



Alternative Response

MYTH BUSTERS

Alternative Response (AR) is an investigative pathway used to assess child safety and reduce future risk. While the approach differs from a Traditional Investigation, child safety remains the priority.

Below are common myths about AR and clear explanations of how the model works in practice.

Myth *AR is not a real investigation.*

Fact

AR is an investigation. Traditional Investigations focus on gathering evidence to determine whether maltreatment occurred. AR Investigations focuses on gathering facts to help learn about and plan with the family if/when concerns are identified. In AR Investigations (like Traditional Investigations):

- Child safety is assessed
- Protective capacity is evaluated
- Risk factors are identified
- Preventive services are offered when appropriate

Myth *Children will not discuss concerns in front of their parents.*

Fact

Interview decisions are based on safety and professional judgment. Some children speak more freely privately. Others respond better when a parent is present. The investigator assesses comfort level, signs of coaching, and overall safety. If concerns arise, the approach is adjusted in consultation with supervision.



TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services

Myth Fact

Calling the family first will compromise safety.

Safety assessment is ongoing, regardless of first contact method. Coaching is a possibility in any investigative pathway. AR Investigations emphasize engagement, transparency, and continuous safety monitoring.

Myth Fact

If parents are uncooperative, nothing can be done.

Engagement is preferred. Safety is required. When families are not motivated to work with the Department, concerns are still addressed and expectations are made clear. If safety concerns persist, the case is staffed with leadership to determine appropriate next steps.

Myth Fact

Staff must regularly work after hours in AR.

Flexibility may be needed, but creative scheduling strategies can reduce after-hours work.

- Providing documentation for employers or schools
- Flexing schedules
- Coordinating meetings within policy timeframes

The reality is that the needs of our families sometimes require that we work after hours. This occurs in all stages of service, not just AR.

Myth Fact

Safety plans cannot be used in AR.

Safety plans are implemented whenever a child cannot remain safe without protective action. AR cases meet statutory definitions and require intervention when threats are identified.

Myth Fact

Families will not be honest in AR.

Respectful engagement often increases openness. Clear communication, transparency, and shared understanding of concerns support more meaningful conversations. Safety and credibility are continually assessed.

Myth Fact

Investigators must accept whatever plan the family creates.

Plans must reduce safety threats and risk factors. Investigators guide families in developing realistic plans but do not approve plans that compromise child safety.

Myth Fact

Children cannot be safe without a disposition.

Sustained behavior change and strengthened protective capacity are what keep children safe. A disposition alone does not guarantee future safety.

Myth Fact

AR is the same as FBSS.

AR is an investigative pathway. FBSS does not conduct investigations. While both may connect families to services, AR investigators conduct safety assessments and make investigative determinations.