

A Guide to RED Team in Colorado

“RED” Team is an acronym for Review, Evaluate and Direct. It was established in Olmstead County, Minnesota in the late 1990’s and is utilized by Child Welfare agencies around the world. In Colorado, statute 7.103.71 has required since 2015 that RED Team occur in each of the 64 counties.

RED Team is a decision-making process, specifically aiding Child Welfare agencies in determining if a concern reported by a member of the community (a referral) meets the threshold that requires an assessment and if so, what response time the assigned Social Caseworker should use. This is accomplished by answering the following three questions:

1. What is the alleged abuse and/or neglect in this referral?
2. Does the alleged abuse and/or neglect meet criteria for agency response?
3. What response time is warranted?

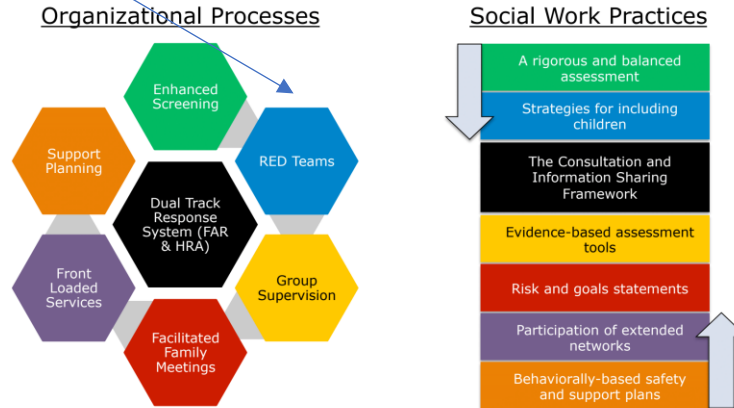
In Colorado, RED Team is attended by between three and five county human/social services staff members, with a minimum of one supervisor in attendance at each RED Team. Each person on the RED Team has a role: one is the facilitator; one is the reader (who reads the referrals aloud for the group) and one is the scribe (responsible for documenting the conversation in the Trails database). The RED Team utilizes the Consultation and Information Sharing Framework to organize their thinking in two ways: what are concerns and the strengths for the family, and how potentially hazardous or helpful are those concerns or strengths. The Consultation and Information Sharing Framework (often referred to as “the framework”) is pictured below:

Red Team is an integral aspect of Colorado’s Differential Response Model. The use of RED Team and the framework when making decisions regarding referrals from the community is imperative in ensuring county departments are providing a rigorous and balanced approach from their first interactions with the family and the related concerns. This process aides in providing balance by requiring consideration not only for the alleged concerns for the family, but also the strengths within the family and their support network. Additionally, the process supports a rigorous approach in considering the allegations. The Consultation and Information Sharing Framework requires consideration of the alleged abuse or neglect and the related impact on the children and family system.

As all members of a family system know, families are complex, and come with many “complicating factors”. These complicating factors can often be conflated with abuse or neglect when they are instead simply challenges or difficulties the family is experiencing. This distinction is essential in ensuring the correct screening decision is made, and the family’s situation is considered fully from the start. The same is true on the opposite side of the framework, as staff are prompted to consider the impact of family’s strengths and resources, so that when the impact of these positive attributes creates safety, it is quickly and easily identified.

RED Team is one of the important Organizational Processes within Colorado’s Differential Response

Colorado’s Differential Response Model



Model

For additional information on RED Teams, please refer to the following resources:

[In Colorado: Making Smarter Decisions about Child Welfare Investigations](#)

[Volume 7 RED Team Rules](#)

[RED Team Creator Suzanne Lohrbach discussing RED Teams and the Consultation and Information Sharing Framework](#)