to be changed regarding what parents can do in regards to discipline	2
• Parents should be able to discipline as they see fit as long as it does not endanger the child	2
• No one has the right to take child from parent unless there is obvious physical abuse	1
• CFS has no right to tell parents how to discipline their children	1
• Control shouldn't be given to children	1
• In the system, children's interests are first and the parents are second.....	1
• System needs to get tough on children	1
• After age 12, the discipline should be left to the parent.....	
Investigator-Actions-Behavior	19
• Investigators should inform and speak with parent before questioning child	6
• Investigators should check all information/parties to get the accurate story.....	4
• More investigators need to be hired to ensure more thorough and accurate investigations	4
• Investigators need to be trained better to achieve a higher level of competency	2
• Investigator coming to house without warning scares family/respondent.....	1
• Investigators should work more closely with the guardian program	1
• Investigators should explain why they are doing things rather than making demands	1

(Continued on next page)

Services	9
• CFS and law enforcement should have some way to help control an ungovernable child over age 12	2
• Need a place to put children who will not behave	1
• A counselor needs to have a more lasting relationship with child if establishes trust, etc.....	1
• Should offer some type of counseling for children to find out why their behavior has changed.....	1
• More services are needed for youths	1
• Stiffer penalties are needed for young people who break the law	1
• Low income families need more help.....	1
• Parents need help supporting child(ren) if single parent	1
Other	10
• Respondent upset with local law enforcement, not CFS	2
• More grandparents should be awarded custody because they are more stable	1
• Respondent feels CFS should leave him alone and stay out of life	1
• Questions how much impact CFS has since no one really listens to them.....	1
• Respondent angry at program	1
• Respondent wouldn't want investigator's job	1
• Afraid that any injury will result in a report of abuse.....	1
• Prevention is the key to preventing abuse.	1
• HRS has too much power and abuses it.....	1
Reporter	5
• School went too far with little information; too quick to react.....	1
• CFS should hold classes for school staff to provide accurate information about child protection law.	1
• Upset that anyone can make a false allegation and be protected by anonymity	1
• School should call family first before calling hotline.....	1
• More people need to speak up and be listened to so important cases will be investigated.....	1
Positive	12
• Investigator/CFS handled investigation well.....	5
• Investigator was fair and objective/did good job.....	3
• CFS was fine; they have procedures and must follow them	2
• Glad that CFS has to investigate everything whether is disruptive or not	2

Source: Results of OPPAGA survey

Appendix D

Cross-Tabulation of Survey Responses

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The following cross-tabulations of survey responses examine whether particular factors influenced the way respondent's answered the survey questions. Source information following each indicates whether the responses represent mail respondents, telephone respondents, or both. Because there was variation in the number and structure of survey questions asked of telephone and mail respondents, this source information helps explain changes in the total number of respondents from exhibit to exhibit. (Appendix A provides a discussion of differences between the telephone and mail survey instruments.)

How Views of the Process Affect Experience Perceptions

Few factors appear to have influenced respondents' perceptions of the child protective investigation experience. The extent to which the investigator explained the investigation process and perceptions about the investigation's effect on parents' abilities to discipline appear to have influenced the overall experience perception. Whether children's behavior changed following the investigation and parents' perceptions regarding their abilities to control their children did not appear to influence experience perception. Likewise, knowledge of case closure and perceptions about whether the Department of Children and Families focuses on appropriate cases did not affect individuals' characterization of the investigation experience. The following exhibits illustrate these findings.

The majority of respondents who reported that the investigator explained the process viewed their experience with protective services as good. However, those who felt the process was not explained were twice as likely to characterize the experience as bad than good or mixed.

Table D-1
Experience with CPS and Explanation of the Process

Experience with Child Protective Services	Did the Investigator Explain the Process?	
	Yes (n=138)	No (n=38)
Good	62%	24%
Both Good and Bad	25%	26%
Bad	13%	50%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Knowledge of case closure did not effect whether respondents characterized the experience with child protective services as good, bad, or mixed.

Table D-2
Experience with CPS and Case Closure

Experience with Child Protective Services	Do You Know If Your Case Was Closed?	
	Yes (n=90)	No (n=94)
Good	55%	55%
Both Good and Bad	23%	25%
Bad	22%	20%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-3
Experience with CPS and
Focus on Appropriate Cases

Whether the respondents believed the department focuses on appropriate cases or not does not appear to affect how they characterized their experience. Nearly half of those who felt that the department does not focus on appropriate cases characterized their experience as good.

Experience with Child Protective Services	Do Investigations Focus on Appropriate Cases?	
	Yes (n=85)	No (n=78)
Good	62%	45%
Bad	12%	31%
Both Good and Bad	26%	24%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-4
Experience with CPS and Behavioral Changes

Regardless of whether the child's behavior changed as a result of the investigation, respondents were likely to characterize the experience as good.

Experience with Child Protective Services	Did Your Child's Behavior Change?	
	Yes (n=75)	No (n=107)
Good	60%	51%
Bad	17%	23%
Both Good and Bad	23%	26%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-5
Experience with CPS and Controlling Behavior

When a parent's control of a child became better or stayed about the same, they were likely to characterize the experience as good. Conversely, when a parent's control of a child became worse, they were just as likely to characterize the experience as good as they were bad.

Experience with Child Protective Services	Ability to Control Child?		
	Better (n=33)	Worse (n=16)	Same (n=93)
Good	67%	38%	56%
Bad	9%	38%	22%
Both Good and Bad	24%	25%	22%
Total	100%	101%	100%

Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: Phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-6
Experience with CPS and Discipline

Parents who reported that discipline of a child became better or stayed about the same were more likely to characterize the experience as good than parents who reported discipline of the child become worse.

Experience with Child Protective Services	Ability to Discipline Child?		
	Better (n=30)	Worse (n=20)	Same (n=92)
Good	67%	40%	55%
Bad	13%	35%	22%
Both Good and Bad	20%	25%	23%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Factors Affecting Views of the Investigator's Courtesy

Respondents who felt that the investigator had neither explained the investigation process nor listened to them were more likely to report that they were not treated with courtesy. Individuals with prior department contact were also more likely to state that they were not treated courteously during the child protective investigation. The outcome of the case, whether the individual was found to be responsible for the allegations, did not appear to affect whether respondents felt that they were treated courteously. The length of the case, the receipt or recommendation for services, and individual perceptions about whether the department focuses on appropriate cases also do not affect respondents' perceptions of investigator courtesy. The following exhibits illustrate these findings.

Table D-7
Investigator Courtesy and Explanation
of the Process

Over three-fourths (79%) of the respondents felt that the investigator explained the process. However, those who felt that the process was explained reported that the investigator was courteous in greater proportion than those who thought the process was not explained.

Was the Investigator Courteous?	Did the Investigator Explain the Process?	
	Yes (n=145)	No (n=39)
Yes	94%	64%
No	6%	36%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-8
Investigator Courtesy and Listening

Respondents who felt that the investigator did not listen also felt they had not been treated with courtesy. However, nearly 90% reported that the investigator listened to them.

Was the Investigator Courteous?	Did the Investigator Listen?	
	Yes (n=167)	No (n=21)
Yes	96%	23%
No	4%	76%
Total	100%	99%

* Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-9
Investigator Courtesy and Focus on
Appropriate Cases

Opinions about whether or not the department focuses on appropriate cases did not greatly affect perceptions of investigator courtesy. Both groups tend to report that the investigator was courteous.

Was the Investigator Courteous?	Do Investigations Focus on Appropriate Cases?	
	Yes (n=88)	No (n=79)
Yes	92%	82%
No	8%	18%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-10
Investigator Courtesy and
Prior Departmental Contacts

Prior contact with the department affects perceptions of courtesy. Those with no prior contacts with the department were more likely to report that the investigator was courteous as compared to those who had one or more previous contacts with the department.

Was the Investigator Courteous?	Prior Contact with Department?	
	No Prior Contact (n=137)	One or More Prior Contacts (n=53)
Yes	93%	75%
No	7%	25%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-11
Investigator Courtesy and Worst Allegation Status

Case findings were not related to perceptions of courtesy. Regardless of whether there was no indication or some indication/verified abuse, respondents were likely to feel that they were treated with courtesy by the investigator.

Was the Investigator Courteous?	Worst Allegation	
	No Indication (n=111)	Some Indication /Verified (n=79)
Yes	87%	89%
No	13%	11%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-12
Investigator Courtesy and Services Received

Respondents who needed no services were as likely to describe the investigator as courteous as those who received services or had services recommended.

Was the Investigator Courteous?	Services Received or Recommended?	
	Yes (n=83)	No (n=107)
Yes	87%	89%
No	13%	11%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Case length does not appear to affect whether respondents feel that they were treated with courtesy. Regardless of how quickly the case was closed, respondents tended to report that the investigator was courteous.

Table D-13
Investigator Courtesy and Case Closure

Was the Investigator Courteous?	Length of Time to Close Case	
	30 Days or Less (n=46)	More Than 30 Days (n=144)
Yes	83%	90%
No	17%	10%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Factors Affecting Views of the Investigator's Fairness and Objectivity

Respondents who had a negative perception of the investigator also reported that the investigator was not fair and objective. Those who reported that the investigator was not courteous, did not explain the investigation process, and did not listen also reported that the investigator was not fair and objective. Similarly, individuals who believed that the department focuses on inappropriate cases also did not believe that the investigator was fair and objective. Respondents with prior department contact also reported that the investigator was not fair and objective. The length of time it took to close the case, case outcome, and whether services were recommended or received did not influence whether respondents believed the investigator was fair and objective. The exhibits in this exhibit illustrate these findings.

Table D-14
Investigator Fair/Objective and Courtesy

When respondents felt that the investigator was courteous, they also characterized the investigator as fair and objective.

Was the Investigator Fair and Objective?	Was the Investigator Courteous?	
	Yes (n=160)	No (n=19)
Yes	96%	26%
No	4%	74%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-15
Investigator Fair/Objective and
Explanation of Process

Respondents who reported that the investigator did not explain the process were less likely to think that the investigator was fair and objective than respondents reporting that the investigator did explain the process. However, a majority of each group rated the investigator as fair and objective.

Was the Investigator Fair and Objective?	Did the Investigator Explain the Process?	
	Yes (n=141)	No (n=36)
Yes	96%	61%
No	4%	39%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-16
Investigator Fair/Objective and Listening

When respondents felt listened to, they were more likely to believe the investigator was fair and objective.

Was the Investigator Fair and Objective?	Did the Investigator Listen?	
	Yes (n=164)	No (n=17)
Yes	96%	18%
No	4%	82%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-17
Investigator Fair/Objective and
Focus on Appropriate Cases

Overall, respondents felt that the investigator was fair and objective. However, those who think that the department does not focus on appropriate cases are slightly less likely to rate the investigator as fair and objective as those who believe the department does focus on appropriate cases.

Was the Investigator Fair and Objective?	Do Investigations Focus on Appropriate Cases?	
	Yes (n=83)	No (n=77)
Yes	94%	83%
No	6%	17%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-18
Investigator Fair/Objective and
Prior Departmental Contact

Prior contact with the department affects perceptions of fairness and objectivity. A greater proportion of respondents with no previous contacts with the department perceived the investigator as fair and objective compared to those with one or more prior departmental contacts.

Was the Investigator Fair and Objective?	Prior Contact with Department	
	No Prior Contact (n=132)	1 or More Prior Contacts (n=49)
Yes	95%	74%
No	5%	26%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-19
Investigator Fair/Objective and
Allegation Status

Case outcome does not affect perceptions of fairness and objectivity. Respondents whose case outcome found no indication of abuse were as likely to perceive the investigator as fair and objective as respondents whose cases indicated or verified some abuse.

Was the Investigator Fair and Objective?	Allegations	
	No Indication (n=106)	Some Indication /Verified (n=75)
Yes	90%	88%
No	10%	12%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-20
Investigator Fair/Objective and
Services Received

The need for services does not affect perceptions of fairness and objectivity. Respondents reported that the investigator was fair and objective regardless of whether services were prescribed or received or no services were needed.

Was the Investigator Fair and Objective?	Services Received or Recommended	
	Yes (n=80)	No (n=101)
Yes	88%	90%
No	12%	10%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-21
Investigator Fair/Objective and Case Closure

The length of a case does not affect perceptions of fairness and objectivity. The majority of each group felt that the investigator was fair and objective.

Was the Investigator Fair and Objective?	Case Closed in:	
	30 Days or Less (n=45)	More Than 30 Days (n=136)
Yes	91%	88%
No	9%	12%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Views About Children's Behavior Changes

Generally, respondents who reported that their child's behavior had improved or remained the same following the child protective investigation also provided favorable responses about other aspects of the investigation. For example, they generally characterized the investigation experience as good and reported that the investigator was courteous, explained the process, and was fair and objective. Even those respondents who reported that their child's behavior had gotten worse following the investigation were as likely as those who reported no change or improved behavior to report that the investigator listened. Respondents with prior department contact were as

likely to report an improvement in their child's behavior as a decline in behavior. Respondents who reported improved child behavior were more likely to have received or been recommended for services. Their cases were also more likely to have been characterized by some indication of abuse or verified abuse. The length of the case and the relationship of the respondent to the alleged victim did not appear to influence the respondent's perception of whether their child's behavior had changed. The following exhibits illustrate these findings.

Table D-22
Experience with CPS and Behavioral Changes

Respondents who stated that their child's behavior stayed about the same or was better as the result of the investigation tended to rate the investigation experience as good. Those reporting that their child's behavior became worse were more likely to characterize the experience as bad.

Experience with Child Protective Services	How Behavior Changed		
	Better (n=55)	About the Same (n=107)	Worse (n=20)
Good	73%	51%	25%
Both	24%	26%	20%
Bad	4%	23%	55%
Total	101%	100%	100%

Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-23
Investigator Courtesy and Behavioral Changes

Nearly all the respondents stating the child's behavior had become better or stayed about the same felt that the investigator was courteous; only 68% of the 19 respondents describing their child's behavior as worse felt the investigator was courteous.

Was the Investigator Courteous?	How Behavior Changed		
	Better (n=57)	About the Same (n=108)	Worse (n=19)
Yes	93%	89%	68%
No	7%	11%	32%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-24
Explanation of the Process and Behavioral Changes

Only 15% of the respondents reported that their child's behavior became worse as a result of the investigation. Respondents who reported that their child's behavior became worse as a result of the investigation were less likely to think that the investigator explained the process than families who reported their children's behavior stayed about the same or improved.

Did the Investigator Explain the Process?	How Behavior Changed		
	Better (n=54)	About the Same (n=106)	Worse (n=21)
Yes	83%	79%	62%
No	17%	21%	38%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-25
Investigator Listens and Behavioral Changes

Regardless of whether respondents felt that the investigation affected their child's behavior, the majority felt that the investigator listened.

	How Behavior Changed		
	About the		
Did the Investigator Listen?	Better (n=56)	Same (n=108)	Worse (n=21)
Yes	96%	90%	62%
No	4%	10%	38%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-26
Investigator Fair/Objective and Behavioral Changes

Changes in the child's behavior affected perceptions of the investigator's fairness and objectivity. Respondents reporting that their child's behavior became worse were less likely to agree that the investigator was fair and objective.

	How Behavior Changed		
	About the		
Was the Investigator Fair and Objective?	Better (n=55)	Same (n=101)	Worse (n=21)
Yes	95%	90%	67%
No	6%	10%	33%
Total	101%	100%	100%

Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-27
Services Received and Behavioral Changes

Services were recommended for or received by a higher proportion of respondents reporting that their child's behavior became better than respondents whose child's behavior stayed about the same or became worse.

	How Behavior Changed		
	About the		
Services Received or Recommended?	Better (n=59)	Same (n=110)	Worse (n=21)
Yes	59%	34%	43%
No	41%	66%	57%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-28
Behavioral Changes and Case Closure

The length of the case does not appear to affect the child's behavior. For example, 28% of the cases for children whose behavior became better were closed within 30 days and 32% were closed in more than 30 days.

How Behavior Changed	Case Closed in	
	30 Days or Less (n=46)	More Than 30 Days (n=144)
Better	28%	32%
About the Same	61%	57%
Worse	11%	11%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Prior contact with the department may affect behavioral changes. A larger proportion of respondents reporting that their child's behavior had improved also had one or more contacts with the department. The same was true for parents who reported that their children's behavior had gotten worse.

Table D-29
Behavioral Changes and Prior Contact

How Behavior Changed	Prior Contact with Department	
	No Prior Contact (n=139)	One or More Prior Contacts (n=51)
Better	29%	37%
About the Same	63%	43%
Worse	8%	20%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Many respondents reporting that their child's behavior became better after the investigation had services recommended or received services. For respondents reporting that the child's behavior stayed about the same, more cases were assessed as not needing services than needing some type of service.

Table D-30
Behavioral Changes and Services

How Behavior Changed:	Services Received or Recommended?	
	Yes (n=81)	No (n=109)
Better	43%	22%
No Change-About the Same	46%	67%
Worse	11%	11%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

A slightly larger proportion of respondents reporting that their child's behavior became better had some indication or verified allegations than those cases where there was no indication of the allegation upon closure of the case.

Table D-31
Behavioral Changes and Allegation Status

How Behavior Changed	Allegation	
	No Indication (n=110)	Some Indication /Verified (n=80)
Better	26%	39%
About the Same	64%	50%
Worse	11%	11%
Total	101%	100%

Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

The alleged perpetrator's relationship to the victim does not appear to affect their views about behavior changes.

Table D-32
Behavioral Changes and Relationship to Victim

How Behavior Changed	Relationship to Alleged Victim		
	Mother/Stepmother (n=127)	Father/Stepfather (n=46)	Other (n=19)
Better	35%	24%	18%
About the Same	55%	56%	82%
Worse	9%	20%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Views About Parental Ability to Control Child

Few factors influenced respondents' perceptions regarding their ability to control their child. Those respondents who received or were recommended for services were likely to report improved control over their child. Respondents whose cases were closed within 30 days were likely to report no change in their parental control. Prior departmental contact and case outcome did not appear to influence respondents' perceptions of their ability to control their child. The following exhibits illustrate these findings.

Respondents who received services or for whom services were recommended were more likely to report an improvement in their ability to control their child.

Table D-33
Ability to Control Child and Services

Ability to Control Child	Services Received or Recommended?	
	Yes (n=61)	No (n=82)
Better	36%	15%
Same	52%	74%
Worse	12%	11%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Respondents whose investigation ended within 30 days were slightly more likely to report that their child's behavior remained about the same than those whose cases continued for a longer period of time.

Table D-34
Ability to Control Child and Case Closure

Ability to Control Child	Case Closed in	
	30 Days or Less (n=34)	More Than 30 Days (n=109)
Better	18%	26%
Same	73%	62%
Worse	9%	12%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

The relationship of the respondent to the child does not appear to affect parents' ability to control the child.

Table D-35
Ability to Control Child and Relationship to Victim

Ability to Control Child	Relationship		
	Mother/Stepmother (n=88)	Father/Stepfather (n=38)	Other (n=17)
Better	24%	32%	6%
Same	66%	53%	88%
Worse	10%	16%	6%
Total	100%	101%	100%

Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: Phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Prior contact with the department does not appear to affect reports of ability to control the child.

Table D-36
Ability to Control Child and
Prior Departmental Contacts

	Prior Contact with Department	
	No Prior Contact (n=106)	One or More Prior Contacts (n=37)
Ability to Control Child		
Better	22%	30%
Same	68%	57%
Worse	10%	13%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Case findings do not appear to affect parents' ability to control their children.

Table D-37
Ability to Control Child and Allegation Status

	Allegations	
	No Indication (n=86)	Some Indication /Verified (n=57)
Ability to Control Child		
Better	20%	30%
Same	67%	61%
Worse	13%	9%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Views About Parental Ability to Discipline

Few factors influenced respondents' perceptions regarding their ability to discipline their child. Respondents who received or were recommended for services were likely to report that their ability to control their discipline their child had improved. Male respondents were more likely than female respondents to report improved ability to discipline their child following the investigation. Factors such as the length of the case, prior department contact, and case outcome did not appear to affect respondents' perceptions of their ability to discipline their child following the investigation. The following exhibits illustrate these points.

Receiving services or being recommended for services appears to have a positive effect on the parent's ability to discipline their child. However, the majority of parents who were not recommended for or did not receive services reported that their ability to discipline their child remained the same.

Table D-38
Ability to Discipline Child and Service Status

Ability to Discipline Child	Services Received or Recommended?	
	Yes (n=60)	No (n=83)
Better	32%	15%
Same	55%	71%
Worse	13%	14%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

The amount of time it takes to investigate and close a case does not appear to affect parental ability to discipline the child.

Table D-39
Ability to Discipline Child and Case Closure

Ability to Discipline Child	Case Closed in:	
	30 Days or Less (n=36)	More Than 30 Days (n=107)
Better	17%	23%
Same	66%	64%
Worse	17%	13%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Fathers and stepfathers were more likely than mothers and stepmothers to report that their ability to discipline the child improved after the investigation.

Table D-40
Ability to Discipline Child and Relationship to Victim

Ability to Discipline Child	Relationship		
	Mother/Stepmother (n=90)	Father/Stepfather (n=36)	Other (n=17)
Better	19%	28%	23%
Same	68%	53%	71%
Worse	13%	19%	6%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Prior contact with the department does not appear to affect the parent's ability to discipline their child.

Table D-41
Ability to Discipline Child and Prior Departmental Contacts

Ability to Discipline Child	Prior Contact with Department	
	No Prior Contact (n=106)	One or More Prior Contacts (n=37)
Better	22%	22%
Same	69%	51%
Worse	9%	27%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Case outcome does not affect the parent's ability to discipline the child.

Table D-42
Ability to Discipline Child and Allegation Status

	Allegations	
	No Indication (n=87)	Some Indication /Verified (n=56)
Ability to Discipline Child		
Better	21%	23%
Same	67%	61%
Worse	12%	16%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Views About Case Focus

As was the finding in most areas, respondents who characterized the investigation experience as bad and reported that the investigator did a poor job were likely to also report that the department does not focus on appropriate cases. The length of the case, case outcome, and prior department contact, however, appear to have little influence on respondents' perceptions of the departments' case focus. Respondents who received services or for whom services were recommended were more likely to report that the department focuses on appropriate cases. The following tables illustrate these findings.

Table D-43
Focus on Appropriate Cases and Experience with CPS

Perceptions of whether the department focuses on appropriate cases varies little between those reporting their experience with the investigation as good or mixed. Those rating the experience as bad tended to report that the department did not focus on appropriate cases.

Focus on Appropriate Cases	Experience With Child Protective Services		
	Good (n=88)	Both (n=41)	Bad (n=34)
Yes	60%	54%	29%
No	40%	46%	71%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Though only a small number of respondents reported that the investigator was not courteous, they were also more likely to feel that the department does not focus on appropriate cases.

Table D-44
Focus on Appropriate Cases and
Investigator Courtesy

Focus on Appropriate Cases	Was the Investigator Courteous?	
	Yes (n=146)	No (n=21)
Yes	56%	33%
No	44%	67%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Perceptions of whether the department focuses on appropriate cases varies little between those reporting that the investigator explained the process and those who reported that the process was not explained.

Table D-45
Focus on Appropriate Cases and
Investigator Explanation

Focus on Appropriate Cases	Did the Investigator Explain the Process?	
	Yes (n=129)	No (n=37)
Yes	54%	43%
No	46%	57%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Though only a small number of respondents reported that the investigator did not listen, these respondents were more likely to feel that the department does not focus its investigations on appropriate cases.

Table D-46
Focus on Appropriate Cases and
Investigator Listened

Focus on Appropriate Cases	Did the Investigator Listen?	
	Yes (n=150)	No (n=18)
Yes	54%	28%
No	46%	72%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Although only a small number of respondents reported that the investigator was not fair and objective, they were more likely to report that the department does not focus its investigations on appropriate cases.

Table D-47
Focus on Appropriate Cases and
Investigator Fairness/Objectivity

Focus on Appropriate Cases	Was the Investigator Fair and Objective ?	
	Yes (n=142)	No (n=18)
Yes	55%	28%
No	45%	72%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-48
Focus on Appropriate Cases and
Prior Departmental Contact

Prior contact with the department does not appear to affect perceptions about the appropriateness of cases that the department investigates.

Approximately equal proportions of those with prior contacts compared to those with no prior contact felt that the department focused on appropriate cases.

Focus on Appropriate Cases	Prior Contacts with Department	
	No Prior Contact (n=129)	One or More Prior Contacts (n=48)
Yes	54%	50%
No	46%	50%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-49
Focus on Appropriate Cases and Allegation Status

Case outcome does not appear to affect the respondent's views about the focus of cases.

Focus on Appropriate Cases	Allegation	
	No Indication (n=104)	Some Indication /Verified (n=73)
Yes	50%	57%
No	50%	43%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-50
Focus on Appropriate Cases and Services Received

Respondents who received services or for whom services were recommended tended to agree that the department focuses on appropriate cases at a higher rate than respondents who do not receive services or have them recommended.

Focus on Appropriate Cases	Services Received or Recommended?	
	Yes (n=72)	No (n=105)
Yes	67%	44%
No	33%	56%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-51
Focus on Appropriate Cases and Case Closure

Case length does not affect views about the appropriateness of the department's case focus.

Focus on Appropriate Cases	Case Closed in:	
	30 Days or Less (n=44)	More Than 30 Days (n=133)
Yes	55%	53%
No	45%	47%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

Table D-52
Focus on Appropriate Cases and
Relationship to Alleged Victim

More mothers and stepmothers than father and stepfathers reported that the department focuses on appropriate cases.

Focus on Appropriate Cases	Relationship		
	Mother/Stepmother (n=117)	Father/Stepfather (n=40)	Other (n=20)
Yes	53%	40%	80%
No	47%	60%	20%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Mail and phone survey conducted by OPPAGA

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Appendix E

Glossary of Terms

ABUSE – Non-accidental infliction of physical, mental, or sexual injury or the failure to prevent the occurrence of injury to a child.

ABUSED OR NEGLECTED CHILD – A child whose physical or mental health or welfare is harmed, or threatened with harm, by the acts or omissions of the parents, adult household members or other person responsible for the child's welfare. [Section 415.503(1), F.S.]

AGGRAVATED CHILD ABUSE – A criminal offense which includes aggravated battery on a child, willfully torturing a child, maliciously punishing or willfully unlawfully caging a child.

ALLEGATION – Used generally, a charge or claim of fact in a report of child abuse or neglect which must be proven if the report is to be found true.

ALLEGATION NARRATIVE – A written description of the nature of the alleged maltreatment(s) and circumstances surrounding the incident.

CARETAKER - Persons responsible for the child's care in institutional settings: for example, employees of private schools or day care centers, residential homes, institutions, facilities, other agencies, which provide care to a child outside the child's home. An adult baby-sitter, or other person who has responsibility for a child's welfare, such as a boyfriend or girlfriend of the child's parent, other siblings, or uncles, aunts, and grandparents.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT – Term used to refer to both forms of child maltreatment. Implies one or all of the following: physical or sexual abuse, mental injury, physical or emotional neglect. Includes harm or threatened harm to a child's physical or mental health or welfare by the acts or omissions of the parent, adult household member or other person responsible for the child's welfare.

CHILD PROTECTIVE INVESTIGATOR – The department's authorized agent for conducting child protective investigations of allegations that a child has been abused or neglected. Refers to any department employee who is responsible for conducting investigations of child abuse and neglect, not including supervisory or service delivery staff.

CLEAR AND CONVINCING EVIDENCE – A level of proof which means that the evidence clearly points to injury and to the alleged perpetrator but it is not necessarily beyond reasonable doubt.

COLLATERAL CONTACTS – Contact with another person who can provide relevant evidence or supportive testimony, but who are not subjects of the report. Examples include teachers, physicians, relatives, and reporters.

COMMENCING THE INVESTIGATION – Commencement means the initiation of the on-site interview with the victim unless the safety of the victim can be assured by other communication approved at the local level by the protective investigator supervisor or other appropriate official of the

department and documented in the case file. In all cases, an attempted on-site visit with the alleged victim must be made within 24 hours.

CREDIBLE EVIDENCE – Evidence worthy of belief by a reasonable person, i.e., evidence that is relevant to the issue, reliable as to fact and source, and collected and evaluated honestly and truthfully.

DAY CARE – A wide variety of organized care, supervision and developmental opportunities that supplements parental guidance and care for a part of the day outside of the home. Parents retain responsibility for the child's general welfare, while the child may be temporarily in the center's care. Day care is provided in child development centers, nursery and day schools, kindergartens, family daycare homes, before- and after-school programs, or vacation programs. Day care provides education, nutrition, health services when needed, social and emotional growth activities.

DEPENDENT CHILD – A child who is found by the court to be abandoned, abused or neglected by parents or custodians; a child who has been surrendered for the purpose of adoption; a child whose parents have failed to substantially comply with requirements of performance agreement or who is believed to be at risk of imminent abuse or neglect by parents or custodian.

DETENTION HEARING – A court hearing held within 24 hours of the child taken into custody to determine whether a child should be kept away from that child's parents pending further court order or completion of the investigation.

DISPOSITION – The order of a juvenile court which determined a treatment plan for a child, who has already been adjudicated to be abused or neglected or the non-judicial decision, after classification, of what if any services will be provided and how the investigation will be closed.

EARLY SERVICES INTERVENTION – The engagement of an agency services counselor (protective supervision, voluntary family services, foster care or adoption) prior to completion of the investigation and disposition of the report or engagement of any agency service provider.

EMERGENCY SERVICES – Services which must be provided during the initial contact or early during the investigation to protect the child, or obtain information necessary to proceed with investigation. Activities which must occur before the initial contact is terminated.

EMERGENCY SHELTER – A place for the temporary care of a child who is alleged to be or who has been found to be dependent, pending further disposition, before or after adjudication or after execution of a court order. "Shelter" may include a facility which provides 24-hour awake supervision for the temporary care of a child who is placed for care or protection. The shelter may be a family home or staffed facility.

FAHIS – Abbreviation for the Florida Abuse Hotline Information System

FOSTER CARE – A court-ordered or voluntary service designed to provide short-term substitute care for a planned period until a child can be returned home under supervision or found a permanent home.

GUARDIAN – An adult appointed by a court to serve as custodian of a child when the child's parent is shown to be inadequate, until the parent proves reviewed ability to provide proper care to the child.

A guardian has almost all the rights and powers of a natural parent, but the relationship is subject to termination or change.

HARM – Physical or psychological injury or damage to a child.

INVESTIGATION – The protective services process which is a fact-finding and/or emergency service engagement process with the primary goal of protecting children from abuse, neglect or exploitation.

JURISDICTION – Refers to the power, right, or authority to interpret and apply the law.

LAW ENFORCEMENT – Local city police departments and county sheriffs' offices.

LEGAL CUSTODY – A legal status created by court order or letter of guardianship which vests in a custodian of the person or guardian, whether an agency or an individual, the right to have physical custody of the child and the right and duty to protect, train, and discipline him/her and to provide him/her with food, shelter, education, and ordinary medical, dental, psychiatric, and psychological care.

MALTREATMENT – Used as an inclusive description for any form of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children.

MANDATED REPORTER – Any person who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is abused, neglected, or exploited is required to report that suspicion to the Abuse Hotline under potential legal penalties for willful failure to do so. [See ss. 415.103 and 415.504, F.S.] The statute lists the following professions but does not limit itself to these professions: physician, osteopath, medical examiner, chiropractor, nurse, hospital personnel, health and mental health professionals, practitioners of spiritual healing, school personnel, social workers, child care workers and law enforcement officers. Protective Services staff are required to report to the Florida Abuse Hotline their suspicions that a child has been abused, neglected, or exploited.

NEGLECT – Failure to provide the care and services necessary to maintain the physical and mental health of a child, including but not limited to food, clothing, shelter, supervision, and medical services or permitting a child to live in an environment when such deprivation or environment causes the child's physical, mental or emotional health to be significantly impaired or to be in danger of being significantly impaired. The foregoing shall not be considered neglect if caused primarily by financial inability unless services have been offered and rejected. A parent or guardian legitimately practicing his religious beliefs in accordance with a recognized church or religious organization, who thereby does not provide specific medical treatment for a child, shall not, for that reason alone, be considered a negligent parent or guardian; however, such an exception shall not preclude a court from ordering that services be provided. [See s. 39.01(37), F.S., and s. 415.102(12), F.S.]

NO JURISDICTION – The closure of a report in which the facts obtained determine that the department has no authority to investigate.

NO JURISDICTION TO INVESTIGATE – Reports of abuse which occur in areas where the department has no authority to investigate, such as military bases, Indian reservations and other states, or reports involving a person 18 years of age or older who is not disabled or elderly, or abused by

someone other than those persons specified in Ch. 415, F.S., as being responsible for the child, elderly person or disabled adult's care or welfare.

PARENT – Means the biological father or biological mother of a child or, if a child has been legally adopted, the adoptive mother or father of the child.

PERFORMANCE AGREEMENT – A written document provided to the court, clearly specifying the responsibilities and action to be taken by the department, the parents, foster parents or other placement, and child when appropriate in achieving reunification of the family. Time limits are set and the agreement is signed by parents and the department counselor.

PERMANENT COMMITMENT – (Termination of Parental Rights) A legal proceeding and, specifically, the judicial disposition to free a child from the child's parents' claims, so that the child can be adopted by others without the parents' written consent. In Florida, permanent commitment depends on proof that the allegations are clearly and convincingly true.

PLACEMENT – The removal of a victim from the natural home, for placement in a different setting. Child placement may be in a shelter home, foster home, group home, relative or friend's home, or an institution.

PREPONDERANCE OF THE EVIDENCE – A level of proof which means that it is more likely than not that something (e.g., abuse) occurred.

PREVENTATIVE SERVICES – Services designed to prevent the development of dependency problems within the family that would require more intensive intervention. Example parent support groups and mental health counseling.

PROTECTIVE CUSTODY – In child abuse and neglect cases, refers to the emergency removal or withholding of a child from the custody of the parent(s) when the child would be in imminent danger if left in or related to the custody of the parent(s).

PROTECTIVE SERVICES – In a general sense, all responsibilities for identifying and receiving reports of abuse, neglect or exploitation; investigating suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation; assessing and treating families in need of help; and providing or arranging preventative, supportive and supplementary services. In Florida, the investigative functions are handled by protective investigators. Protective services supervision counselors are responsible for both voluntary and court-ordered treatment and supervision of families and their children.

PROTECTIVE SERVICES SUPERVISION – A legal status created by court order in dependency cases which permits the victim to remain in his home or other placement under the supervision of an agent of the department, subject to being returned to the court during the period of supervision.

REASONABLE CAUSE TO SUSPECT – Evidence that would lead a prudent person to suspect that abuse, neglect, or exploitation may have occurred.

RELATIVE – Means in addition to parents, any blood relative, for example, brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles of the child, those of half blood, first cousins, nephews, nieces and persons of preceding generations as denoted by prefixes

REPORT - The initial or subsequent oral or written statement, received by the Florida Abuse Hotline which identifies a child, elderly person or disabled adult as the suspected victim of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Also, the oral conveyance of a person's reasonable suspicions that a child, elderly person or disabled adult has been abused, neglected or exploited, including identifying information and nature of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

REPORTER NARRATIVE - Confidential information related to the reporter or subjects of a report.

RISK - Risk is the potential for harm, imminent or otherwise, without regard to whether one can document evidence that abuse or neglect has occurred. Risk of harm means anything that threatens the children, elderly or disabled adults to function normally. (See **RISK FACTORS** and **RISK ASSESSMENT**.)

RISK ASSESSMENT - Risk assessment is a clearly-defined process of using interviewing, observation, and evidence collection to develop an accurate, reliable, and written description of the victim's risk status and to support structured analysis and decision making by protective investigators and counselors to ensure the protection of the victim.

RISK FACTORS - Risk factors are carefully weighed factual descriptions of family and individual behaviors and perceptions as expressed in quotable statements, NOT a layman's subjective impressions of a family's "dynamics" nor the demonstrative or real evidence. [See **RISK AND RISK ASSESSEMENT**.]

SIGNIFICANT OTHERS - For purposes of protection investigation, these are persons who are involved in providing information for the investigation because of their relationship to the subjects. [See **COLLATERAL CONTACTS**.]

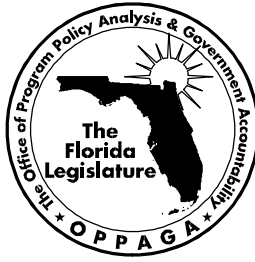
SOURCE - Any person reported to be knowledgeable of a reported incident of abuse, neglect or exploitation who might assist in providing investigation to the protective investigator.

TEMPORARY CUSTODY - A court ordered status in which physical care, control and supervision of a child is vested with an adult or an agency for a time-limited period.

THREATENED HARM - When the acts or the omissions of a parent, adult household member, or other person responsible for a child's welfare have engendered conditions where that child's physical or mental health or welfare is placed in jeopardy; or, the presence of physical or behavioral indicators which would cause a reasonable suspicion that child has been harmed as defined in s. 415.503(9), F.S.

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