



Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

## DFPS News Release

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## MEDIA ADVISORY

### DFPS Commissioner in Amarillo to introduce "Alternative Response"

- What:** Interview opportunity with DFPS Commissioner John Specia
- When:** Tuesday, November 18, 2014  
10 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. - immediately before CPS Staff/Stakeholders meeting
- Where:** Trinity Fellowship Church, 5000 Hollywood Road, Amarillo, TX
- Why:** CPS is committed to transforming itself into the best, most effective child protection system possible.

Alternative Response is new way for CPS to work with families in lower risk cases of child abuse and neglect. It allows CPS to intervene in more supportive ways by focusing on families' strengths/needs and providing services.

On November 3, 2014, Amarillo became the first area in Texas to implement this new stage of service in CPS investigations. For now, the implementation is limited to an urban and a rural area, with Randall and Potter Counties being the urban area. Gray, Hansford, Hutchinson, Carson, Ochiltree, Roberts, Donley, Lipscomb, Hemphill, Wheeler, Collingsworth, Childress, Hall, Armstrong counties make up the participating rural areas.

"Child safety still remains the top-priority," according to CPS Regional Director Camille Gilliam. "But a big difference between Alternative Response and traditional CPS investigations is there is no disposition, no designation of perpetrator or entry into the Central Registry."

Alternative Response (AR) is an approach that allows CPS to respond differently to accepted reports of child abuse and neglect based on such factors as the type and severity of the alleged maltreatment, number and sources of previous reports, and willingness of the family to participate in services.

It's a more collaborative and family-friendly approach to working with families who need help. Some reports will continue to be routed to the traditional investigations pathway, while other reports – based on their eligibility – will be routed to the new AR pathway.

Data shows that families served through AR are more engaged and invested in the process, have reduced recidivism with fewer families returning to the system, and have a more positive outlook of CPS at the end of the case. AR also helps connect families with the resources they need to be

successful without further CPS intervention. Because of the more positive and collaborative interaction between caseworker and family, research shows an increase in caseworker morale resulting in reduced turnover.

Once AR has been up and running for 6 months in the Amarillo urban and rural areas, it will be rolled out to the rest of the Panhandle area (or Region 1.) On December 1, 2014, AR is expected to launch in the Laredo area (Webb County) followed by select Dallas area counties (Dallas, Rockwell, Navarro, Hunt and Kaufman) on January 19, 2015. Those will also run for 6 months before going region wide in those areas.

AR has been federally mandated (for Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act or CAPTA funding) and is a proven program that has been successfully implemented in many states across the nation including California, Nevada, Ohio and Minnesota.

"This is a major practice change for CPS and we are excited," said Gilliam.

"This is not a 'pilot' where we are going to try this program out and see if it works- AR is here to stay."