Rethinking child protective services substantiation: Research perspectives on evolving policy

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Workshop overview

- Introductions
- History
- Harm Evidence Model
- Validity of Substantiation
- Substantiation and Services
- Substantiation and the Courts
- Substantiation and Measurement
- Substantiation and Differential Response

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Early policy history of substantiation

- In 1962, Henry Kempe "discovered" child physical abuse with the publication of "The Battered Child Syndrome"

- Spurred by Kempe and others, U.S. Children's Bureau disseminated model legislation in 1962 and all states passed reporting and investigation laws by 1965

- The Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974 (CAPTA) required states to provide prompt investigations "to substantiate the accuracy" of reports

- A 1976 model legislation document for the Children's Bureau suggested states require within 90 days of an initial report "a determination by the local child protective service that the report is founded or unfounded"

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Legalistic and social work perspectives

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Legalistic and social work perspectives

- Child Abuse and Neglect is a Multi-disciplinary Field with corresponding influences
  - Law
  - Medicine
  - Social work

- Main Issues in the Formation of Early Laws and Policies
  - Balance the tendency to prosecute with tendency to help families
  - Balance law enforcement facts gathering orientation with social work assessment
  - Early laws/policies were an attempt to achieve these sorts of balance
  - We are now able to see how this has played out to some extent in the manifestation of diverse CPS systems

Is state child welfare more like "criminal justice" or "friendly visitors?"

A key dimension to consider is the evolving nature of Child Welfare practice. The continued emphasis on community engagement and multiple-track systems (Assessment vs. Investigation) have lent a more "Social Work" or "Public Health" quality to Public Child Welfare.

- Perhaps substantiation is a better fit with the Criminal Justice approach, being related to the "guilty/not guilty" dichotomy.

- What might a more service oriented, public health type construct look like? Perhaps some indicator of service need would provide useful information for families being assessed, rather than investigated? On the other hand, we still need information about child abuse and neglect.

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Early empirical studies

Early empirical studies

- National Reporting Study on Child Abuse and Neglect (Circa 1973 – 1988)
  - Thirty states participated in the study of reporting following the passage of CAPTA, mostly aggregate data, but eventually electronic data
  - In the design of the original national data collection program only certain data were transmitted if the report was substantiated. For example, data on maltreatment were not collected.
  - After 1983 the study did not report rates of substantiation

- NIS
  - Sample studies of CPS agency reports and community sentinels
  - NIS-1 (1979-1980) concentrated on definitions of maltreatment defined by the study
  - For NIS-2 (1986-1987) both study definitions (harm standard) as well as CPS substantiations (endangerment standard) were used
  - NIS-3 and NIS-4 continue to use these standards

- NCANDS –
  - Substantiated or indicated dispositions (victimization) monitored since 1989
  - 2007 the rate is 22.5% of children investigated

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Early empirical studies

- Several Studies Focused on Case Characteristics Associated with Substantiation
    - Eckenrode J., Munsch, J., Powers, J., & Doris, J. (1988)
    - Giovannoni (1989, 1991)
    - Zuravin, S.J., Watson, B., & Ehrenschaft, M. (1987)
    - Winefield & Bradley. (1992
    - Wells, Fluke & Brown. (1995)
    - Schwab, Baumann, D., & Gober, K. (1997)
    - Fluke, Yuan & Edwards. (1999)
    - DePanfilis & Zuravin. (1999)
    - English, Marshall, Brummel & Orme. (1999)

- Factors Influencing Substantiation
    - Reporting Source (professionals tended to higher)
    - Child Age (younger children somewhat higher)
    - Maltreatment Type
    - Severity
    - Chronicity (rereporting, recurrence)

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Early empirical studies

- Policy/Organizational Factors
  - Besharov (1990), 60% to 65% unsubstantiation rate among states, argues from a policy perspective that the level of unsubstantiated reporting is too large and is a misapplication of resources.
  - Flango (1991) and (USDHHS, 1995) rates of substantiation vary depending on categories of reporting (so called two and three tier systems)
  - Fluke, J., Parry, C., Shapiro, P., Hollinshead, D., Bollenbacher, V., Baumann, D., Davis-Brown, K., (2001).

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Fluke, et al., unsubstantiation study policy elements reviewed and analyzed

- Criteria for screening reports

- Use of risk and/or safety assessments

- Role of law enforcement

- Decision maker(s)

- Consequences of decision making

- System administration

- All of the above had no significant main effects

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Fluke, et al., unsubstantiation study policy elements reviewed and analyzed

- Central Registry

- Disposition categories and definitions

- Levels of evidence

- Statistically Significant Main Effect Identified, Interaction Effects Identified for Level of Evidence

The Harm-Evidence model of substantiation

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An overview of the process

Report is made by mandated or permissive reporter (ratio is about 56/44)

Report is **screened in** or not (60% nationally, vast state variation)

SINGLE TRACK STATES:
Cases are investigated and substantiation determination is made. Gates services in 11 states.

TWO TRACK STATES:
"Assessment" or "investigation" track. Assessment tracks often <u>do not</u> make substantiation judgment.

"SUBSTANTIATED"
Higher rates of service delivery (60%), Employer-searchable central registry membership sometimes.

"UNSUBSTANTIATED"
Lower rates of service delivery (30%). No employer-searchable record, report destruction often happens.

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Note: Substantiation has varying evidentiary thresholds

Some states use "credible evidence," others use "reason to suspect" or "clear and convincing," etc… The variance here is pretty impressive, but has little "on the ground" impact, amazingly enough.

Substantiation rates also vary radically state to state, from about 1/10 to more than half (national average: about 1/4).

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm06/appendd.htm

OK, so what might people *think* substantiation means?

Substantiated
- = "Child abuse happened"
- = "Guilty Verdict"

Unsubstantiated
- = "Nothing happened," and maybe "the state child welfare agency hassled innocent people for no reason"
- = "Not Guilty"

We could draw it like this:

Unsubstantiated cases
from families in which
nothing really happened.
___

Families should have
- Low risk for maltreatment
- Low rate of re-report
- Low rates of other problems in the family

Substantiated cases
from families in which
something serious happened.
___

Families should have
- High risk for maltreatment
- High rates of re-report
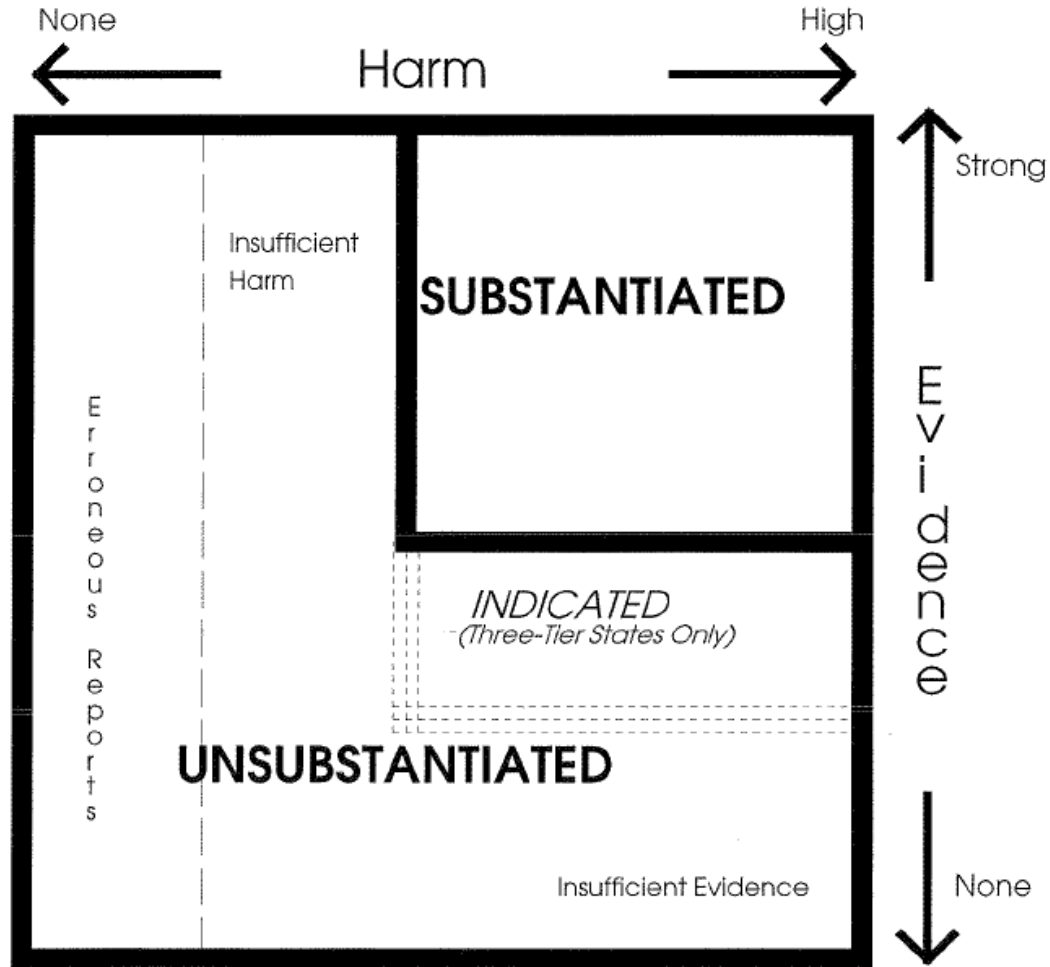- High rates of other problems in the family

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But I didn't like this model

I was an investigative worker in the late 1980's. I frequently noticed that I was a lot more worried about some of my "unsubstantiated" cases than some of my "substantiated" cases.

When I became a professor, I started to think about this in more detail. I thought maybe I could write something about it. Maybe I could make some sense of it.

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So what did I do?

I wrote up a paper explaining how substantiation works, and explaining that the substantiated / unsubstantiated dichotomy was nothing like a "bright line," and how it had little real utility.

I proposed a theoretical model explaining what substantiation is (the "Harm/Evidence Model"). The H/E model says one very simple thing: In order to substantiate a case you must have two things (1) a case which has enough harm or risk of harm to be considered maltreatment and (2) you must have evidence to show it.

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What does it do?

As a way to think about this very simple model (harm+evidence=substantiation), Let's think about some cases and where they might go.

Kind of a "pin the tail on the Harm/Evidence Model" kind of thing.

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Kid with belt bruise

Child has bruising in the shape of father's belt buckle, tells credible story, father admits.
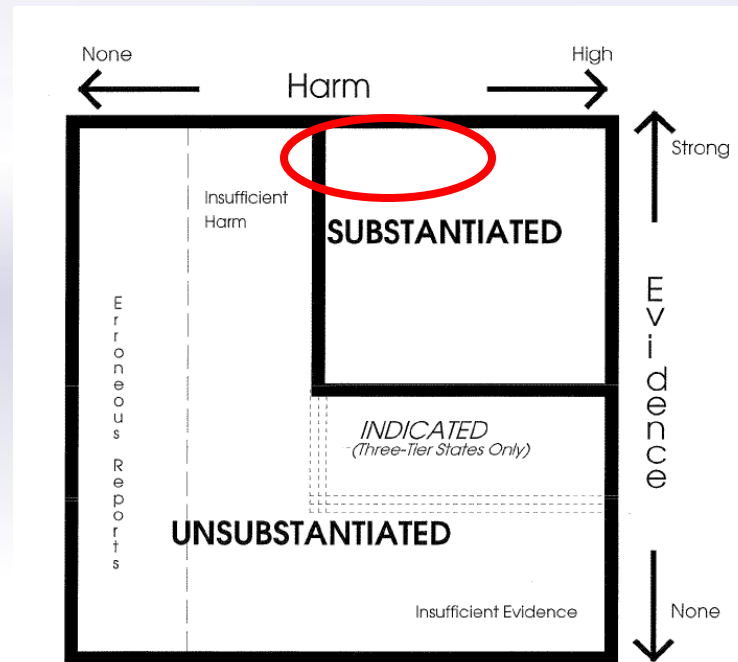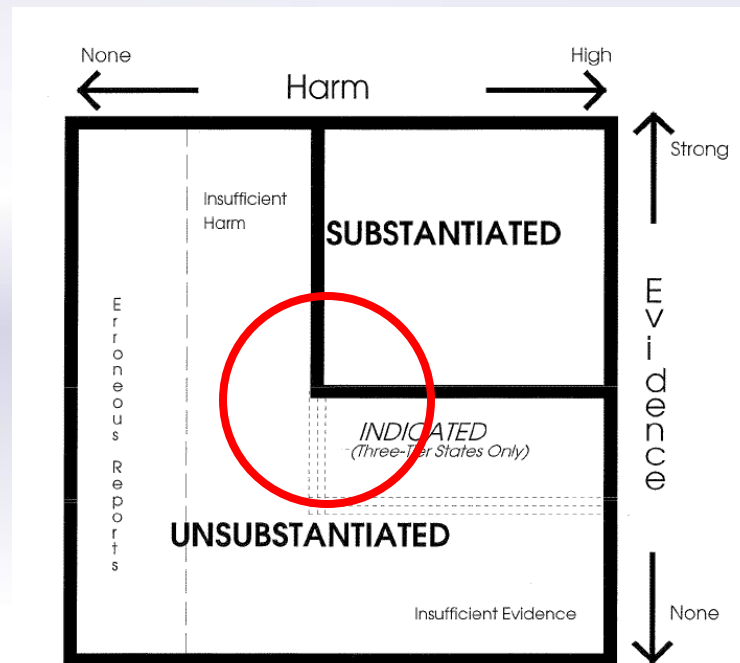
Possible SIDS case

Family has history of neglect, 2nd child in family dies, diagnosis given is possible SIDS.
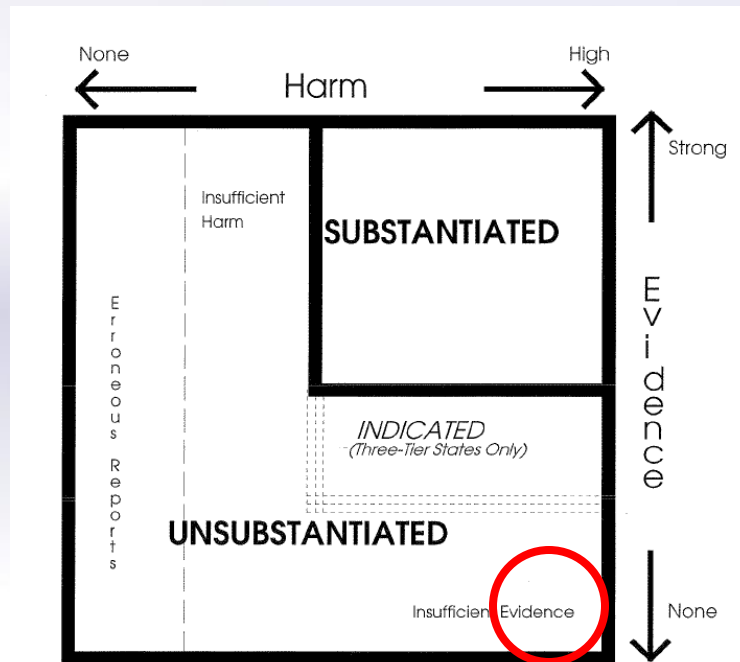
Preteen injury

11 year old child in tumultuous home has repeated minor bruising which appears consistent with abuse. Reports that injury was from discipline, but gives somewhat unclear and conflicting history.
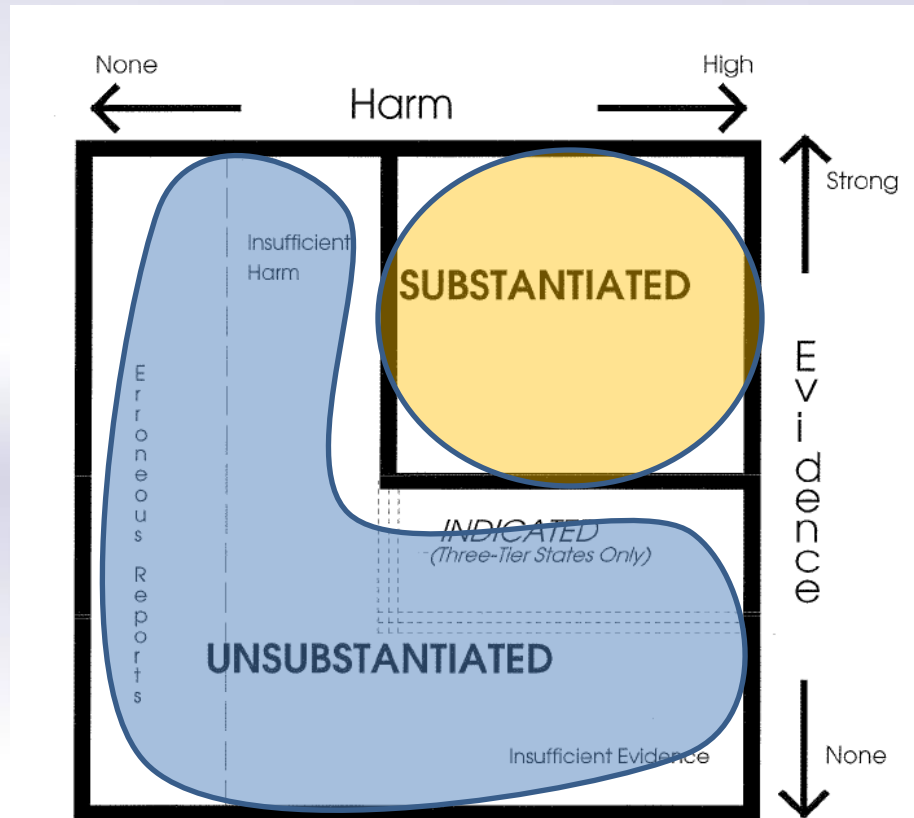
In summary, different cases can fall in different parts of the model, and the same case clearly can be seen differently by different investigators.

What implications can we draw from this model?

The main implication I draw is that substantiated and unsubstantiated cases may not be <u>as</u> different as we think. On the whole, you would expect substantiated cases to represent somewhat more serious situations than unsubstantiated cases, but <u>perhaps this difference will not be very great</u>

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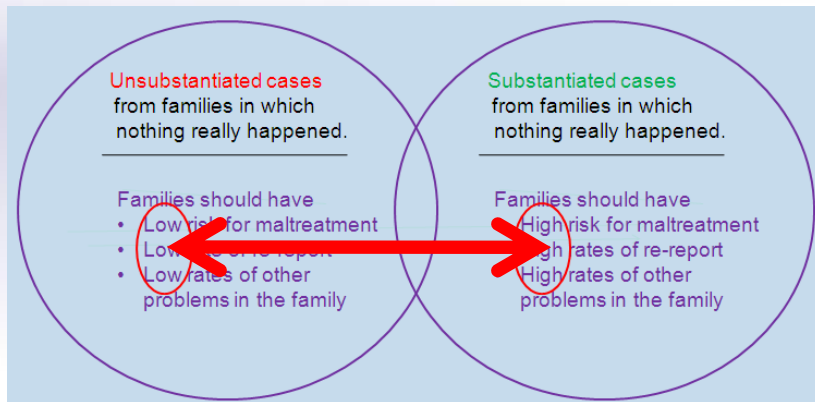# In this model, there is <u>a lot</u> of overlap on the "Harm" axis.

It is easy for an unsubstantiated case to be far more serious than a substantiated one.
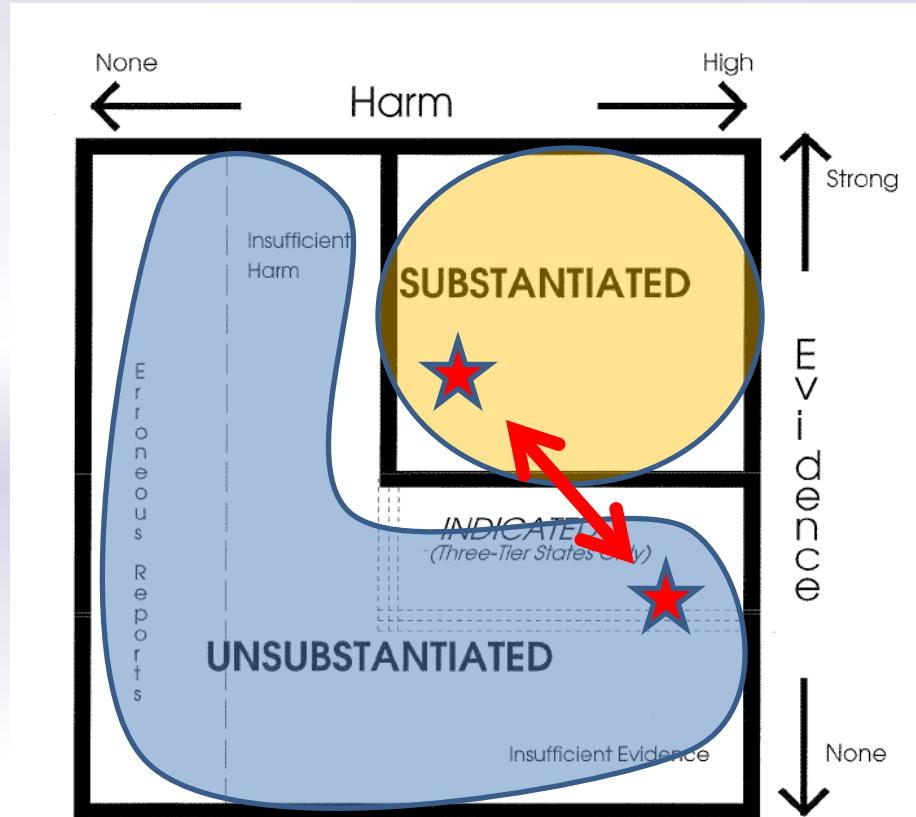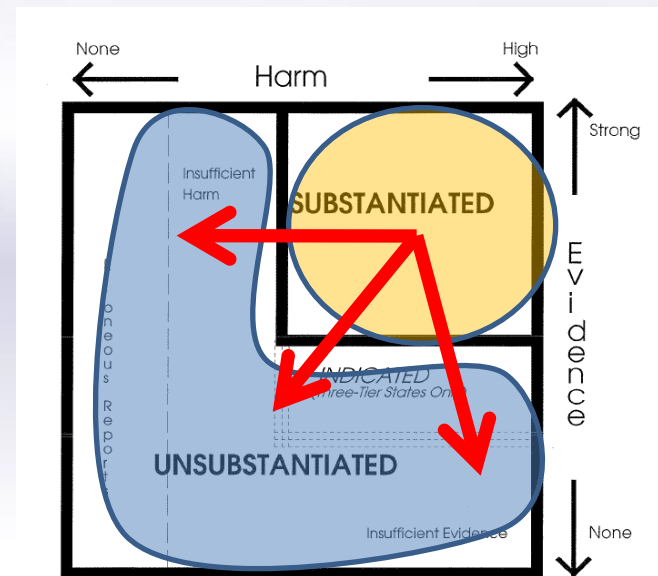
The H/E model suggests that the Sub/Unsub difference is less important than we thought.

Old Model:
Big Harm Differential

Harm/Evidence Model:
Lower Harm Differential

Let's back up and think about <u>service need</u>, which has <u>nothing whatsoever to do with evidence.</u>
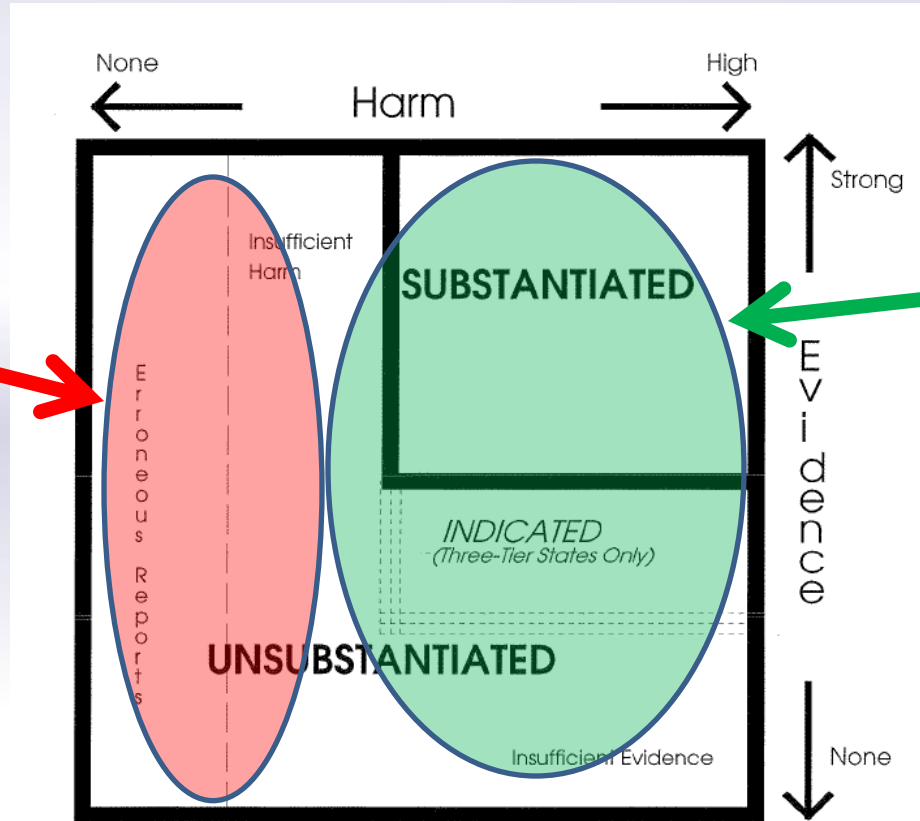
If you only serve substantiated cases, you miss all the needy (green) people in the lower right. That isn't good if your agency has a prevention mission.

No Service Need Present

Service Need Present

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Summary:
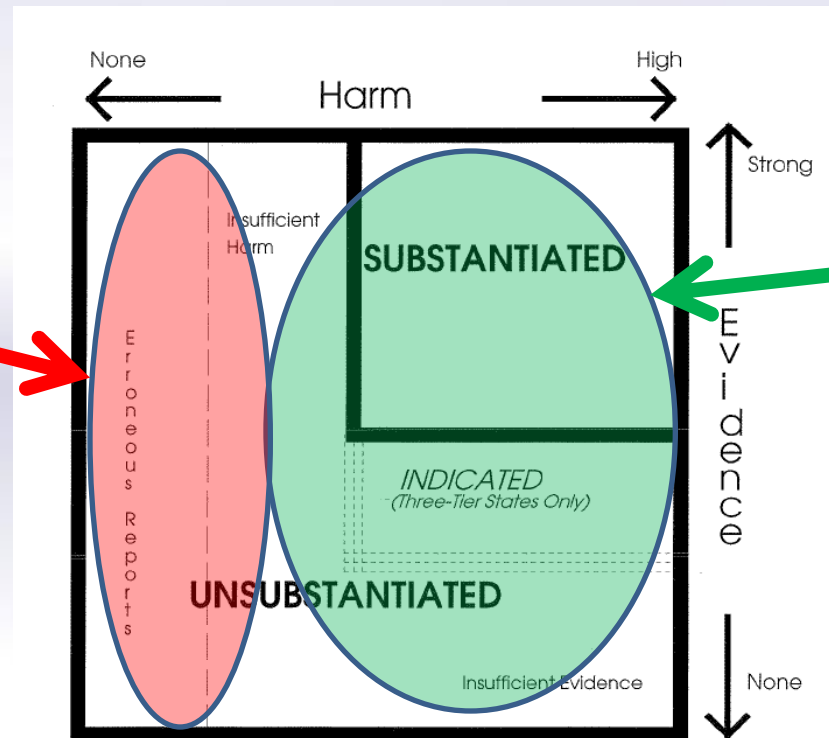
- The Harm/Evidence Model gives us a new way to look at substantiation.

- It implies that the differences between substantiated and unsubstantiated cases may not be that large.

- It implies that services must be gated by actual service <u>need</u>, not by substantiation status.

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How well does Brett's model fit actual decision-making?

Research relating caseworkers' assessments of harm and availability of evidence to substantiation

Cross, T.P. & Casanueva, C. (2009). Caseworker judgments and substantiation. *Child Maltreatment, 14,* 38-52.

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National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW)

- Longitudinal national probability study of children involved with CPS

- Interviews and surveys with children, caregivers, and teachers as well as caseworkers

- Random samples:
  - 92 primary sampling units (counties) across the country
  - 5501 children within those counties who were involved in CPS investigations

Caseworker question about harm

Regardless of the outcome of the investigation, how would you describe the level of harm to [CHILD'S NAME]?

Would you say:	% of cases
1 = None	44%
2 = Mild	28%
3 = Moderate	20%
4 = Severe	8%

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Caseworker question about evidence

Regardless of the outcome of the investigation, how sufficient was the evidence to substantiate the case?

Would you say:	% of cases
1 = **There was no evidence of maltreatment**	34%
2 = **Evidence was clearly not sufficient**	17%
3 = **Evidence was probably not sufficient**	11%
4 = **Evidence was probably sufficient**	9%
5 = **Evidence was clearly sufficient**	29%

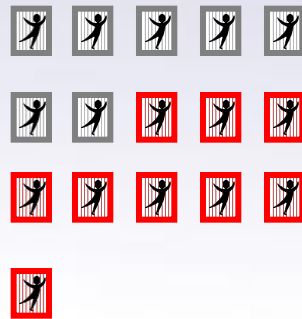# The results on harm, evidence and substantiation per 100 children were plotted

Distribution of 100 children

Little or no harm

Moderate to severe harm

Probably to clearly sufficient evidence

No to probably insufficient evidence

Each figure represents 1 out of 100 children
Red = substantiated

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How well did Brett's model fit these 100 children?

- The substantiation outcome matched Brett's model in 85 out of 100 cases

- The model is mostly accurate but there are still some decisions that are hard to predict

- Caveats:

  - It is hard to know where to set the "cut points" on harm and evidence to test Brett's model
  - Risk of imminent harm may be a proxy for harm in some cases
  - Imprecision in the research may affect the results

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Other relevant results

- Most cases had low levels of harm and evidence and were not substantiated

- In 9 out of 100 cases, children were judged to be harmed but reports were **not** substantiated
    - Evidence was insufficient in 5 of these cases
    - Evidence was sufficient in 4 of these cases

Other relevant results (cont.)

- Sufficiency of evidence was a stronger predictor of substantiation than harm or risk

- Child gender and age significantly predicted substantiation independent of harm, risk and evidence

  - This suggests that other judgments also affect substantiation decision-making

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Differentiating between substantiated, suspected, and unsubstantiated maltreatment in Canada

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Canada

CIS-2003

- National survey of children 0-15 years of age reported to and investigated by child welfare authorities for alleged child abuse and neglect

- Representative multi-stage cluster sample of investigations opened between October and December 2003 (n=11,562)

- 55 of 400 child welfare service areas (CWSA) across Canada (excluding Quebec)

- Limits:
  - Data limited to information that workers gathered during their standard investigation
  - Did not examine screened-out reports, internal reports on already open cases, cases investigated only by police
  - Results should not be interpreted as being nationally representative

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Levels of substantiation

- Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2003 (CIS-2003; Trocmé et al., 2005)

  – Large sample, three-tier substantiation classification

  – 49% of child maltreatment investigations in Canada (excluding Quebec) were substantiated*

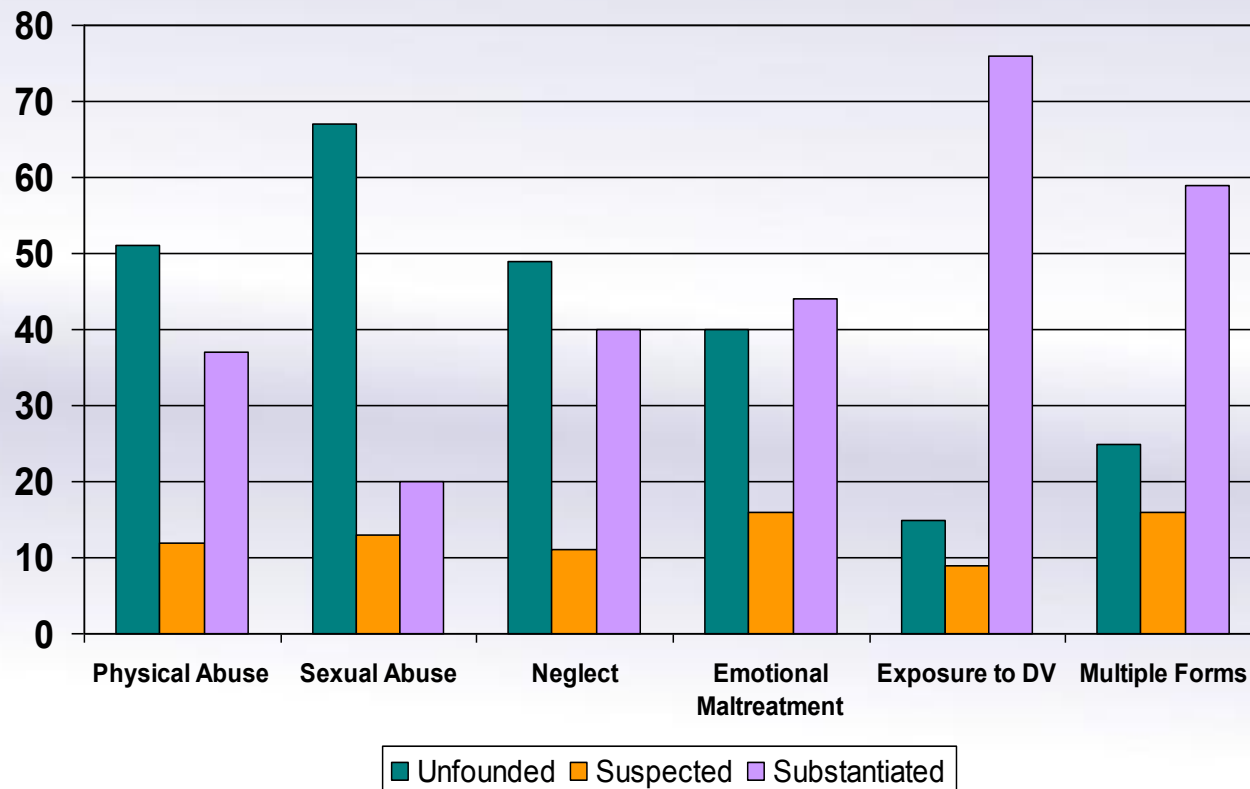 – 13% of investigations were suspected

  *This represents almost double the rate of substantiation reported in the U.S.

  U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—Administration on Children, 2008

Research questions:

1. Can suspected maltreatment cases be combined with unsubstantiated or substantiated cases?

2. Can substantiated cases be accurately differentiated from unsubstantiated?

3. If so, what factors differentiate substantiated and unsubstantiated?

4. Do different sets of factors drive substantiation decision in cases of physical abuse, neglect, emotional maltreatment, and in those involving multiple forms of maltreatment?

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Rates of substantiation by maltreatment type in Canada in 2003 (Excluding Quebec)

Factors for suspected vs. unsubstantiated

- Emotional abuse is only maltreatment form
- Multiple forms of abuse
- Police referral
- Two or more housing risks
- Other minority status
- Primary caregiver has one, two, or three or more risk factors
- Uncooperative caregiver(s)
- Sings of emotional harm
- Any physical harm
- Child behavioural concern

* All factors significant, $p < .05$

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Compared to suspected investigations…

- the following factors increase the likelihood of a substantiated investigation:

    – Police referral
    – Prior substantiated maltreatment
    – Signs of emotional harm
    – Any physical harm

- the following factors decrease the likelihood of a substantiated investigation:

    – Sexual abuse is only maltreatment form
    – Two parent blended family
    – Single parent family

* All factors significant, p < .05

Logistic regression

- Significant predictors of whether maltreatment investigation was substantiated rather than unsubstantiated:
    - Police referral
    - Other minority ethno-racial status
    - Housing and caregiver risk factors
    - Uncooperative caregiver(s)
    - Households with two biological caregivers
    - Physical or emotional harm
    - Prior report of maltreatment
    - Child behavioural functioning concerns

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Discussion

- Certain factors influence the decision to classify maltreatment as suspected **and** the decision to substantiate
  - Police referral
  - Presence of physical or emotional harm
  - Overlap suggests that the presence of these characteristics makes it difficult for workers to dismiss the possibility that maltreatment occurred, but other case features must be present to warrant substantiation

- Certain case characteristics associated with a reduced likelihood of having maltreatment classified as unsubstantiated, but on their own, they may be insufficient bases for substantiating maltreatment
  - Caregiver functioning
  - child behavioural concerns
  - housing risk factors

- Influence of police referral, even after controlling for type and severity of maltreatment:
  - Suggests that police referrals may be perceived to be more credible

- Factors that influence decisions between unsubstantiated and suspected, but do not increase likelihood of substantiation rather that suspected
  - Caregiver risk factors
  - Child behaviour concerns
  - Housing risk
  - Caregiver cooperation
  - Consider within the context of Drake's Harm/Evidence Model (1996)

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Future directions

- Most jurisdictions in Canada only offer two case disposition options

- While some critics have argued that case substantiation is a biased decision that is influenced by many extraneous factors, our analyses show that consistent clinical factors are the most important determinants of case substantiation.

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Validity and substantiation

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Validity and substantiation

- Validity
  - Form of validity, e.g., face, content, concurrent, predictive/criterion, etc.
  - Fundamental Question - Is it maltreatment?
    - Evidence – Harm Framework
    - Risk of Harm
    - Safety
  - If it's maltreatment, how sure are we (precision)?
  - If it's maltreatment, what we have to do about it may confound things.

- Rereporting and recurrence and evidence of predictive validity for substantiation
  - If it happened before is it more likely to happen again?
  - If it didn't happen but the child was at risk did it happen later?

Substantiation and maltreatment recidivism: A propensity score analysis

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Previous research

- Early studies looked at the bivariate relationship between substantiation and recidivism; results were mixed

- More recent studies have used multivariate analytic methods to examine recidivism while "accounting for" the effect of other child and case characteristics, such as age of child and type of maltreatment

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Previous research

- Multistate analysis of NCANDS data found that child victims (substantiated maltreatment) significantly more likely to be both re-reported and re-substantiated than non-victims (Fluke et al., 2008)

- Administrative data in FL found that recidivism more likely among younger children, neglected children, initially substantiated children, and those provided with in-home services (Lipien & Forthofer, 2004)

Previous research

Drake et al. (2003) looked at three types of recidivism – re-reports, substantiated re-reports, and placement into care – among initial cases of sexual abuse, physical abuse, and neglect. Main effects of substantiation shown in table. But, when substantiated cases received services, risk of recidivism greatly reduced.

	Re-report (RR)	Substantiated Re-report (RR)	Placement into Substitute Care (RR)
Sexual Abuse	1.14	1.43	1.35
Physical Abuse	1.17	1.92	2.37
Neglect	2.48	2.88	3.58

Research question and methods

The current study uses a sophisticated methodology known as Propensity Score Matching (PSM) to answer the question: Are initially substantiated cases more likely to be re-reported to child protective services within 12 months of the initial investigation when compared to initially unsubstantiated cases?

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Study sample

- Sample data taken from IDCFS administrative database
- Started with population of all child reports 1999-2004 (n=605,026)
- Sample limited to children with no prior investigations (n=386,231)
- Sample excluded cases opened for intact family services or substitute care (n=325,209)
- If household had more that one investigated child, one child was randomly chosen (n=203,768)
- Children with missing data excluded (n=188,471)

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Comparison of sample before and after matching

Matching variables	Before Match	After Match
Gender	More females unsubstantiated	No difference
Child's Race	No difference	No difference
Child's Age	Lower % under 3 Substantiated	No difference
Geographic region	Lower % substantiated in Cook	No difference
Type of maltreatment	Lower % sexual & physical abuse among substantiated	No difference
# of allegations	Higher % among substantiated	No difference
Maltreatment reporter	Higher substantiated: Law officers & medical personnel	No difference
# of other children	Higher % none substantiated	No difference
Mother as perpetrator	Higher among substantiated	No difference

Survival analysis

Variables in the model	Risk of Re-report
Gender	No significant effect
Race	Caucasian > Latino, African American
Child's Age	Linear relation with highest for under 3
Geographic region	Cook County < rest of the state
Type of maltreatment	Sexual abuse < physical abuse, neglect
Number of allegations	Two or more allegation > One allegation
Maltreatment reporter	social service worker > family & neighbors, law enforcement, medical personnel
Number of other children in home	one or more child in home > only child
Perpetrator	Mother > all other adults in home as a group
Initial Substantiation Status	**Substantiated > Unsubstantiated**
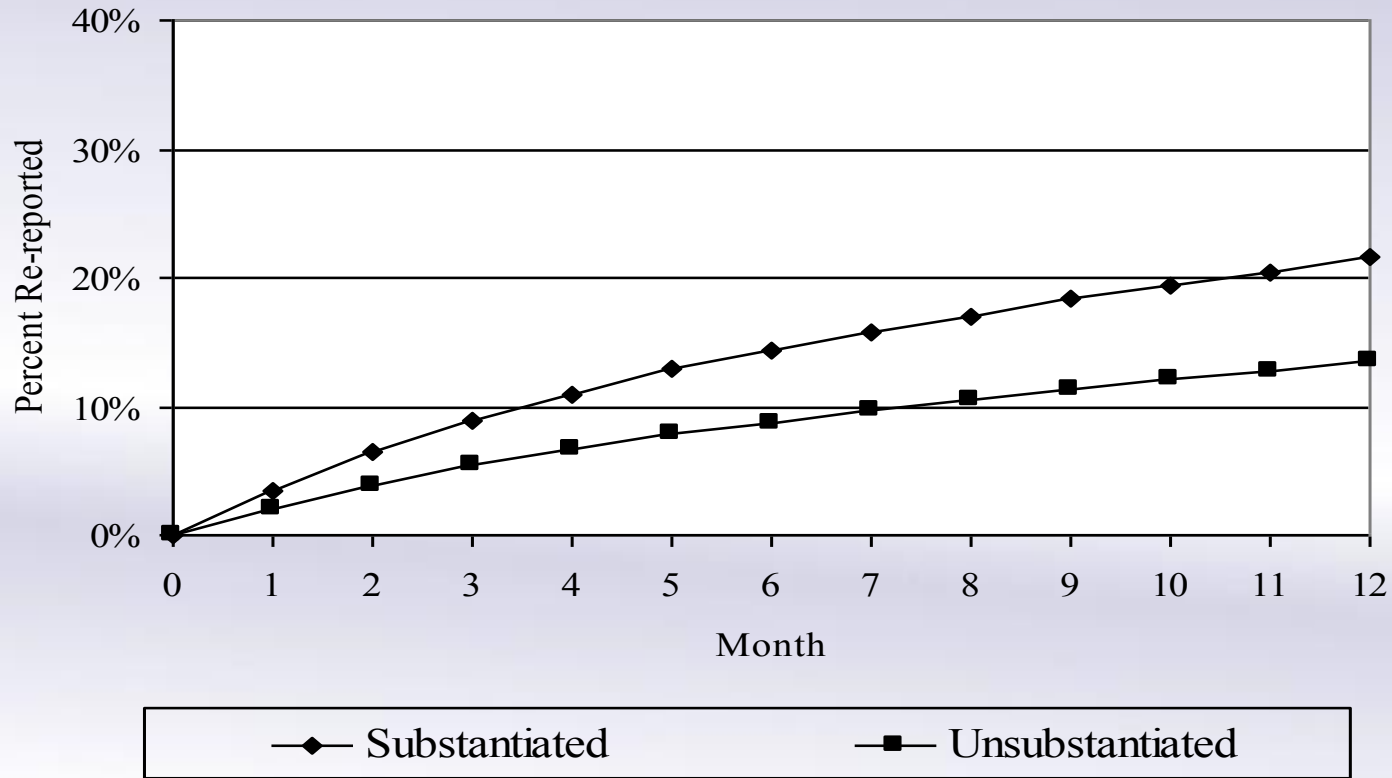
Implications of results

What function should substantiation have in child welfare?

- Gatekeeper for services?
- What is the best way to target limited services when almost all investigated families have some level of service need?
- Targeting more intensive services to substantiated cases makes sense in a system where resources are limited

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Implications of results

- It has been argued that although recidivism rates among substantiated cases are higher, the volume of unsubstantiated cases that return to the system is greater

- This is true, but only because the vast majority of all investigations are initially unsubstantiated (about 75%)

- These two issues of high unmet service needs and high volume of cases that return to the system have led many states to implement differential response systems

Synopsis of findings on substantiation and recidivism

Using NSCAW Data

Brett Drake
Patricia Kohl
Melissa Jonson-Reid
Washington University in St. Louis

Time to Leave Substantiation Behind

Findings From A National Probability Study

Patricia L. Kohl
Melissa Jonson-Reid
Brett Drake
Washington University

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What this talk is about:

We will be over-viewing findings from a paper using NSCAW data. This paper tries to determine if substantiated and unsubstantiated cases are at similar or different risk of recidivism.

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Synopsis of findings on substantiation using NSCAW data

So what is NSCAW anyway?
It's the "National Survey of Child and Adolescent Wellbeing." We use the NSCAW I data (II is still ongoing)

- It is a $74M federally funded study on child maltreatment, the largest ever.
- NSCAW I has a carefully constructed sampling procedure using about 6,000 kids, intended to make the study's results representative of the USA in general.
- The sample is composed of children who were contacted by state child maltreatment agencies.

http://www.rti.org/page.cfm?objectid=D688C979-8B27-456E-AD0AF638862E7365

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Why did we write this article?

It was partly as a follow-on to another article, based on a different large child welfare consortium study: LONGSCAN

Child Abuse & Neglect 29 (2005) 479–492

Defining maltreatment according to substantiation: Distinction without a difference?

Jon M. Hussey [a,*], Jane Marie Marshall [a], Diana J. English [b], Elizabeth Dawes Knight [c], Anna S. Lau [d], Howard Dubowitz [e], Jonathan B. Kotch [a]

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LONGSCAN kids were analyzed to see if substantiated and unsubstantiated kids varied on the following measures:

- The Child Behavior Check List (Internalizing, Externalizing, Total Scores)
- The Vineland (Socialization and Daily Living Skills sections)
- The Trauma Symptom Checklist (TSCC-A)
- The Batelle Developmental Inventory Screening Test

What did they find?

Discussion

In this high-risk sample, the behavioral and developmental outcomes of 8-year-old children with unsubstantiated and substantiated maltreatment reports are indistinguishable. In bivariate and multivariate analyses of the pooled sample, substantiation status was not associated with any of the 10 outcomes. Results from the site-specific analyses largely replicated those from the pooled analyses, finding no difference by substantiation status in 37 of the 40 estimated models. These findings are consistent with earlier work by Leiter et al. (1994), who found no significant association between substantiation status and eight out of nine school and delinquency outcomes.

Prior Citation, Page 489.

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Which brings us back to NSCAW

We decided to do a study to compliment the LONGSCAN article. It seemed only reasonable to tackle similar questions asked of the LONGSCAN study in the NSCAW study.

The NSCAW study has the advantage of allowing us to look at recidivism, which we took as our dependent variable. The LONGSCAN article looked at child symptomotology and problems.

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Our NSCAW sample:

We looked at the 6,000 NSCAW kids and kept the 1,820 kids who:

- Remained in the home following the index (first) investigation

- Had no known prior maltreatment reports (this cut our sample by more than half)

- Had data available on all outcome measures.

Our analyses

NSCAW uses a complex sampling design and requires weighting to be carefully accounted for in the analysis. This necessitated use of SUDAAN (version 9.01).

Since our question was simple, we decided to use simple statistics to show our results. You will see that we use Chi-Square tests (bivariate tables) and event history analyses (multivariate Cox regression models). We also present survival curves.

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First issue:

What factors predicted recidivism at the <u>bivariate level</u> (p<=.05)?

Substantiation Status
Gender
Race
Child Age
Family Income
Caregiver Education
Child Developmental Problems
Caregiver Mental Health Problems
Caregiver Substance Abuse Problems
Maltreatment type

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Recidivism as <u>Any Re-Report (17.4%)</u>

Bivariate Results

<u>Red predictors are nonsignificant,</u> **<u>Green predictors are p<=.05</u>**

Substantiation Status (NS, 15.3% of Sub'd vs. 18.0% of Unsub'd)
Gender
Race
Child Age
Family Income (Below poverty families about 2x as likely)
Caregiver Education
Child Developmental Problems (almost 2x as likely)
Caregiver Mental Health Problems
Caregiver Substance Abuse Problems
Maltreatment type

Recidivism as <u>Substantiated Re-Report (5.3%)</u>

Bivariate Results

Red predictors are nonsignificant, Green predictors are p<=.05

Substantiation Status (NS, 8.1% of Sub'd vs. 4.5% of Unsub'd, p=.09)
Gender
Race
Child Age
Family Income
Caregiver Education
Child Developmental Problems (still almost 2x as likely)
Caregiver Mental Health Problems
Caregiver Substance Abuse Problems
Maltreatment type

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Recidivism as <u>Foster Care (4%)</u>

Bivariate Results

<u>Red predictors are nonsignificant,</u> <u>Green predictors are p<=.05</u>

Substantiation Status (NS, 5.3% of Sub'd vs. 3.7% of Unsub'd, p=.09)
Gender
Race
Child Age
Family Income
Caregiver Education
Child Developmental Problems
Caregiver Mental Health Problems
Caregiver Substance Abuse Problems
Maltreatment type

What about multivariate results?

They're up next, and use "Hazard Rates." A Hazard Rate is how much increase one thing shows over another. If you believe that Women are twice as likely to ask directions as Men, then the "Hazard Rate" for asking directions is 2 for Women (twice as likely = 2:1 = HR of 2).

Cox Regression Models of Recidivism

	Any Rereport $\chi^2 = 39.3$, 12 df, $p < .001$		Substantiated Rereport $\chi^2 = 59.9$, 12 df, $p < .001$		Foster Care Placement $\chi^2 = 68.8$, 12 df, $p < .001$	
	Hazard Rate	p Value	Hazard Rate	p Value	Hazard Rate	p Value
Substantiation status	—	.307	—	.107	—	.343
Substantiated	0.8	—	1.8	—	1.4	—
Unsubstantiated	1.0	—	1.0	—	1.0	—
Gender	—	.219	—	.703	—	.616
Male	1.3	—	1.1	—	0.9	—
Female	1.0	—	1.0	—	1.0	—
Race	—	.070	—	.960	—	.435
White	0.7	—	1.0	—	0.7	—
Non-White	1.0	—	1.0	—	1.0	—
Child age	.09	.071	1.0	.717	1.0	.749
Family Income	—	.033	—	.205	—	.016
Below poverty	1.6	—	1.7	—	2.9	—
Above poverty	1.0	—	1.0	—	1.0	—
Caregiver's education	—	.089	—	.703	—	.261
Completed high school	1.0	—	1.0	—	1.0	—
No high school completion	1.5	—	1.2	—	1.7	—
Child developmental problems	—	.004	—	.002	—	.077
Yes	2.0	—	2.4	—	2.2	—
No	1.0	—	1.0	—	1.0	—
Caregiver mental health problem	—	.114	—	.142	—	.284
Yes	1.6	—	2.0	—	1.7	—
No	1.0	—	1.0	—	1.0	—
Caregiver substance abuse problem	—	.411	—	.752	—	.774
Yes	1.3	—	1.3	—	1.2	—
No	1.0	—	1.0	—	1.0	—
Maltreatment type	—	.484	—	.320	—	.225
Physical abuse	1.0	—	1.0	—	1.0	—
Sexual abuse	1.5	—	1.9	—	0.3	—
Neglect	1.3	—	1.4	—	0.8	—
Other/unknown	1.7	—	2.2	—	2.3	—

Note: Inclusion of cases with prior reports did not substantially change the findings.

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How about some survival curves?

A survival curve is a way to show how long it takes until something happens. The left axis is the percent of people "surviving" (not having the event). These are bivariate.
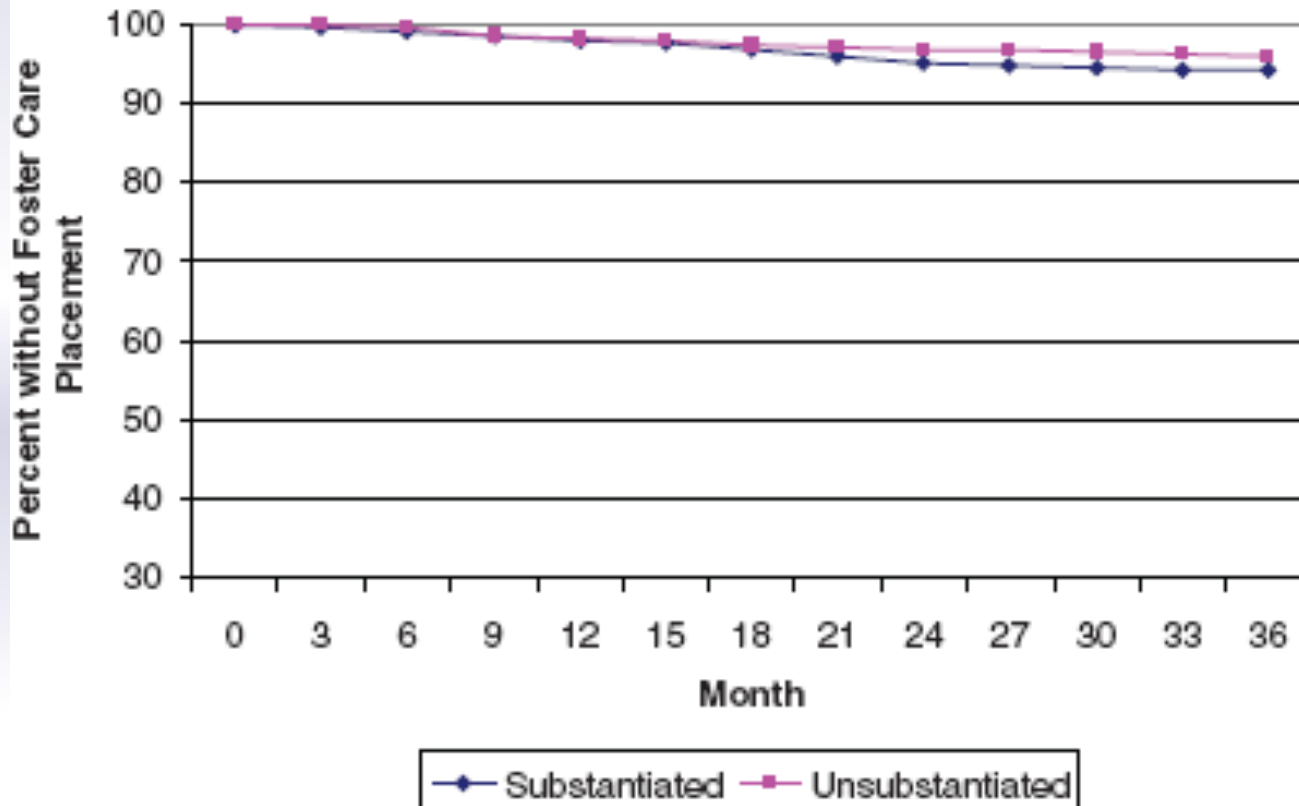
Survivor Functions Estimated by Kaplan-Meier Method for Any Rereport
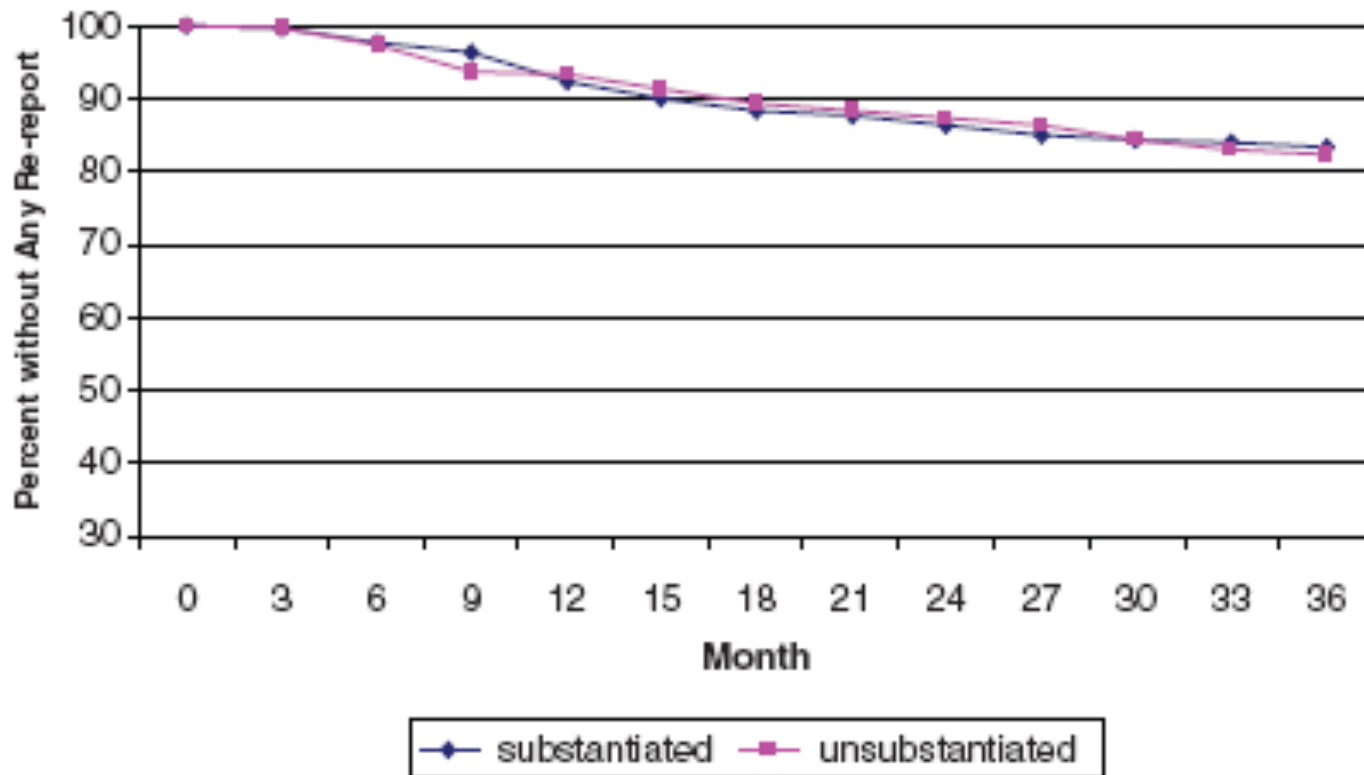
Survivor Functions Estimated by Kaplan-Meier Method for Substantiated Rereport ($p < .05^{a}$)
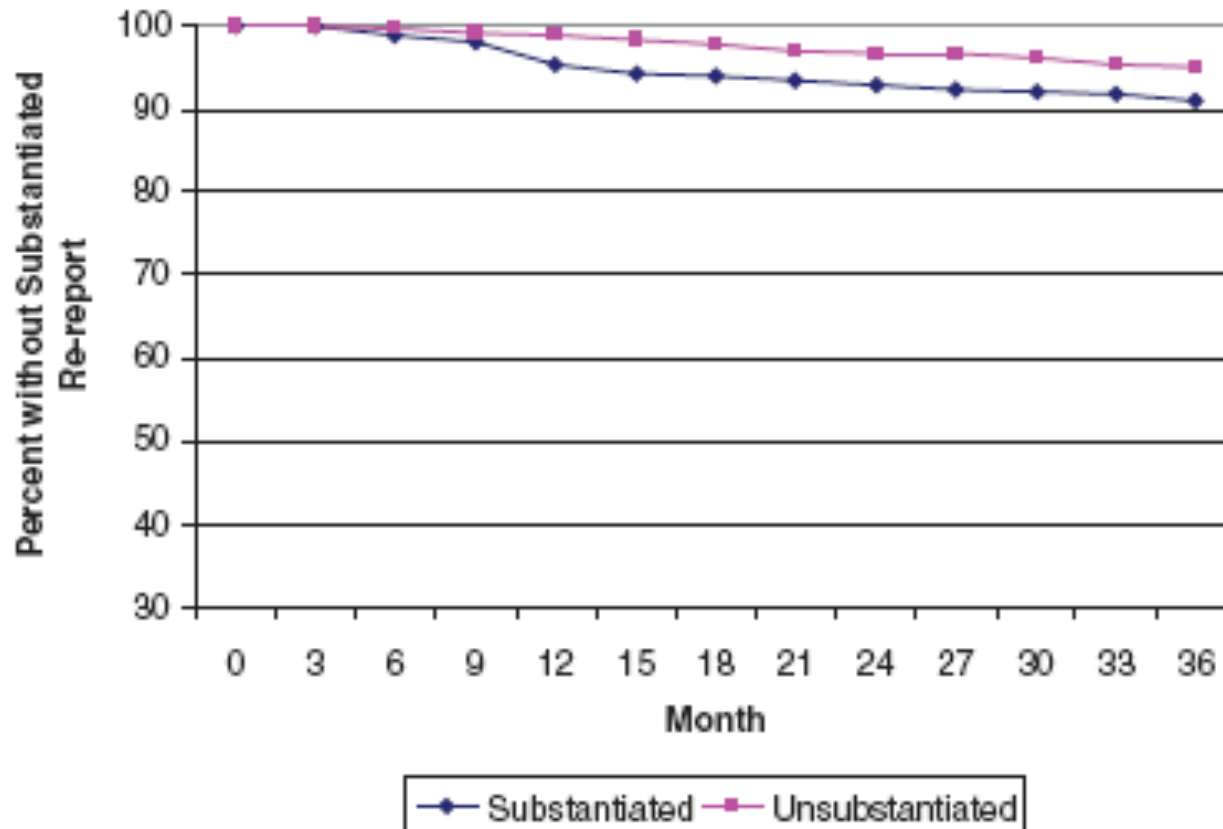
Survivor Functions Estimated by Kaplan-Meier Method for Foster Care Placement

Comparison to prior work:

These survival curves are similar to those found in a single state (Missouri) sample using far more subjects (60,000 children from the mid 1990's). In that study, no difference was found at the any rereport level, and moderate differences were found at the substantiated rereport and the foster care levels.

Drake, Jonson-Reid, Way, & Chung, (2003)

So the takeaway message is….

- We found no real differences in terms of any re-report. Sub'd and Unsub'd cases come back at about the same rates.

- We found that substantiated cases did seem to have higher rates of (substantiated) re-report, but this was not statistically significant, probably due to power issues.

- We found no large differences in terms of recidivism resulting in foster care.

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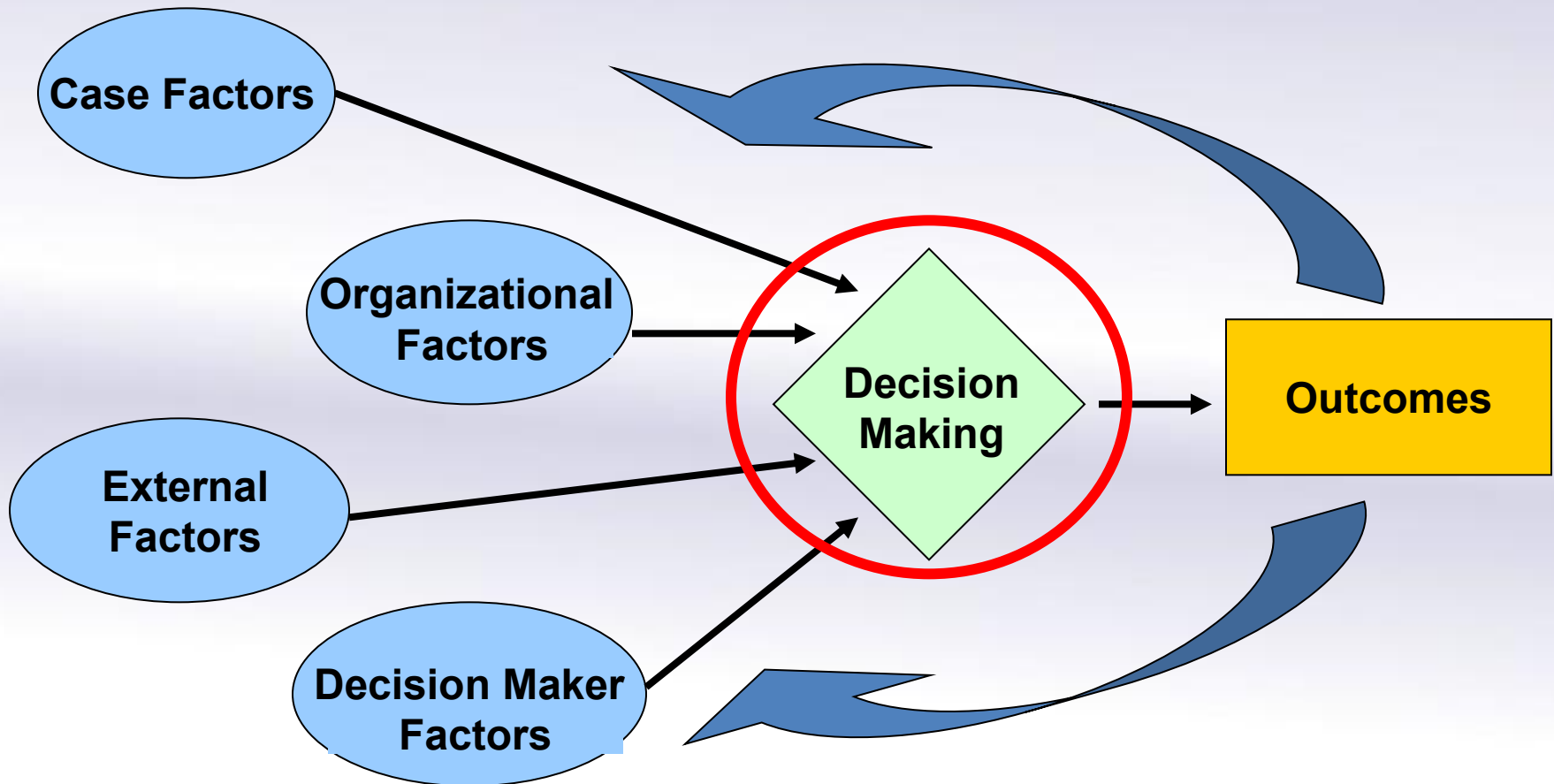School of Social Work
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Based on these data, it looks like the chance of future Child Welfare contact does not vary radically based on substantiation. We suggest that since unsubstantiated cases are at high risk of recidivism, they are logical candidates for service provision.

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Exercise I

Influences on assessment

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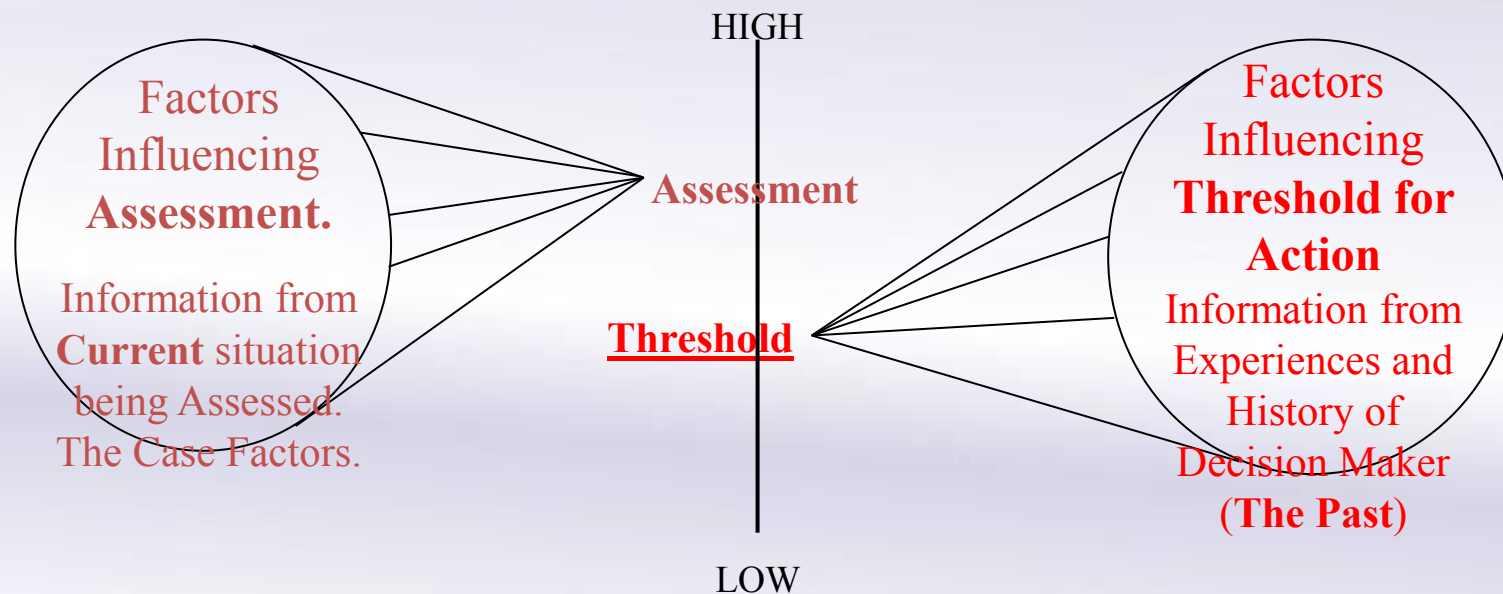*Protecting Children & Animals Since 1877*

Decision Making

But what is the decision making component.

- According to the Dalgleish GADM model, Decision Making consists of
  - An assessment of the situation
  - A decision to do something about it

- There is a need to model the decision making performance of a worker.

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A General Model for Assessing the Situation and Deciding what to do about it - Dalgleish

Evidence and Harm Assessment Dimension

HIGH

Factors Influencing **Assessment.**

Information from **Current** situation being Assessed. The Case Factors.

Assessment

Threshold

Factors Influencing **Threshold for Action** Information from Experiences and History of Decision Maker **(The Past)**

LOW

If the **Assessment** is *ABOVE* the **Threshold**, then ACTION is taken.

If the **Assessment** is *BELOW* the **Threshold**, then NO ACTION is taken.

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Focus of work and beliefs:
        We will present pairs of statements

- We want you to choose between the pairs of statements.

- While you might endorse both statements:

- Try to **choose the statement that best reflects** *your* **general work focus and beliefs**.

- On a sheet of paper write the letter, A or B, that states your preference.

Worker Focus Task

1	There is a need to ensure the physical and emotional well being of all children.	A
	Families are the best place for children to achieve their full potential.	B
2	Child protection workers should be willing to be an advocate for the child.	A
	Work should be focussed on keeping the family together.	B
3	Children's rights should be safeguarded so they achieve their full potential.	A
	The family's right to guide the development of their children should be safeguarded.	B
4	The safety and well being of the child is paramount and overrides the importance of the needs of the family unit.	A
	Maintaining the family unit is paramount and overrides the importance of the child's needs.	B

Worker Focus Task

5	The client is the family unit and all other work is secondary.	A
	The client is the child and all other work is secondary.	B
6	The state has a responsibility to protect children.	A
	The state should not be responsible for families or their children.	B
7	Child protection workers should be willing to be an advocate for the child.	A
	There should be minimalist intervention aimed at strengthening families and the capacity to parent.	B
8	The state has a responsibility to protect children.	A
	The family's right to guide the development of their children should be safeguarded.	B

Get your score by counting the number of A's you preferred across the 8 pairs of statements.

This is a short form modified for use in this context.

The Balance of Focus in Child Protection Work: Reflection

- Did you have a clear preference over the 8 pairs?
  - Think about why you may have those preferences.

- Turn to your neighbors and discuss.

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BREAK

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Three ways in which substantiation has real-world influence

- Service Delivery

- Court Proceedings

- Measurement and Research

Substantiation and service delivery

- ## NCANDS Data
  - ### Some Terms
    - **Victim**: A child having a maltreatment disposition of substantiated, indicated, or alternative response victim

    - **Services:** Noninvestigative public or private nonprofit activities provided or continued as a result of an investigation or assessment. In general, only activities that occur within 90 days of the report are included in NCANDS

    - **Removed From Home:** The removal of the child from his or her normal place of residence to a substitute care setting by a CPS or social services agency

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Two perspectives on services and substantiation from NCANDS

NCANDS Federal Fiscal Year 2007 - Service Provision (44 States)

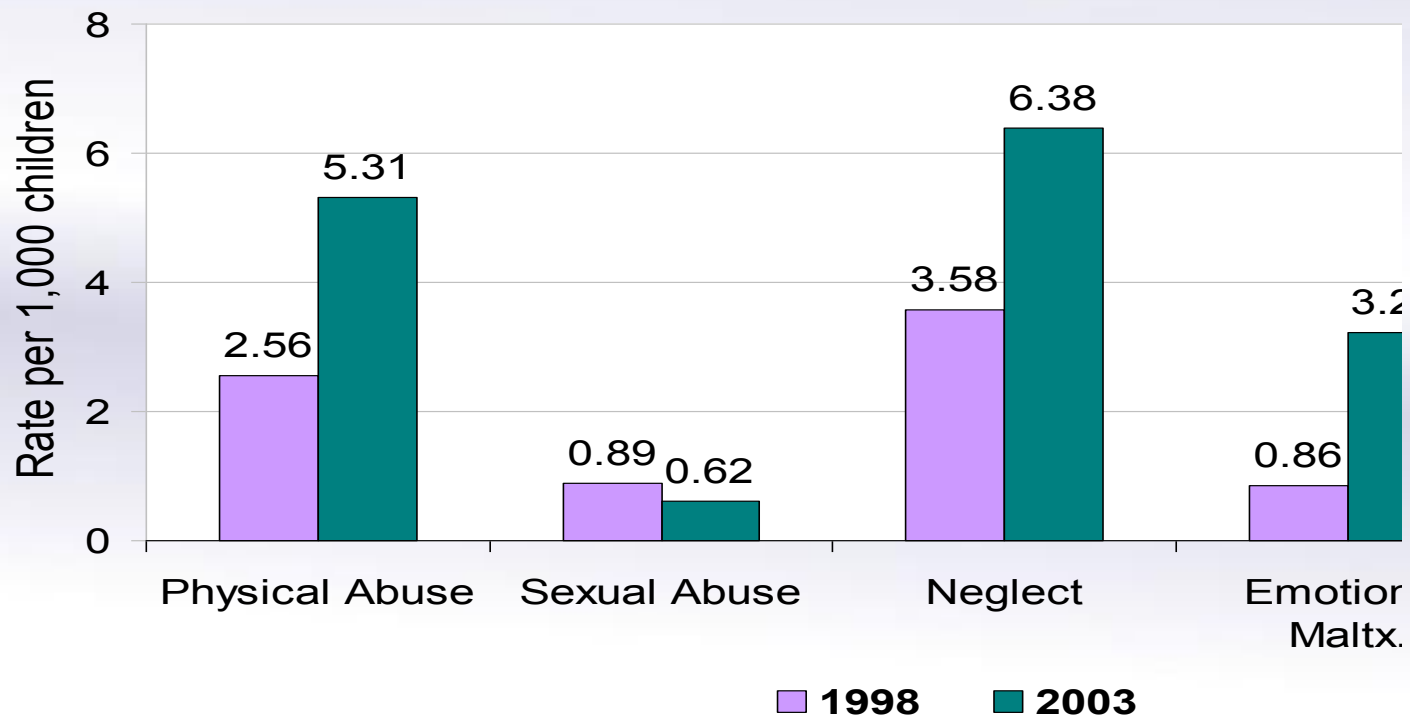|	Children Served		In Home Service		Removed		All Children
	Number	Percent of Served Children	Number	Percent of Served Children	Number	Percent of Served Children	
Victims	364,182	34.81%	242,898	28.90%	121,284	59.00%	586,063
Non-Victims	681,997	65.19%	597,723	71.10%	84,274	41.00%	2,188,966
Total Children	1,046,179	100.00%	840,621	100.00%	205,558	100.00%	2,775,029
		Percent of Children		Percent of Children		Percent of Children	
Victims	364,182	62.14%	242,898	41.45%	121,284	20.69%	586,063
Non-Victims	681,997	31.16%	597,723	27.31%	84,274	3.85%	2,188,966
Total Children	1,046,179	37.70%	840,621	30.29%	205,558	7.41%	2,775,029

NSCAW results on substantiation and services

- Caseworkers perceived children in substantiated cases as needing more services

- But children in sub. and unsub. cases did NOT differ on standard measures of child well-being

- A majority in substantiated cases received child welfare services but only a minority of unsubstantiated cases

- Children did not differ on other service receipt
  - Majorities of sub. and unsub. received special education
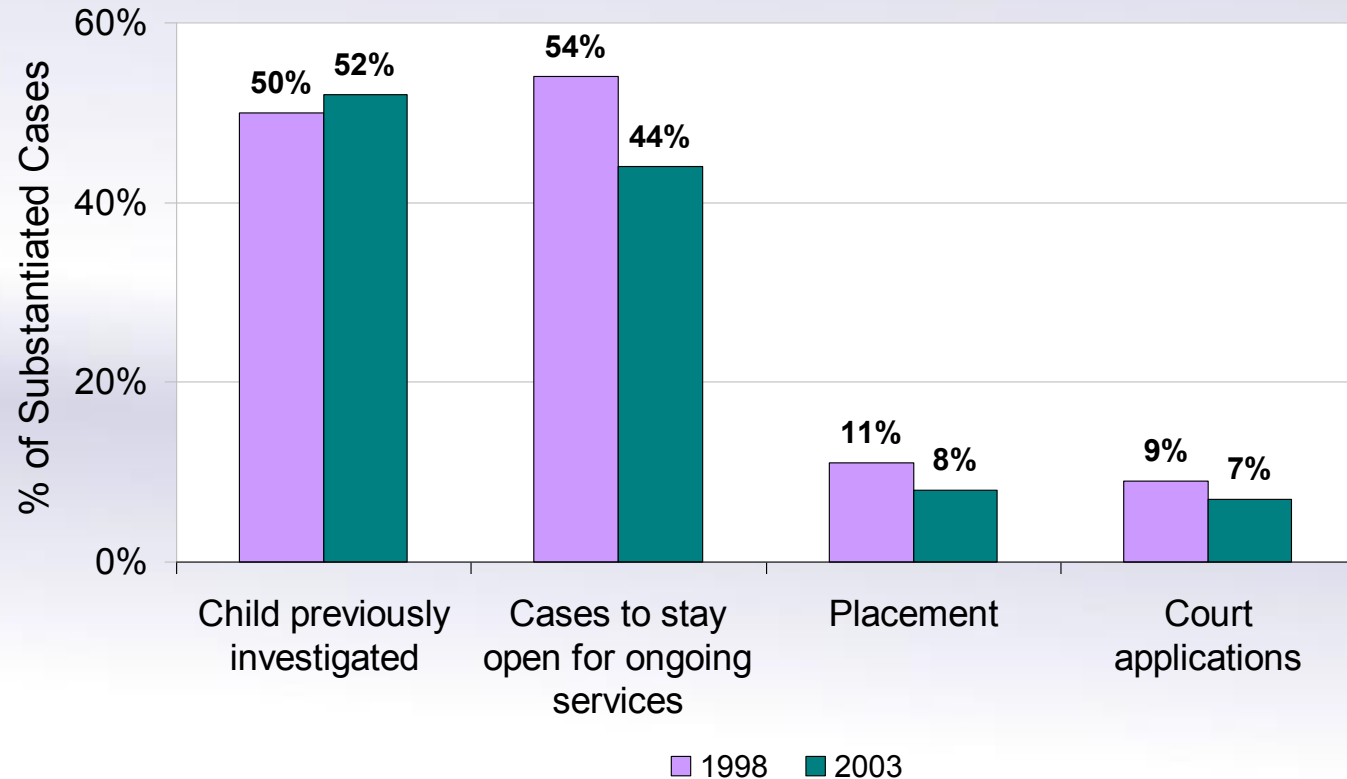 - Minorities of sub. and unsub. received mental health services

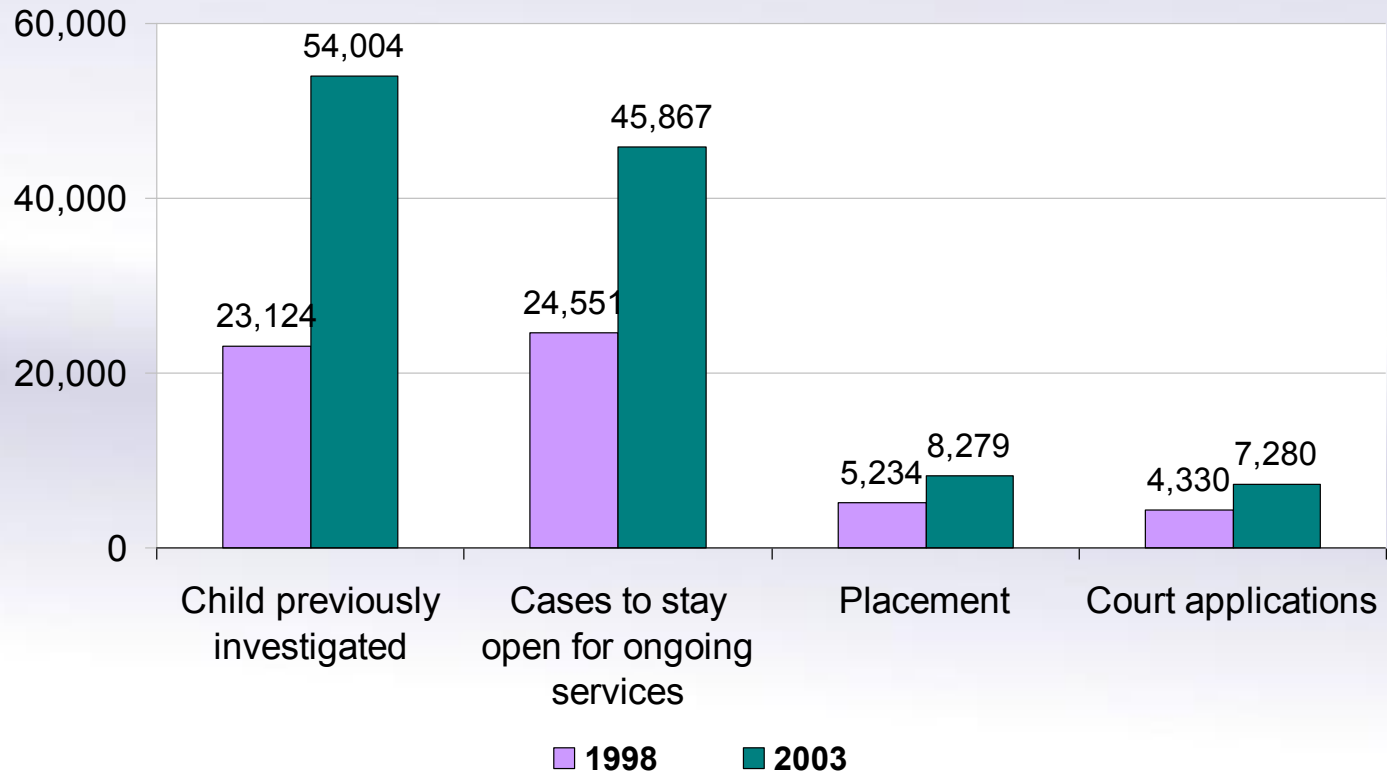# Increasing rates of reported & substantiated maltreatment in Canada(CIS-1998 and CIS-2003, excluding Quebec)
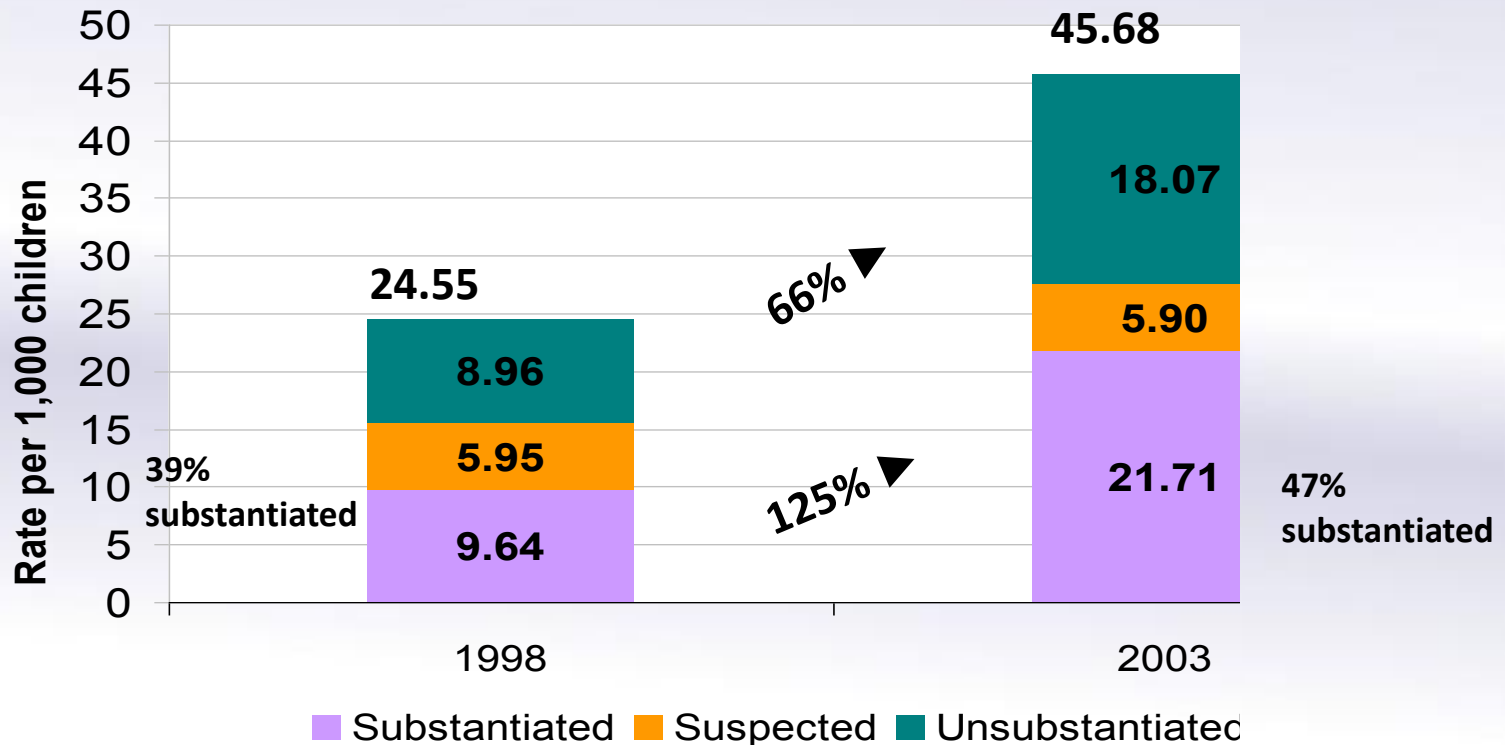
Differential trends by form of substantiated maltreatment: CIS 98/03 (excluding Quebec)


Rate per 1,000 children

	Physical Abuse	Sexual Abuse	Neglect	Emotion Maltx.
1998	2.56	0.89	3.58	0.86
2003	5.31	0.62	6.38	3.2

■ 1998   ■ 2003

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Service response: On-going services (CIS 98/03; QC Excl.)

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Service response: On-going services (CIS 98/03; QC Excl.)

Substantiation levels by Aboriginal status for investigations in Canada in 2003 (Excluding Quebec)
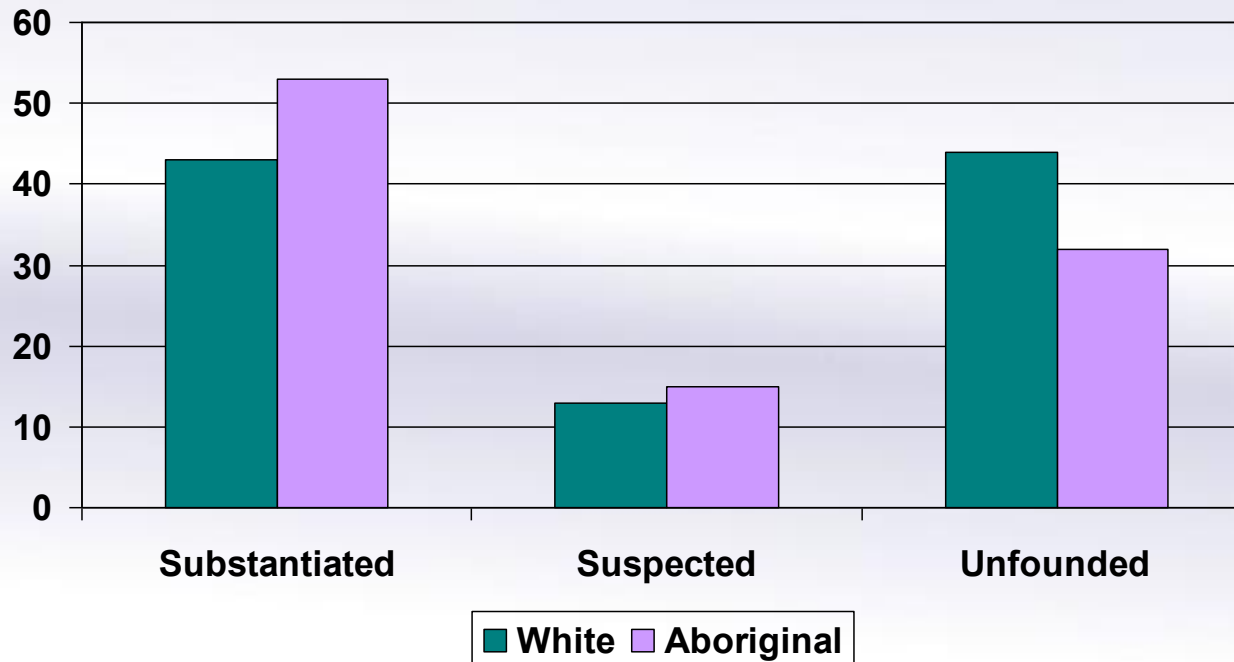
Risk of maltreatment

- Most provinces and territories moved towards a formalized risk assessment model in the late 1990s

- CIS-1998 and CIS-2003 did not formally measure only risk investigations

- Risk investigations were likely represented in these data and may account for part of the increase in investigations from 1998 to 2003

- CIS-2008 data collection instrument allowed workers to describe both investigated maltreatment and risk investigations

Preliminary data: Substantiation (rates per 1,000 children)

	1998	2003	Prelim. 2008	% change 2003 to 2008
Substantiated	9.82	24.44		
Suspected	6.06	5.45		
Unsubstantiated	11.55	23.70		
Total Maltreatment	27.43	53.59		
Sub risk	N/A	N/A		
Unknown risk	N/A	N/A		
No risk	N/A	N/A		
Total risk	N/A	N/A		
Total Maltreatment & Risk	27.43	53.59		

Substantiation and court involvement

The effect of substantiation on family court appears to vary

- In some states, a report **must be substantiated** for the family court to get involved. Drake & Jonson-Reid, 2000

- Schene (2006) facilitated a discussion of California family court judges. The consensus was that judges relied on information CPS provided in court and the **substantiation decision had little bearing**

- More data are needed

Substantiation in
measurement and research

Substantiation in measurement and research

- Substantiation is used at state and national levels (NCANDS, NIS) to estimate the number of children known to CPS who have experienced maltreatment

- Many researchers restrict research on child maltreatment to substantiated victims

  - Based on the idea that substantiation has a reasonable degree of validity (*meaning that they vary from unsubstantiated cases in important ways*)

  - Unsubstantiated cases are heterogeneous, including both those harmed and not harmed

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Substantiation and research: Another perspective

- If many unsubstantiated cases include child maltreatment, then using unsubstantiated cases as "controls" which are assumed to be "non-maltreating" would be an extremely serious problem, minimizing found differences.

- If substantiated and unsubstantiated cases are essentially similar, both can be included in many kinds of studies (e.g. studies using maltreatment as an indicator of need or general risk). This could markedly reduce problems with sample size (statistical power).

Substantiation and research: Another perspective

- What if we could measure maltreatment without substantiation?

- Could substantiation status and all that is implied apply to perpetrators and not children?

- Could we measure maltreatment to children without regard to perpetration?

- Are there good alternative methods for measuring maltreatment (Manly, 2005)?

  - How much better are they?
  - How feasible to collect are they?
  - Are they good for national or state estimates?
 - Are they good for identifying research populations?

Substantiation in an alternative system: Differential response

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Substantiation and differential response

- Elements of differential response from the Quality Improvement Center-Diversified Response
    - Use of two or more discrete response pathways for screened in reports;
    - Establishment of discrete response pathways is codified in statute, policy, or protocols;
    - Pathway assignment depends on an array of factors defined in policy/procedure;
    - Original pathway assignment can change based on new information;
    - Services are voluntary on a non-investigation pathway:
        - families can choose to receive the investigation response, or
        - families can accept or refuse the offered services if there are no safety concerns;
    - **Families are served without a formal determination of child maltreatment; and**
    - **Name of the alleged perpetrator is not entered into the central registry for those individuals who are served through a non-investigation pathway.**
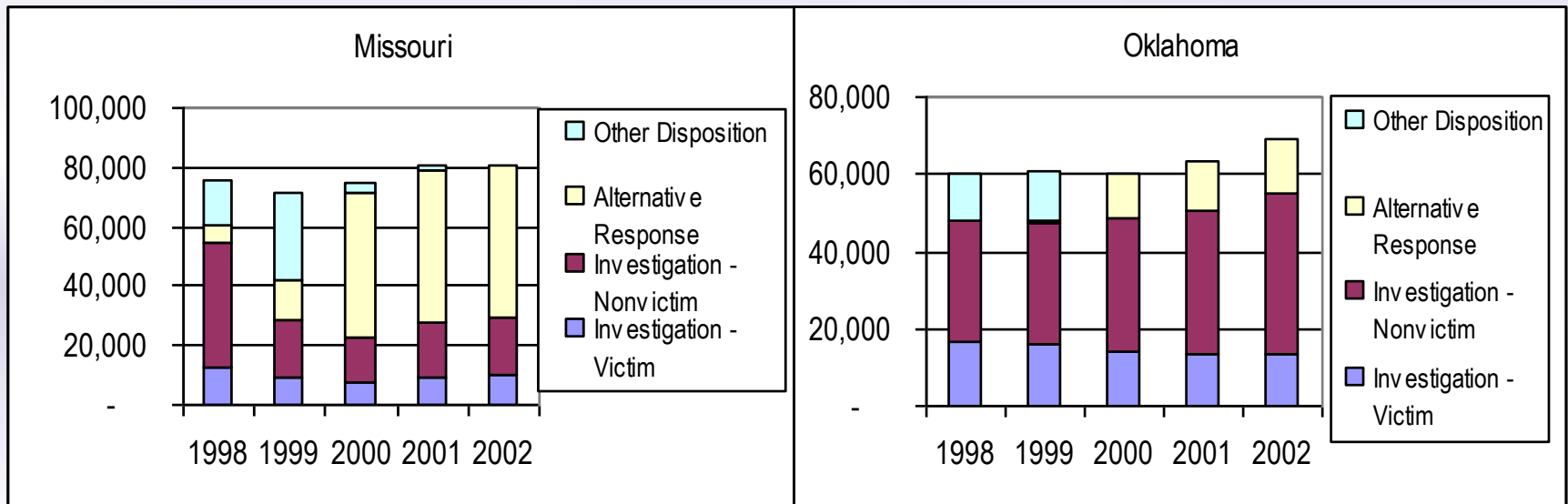
NCANDS and differential response
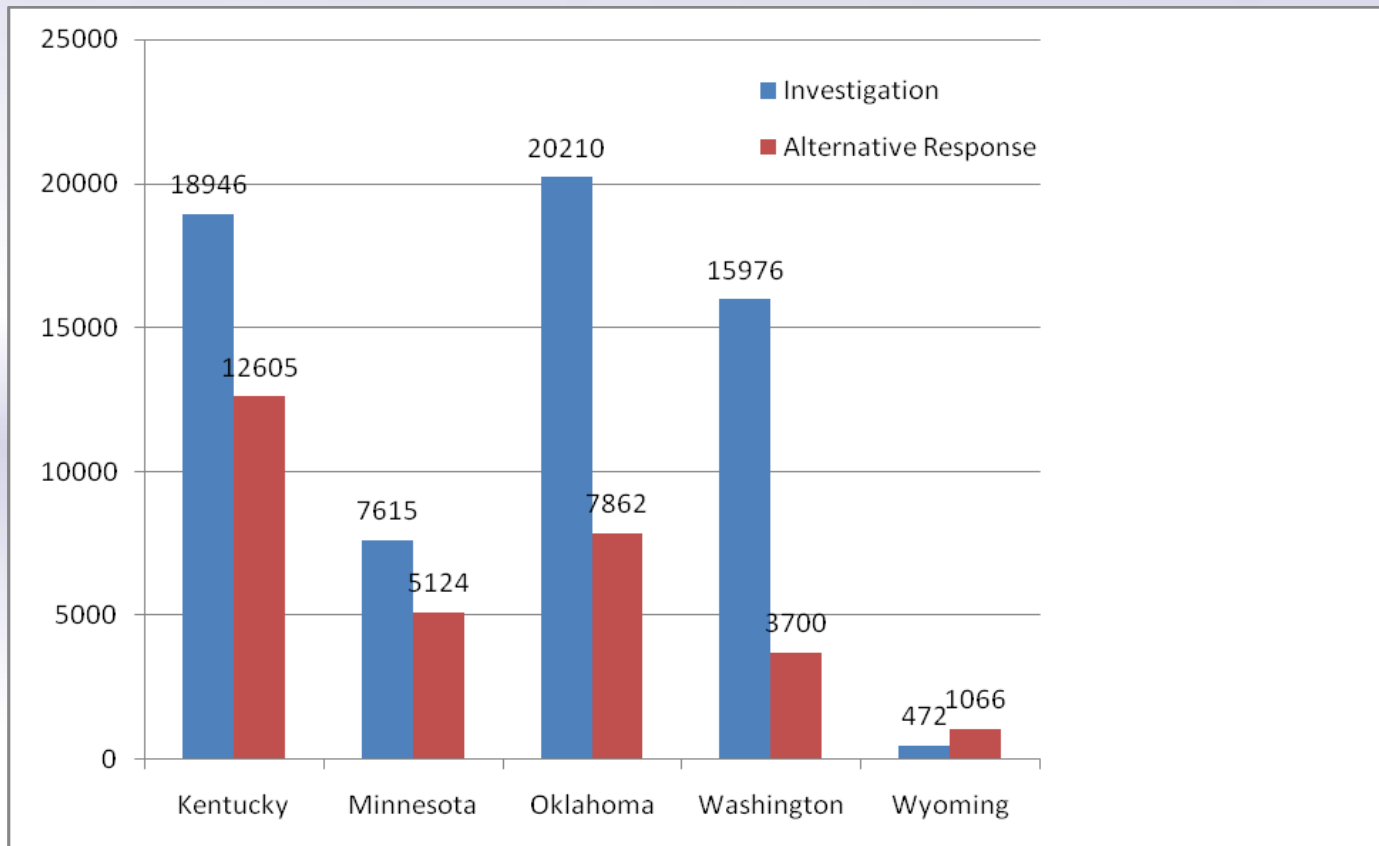## (Schusterman, Hollinshead, Fluke & Yuan, 2005)
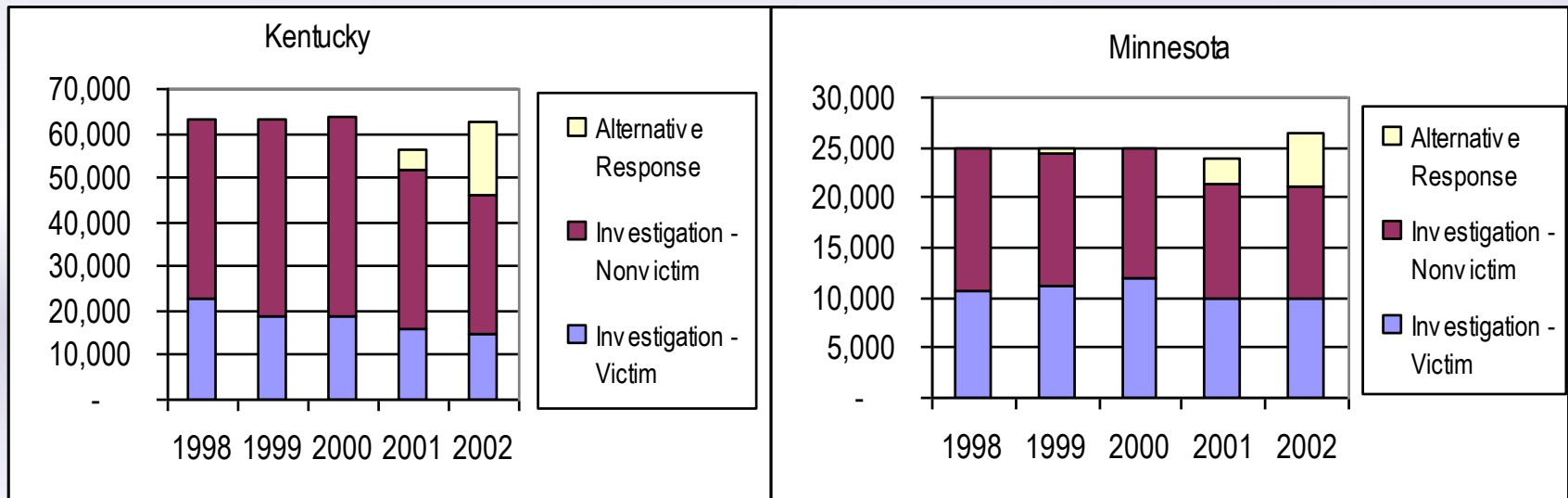
NCANDS and differential response
(Schusterman, Hollinshead, Fluke & Yuan, 2005)

NCANDS and differential response
(Otiz, Schusterman, & Fluke, 2008)

Differential response

- From NCANDS as states have implemented differential response approaches over time
  - Proportion of DR responses of all responses have tended to increase
  - total responses (including investigations) is about the same or greater
  - Mostly, rates of victimization have gone down in these states

- So far research indicates that children are as safe

- Quality Improvement Center on Differential Response (CB, AHA, WRMA) has funded three research and demonstration sites

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A Canadian perspective on differential response

- What is differential response?
    - A swing in the pendulum
    - A shift toward family preservation

- 6 of 13 provinces/territories have some form of differential response
    - British Columbia
    - Alberta
    - Manitoba
    - Ontario
    - New Brunswick
    - Nunavut

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Highlights of differential response from Canada

- British Columbia: Family Development Response
  - Investigation not required
  - Providing a range of responses and community based options
  - Keeping children safe within the family and community
  - Intake and assessment are collaborative, comprehensive, and solution focused

- Ontario: Eligibility Spectrum
  - Upon report, it is determined if there is a need for investigation, or a community link

- New Brunswick: NDCPSI
  - Phase 1: implementation of family group conferences and child protection mediation
  - Grounded in evidence base

- Alberta: Family Enhancement
  - Provision of supports to allow family to continue caring for children
  - Screening process and initial assessment to determine if full assessment/investigation needs to be conducted

Exercise II

Influences on the threshold for action

Key concepts of decision making ecology
(Baumann, Kern, Fluke, 1997)

Slide 125
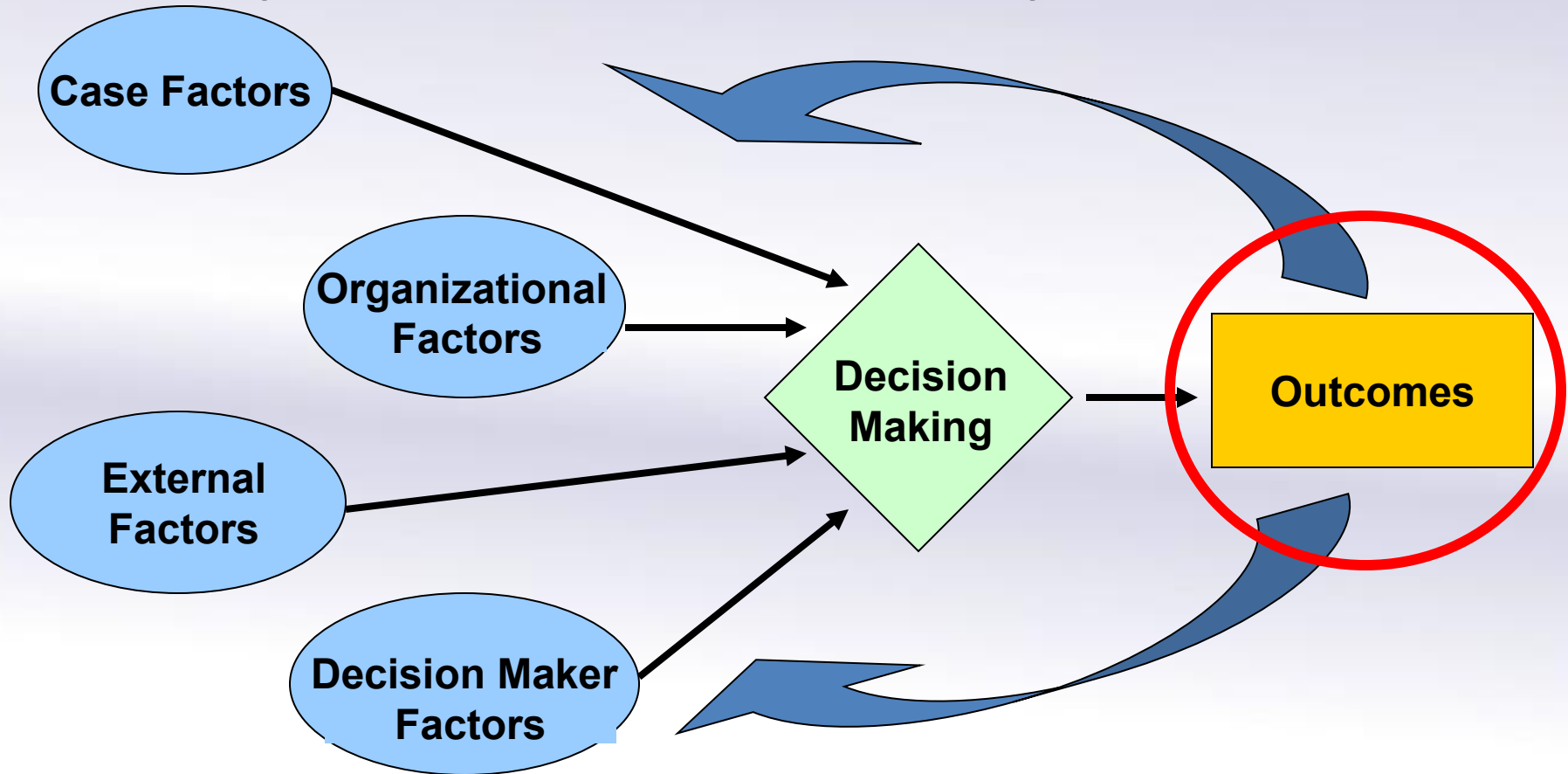
Outcomes and feedback

- Outcomes are viewed from three perspectives:
  - consequences to the decision maker,
  - consequences to the client,
  - consequences to the agency.

- Knowledge of these outcomes influences
  - the client (case factors);
  - the agency (organizational factors)
  - the decision maker (the individual worker)

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A General Model for Assessing the Situation and Deciding what to do about it - Dalgleish

Evidence and Harm Assessment Dimension

HIGH

Factors Influencing **Assessment.**

Information from **Current** situation being Assessed. The Case Factors.

Assessment

Threshold

Factors Influencing **Threshold for Action**
Information from Experiences and History of Decision Maker **(The Past)**

LOW
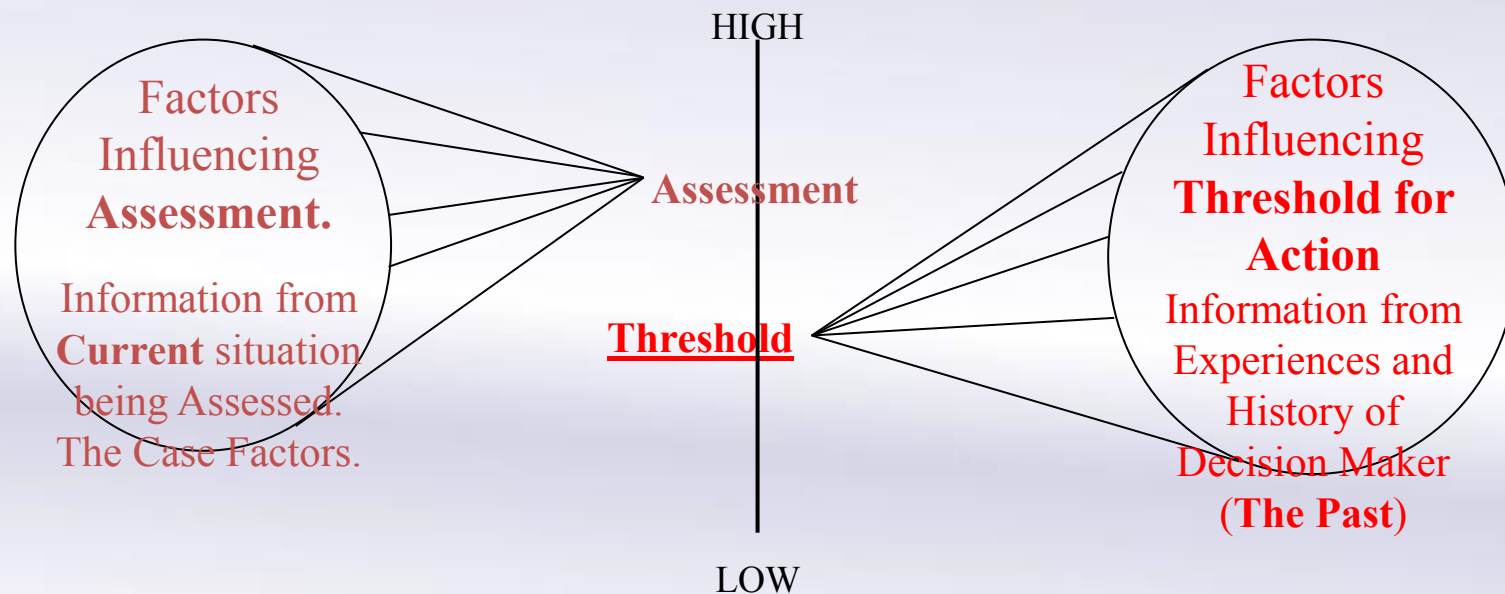
If the **Assessment** is *ABOVE* the **Threshold**, then ACTION is taken.

If the **Assessment** is *BELOW* the **Threshold**, then NO ACTION is taken.

Assessment and decision making is a difficult task

- Assessments and decisions are based on information that is often unclear, noisy and uncertain.

- Sometimes made under time pressure in a highly emotional atmosphere.

- There are structural and resource constraints, media interest, unpredictability of outcomes.

- This is:
  Decision making under uncertainty.

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Influences on the threshold for action.

In decision making under uncertainty.

If you take action, there is a chance of making an error.

If you don't take action, there is a chance of making an error.

YOU CAN'T AVOID THE POSSIBILITY OF ERROR

"C'mon, c'mon—it's either one or the other."

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An exercise: the decision to substantiate child abuse

- Draw a four-fold table on a biggish sheet of paper.
- Some of the group to think about the **child as a stakeholder**.
- Some of the group to think about the **agency as a stakeholder**.
- Some of the group to think about the **juvenile court judge as a stakeholder**.
- Some of the group to think about **a worker or supervisor as a Stakeholder**.

	Actual State	
	Should have Substantiated	Should have Unsubstantiated
Decision: **YES** Substantiated	**Hit** True positive	**False Alarm** False Positive
Decision: **NO** Unsubstantiated	**Miss** False Negative	**Correct No** True Negative

- Write out some consequences of each cell in the table for your Stakeholder.

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Focus on the two types of error

Wrongfully Unsubstantiated – A Miss
Child was Not Substantiated but really should have been

Wrongfully Substantiated False Alarm
Child was substantiated but really should not have been

- On the sheet of paper look at the consequences for each type of error
- Given that you can't avoid the possibility of an error, which error do you want to avoid the most?
- The values you place on the consequences drives the threshold for action.

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Reflection on decision tendency task

- Avoiding Misses implies a LOW Threshold.

- Avoiding False Alarms implies a HIGH Threshold.

- Effect of the Point-of-View of the different stakeholders.

Take home messages

- Thresholds link information about a child and family to decisions about courses of action

- The decision to substantiate is influenced by the consequences of making the wrong decision

- Personal thresholds explain inconsistency and conflict in decision making

- Thresholds can be measured in a variety of ways.

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Take home messages

- The combined influences (factors and feedback) on individual thresholds are an ecology; the Decision Making Ecology

- The Decision Making Ecology mediates the decisions of individual resulting in the behavior at the Child Welfare system level

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