

# Child Intervention Practice in Alberta

Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention

June 05, 2017



# Outcomes

## Part One

- Understanding the History of Child Intervention
- Evidence-Based Data and Analysis
- Focus on Practice not Policy

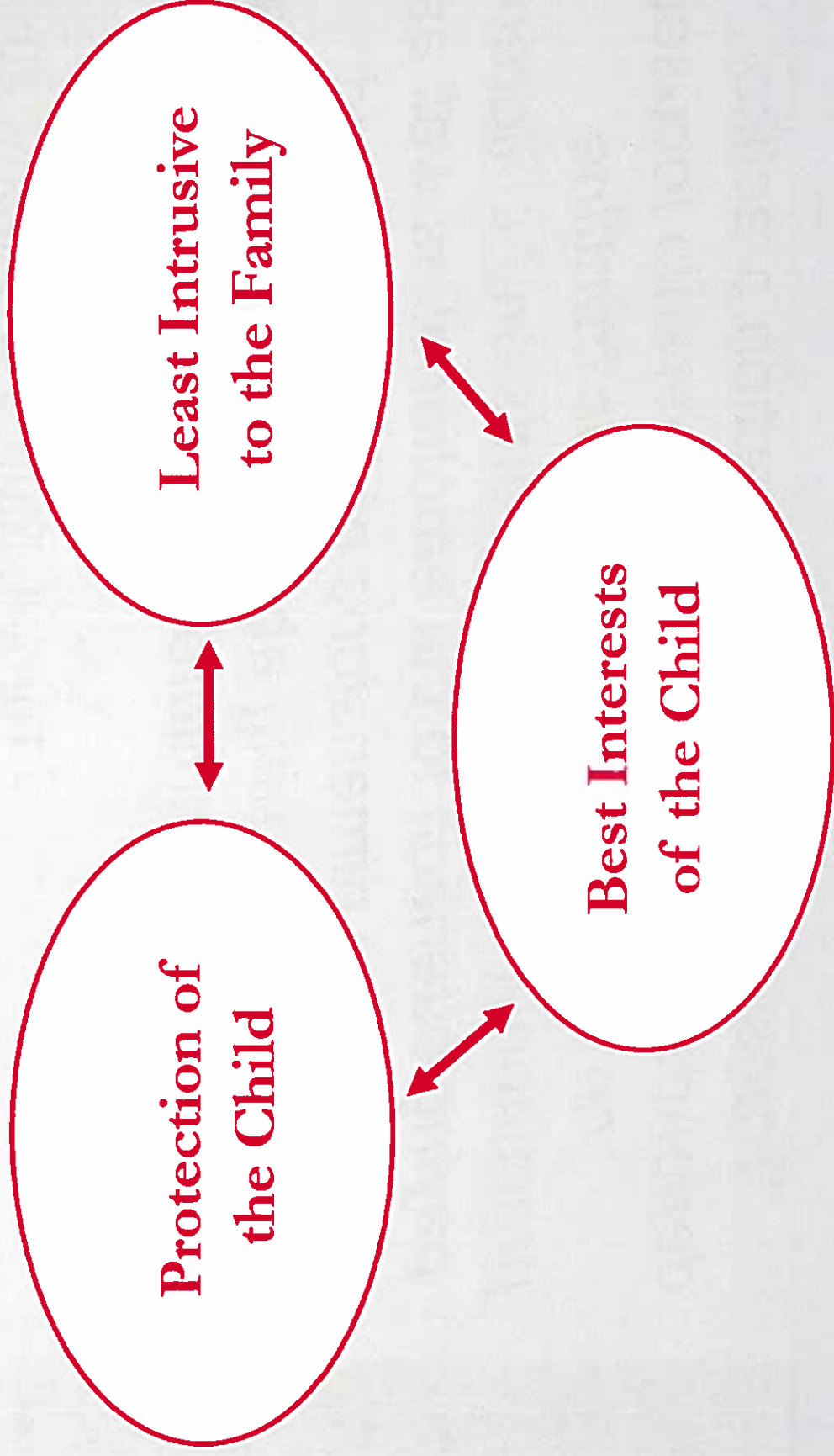
## Part Two

- Principle Approach used in Decision Making
- Practice Approaches
- Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

***“Transforming child protection practice depends on professional leadership focused on the actual interactions frontline practitioners have with parents and children, paying attention to the emotional as well as cognitive dimensions of the work, and continually learning about the impact of the work on children and families”***

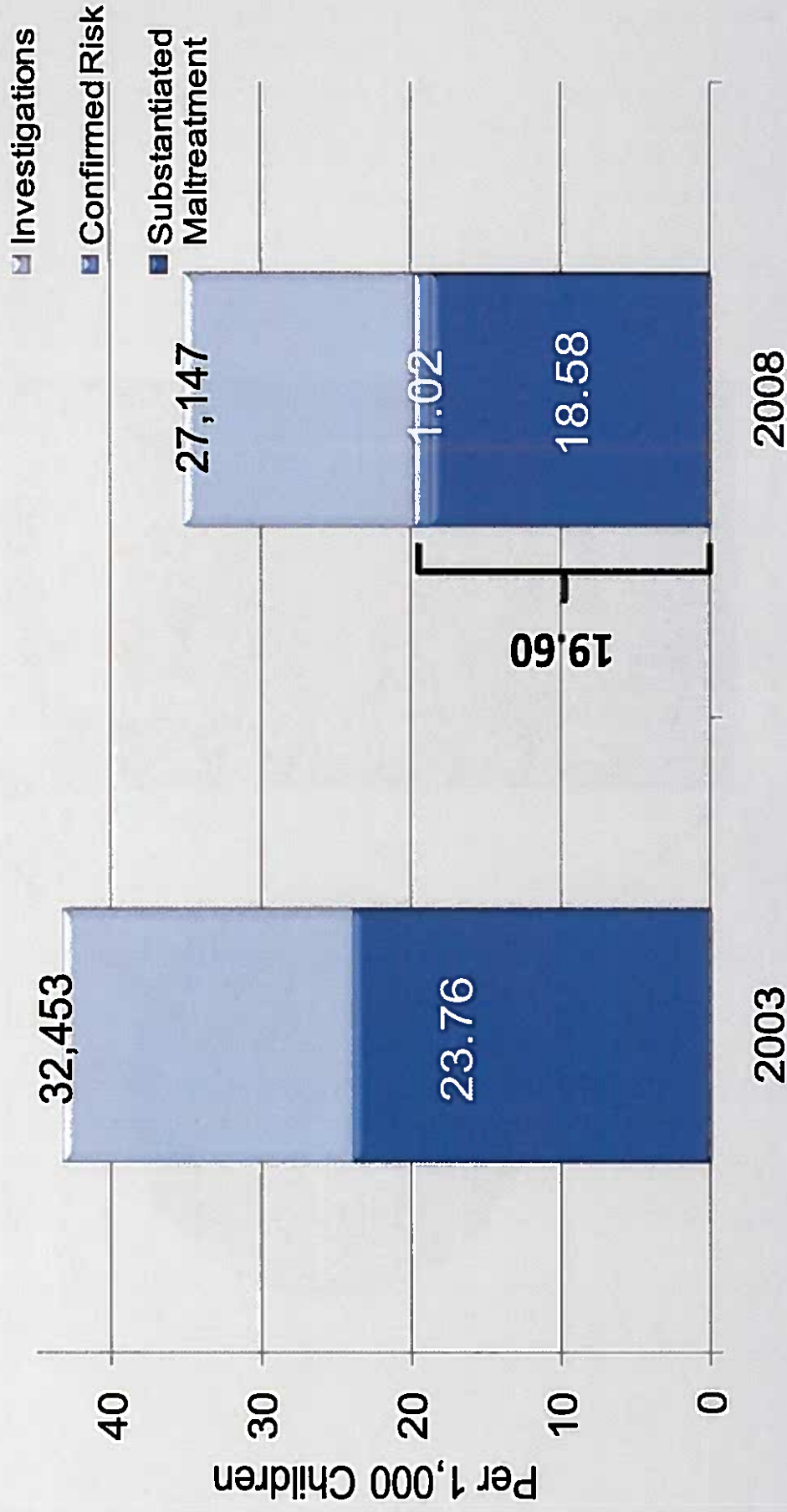
**- Turnell, Munro & Murphy, 2010**

# Child Welfare Priorities



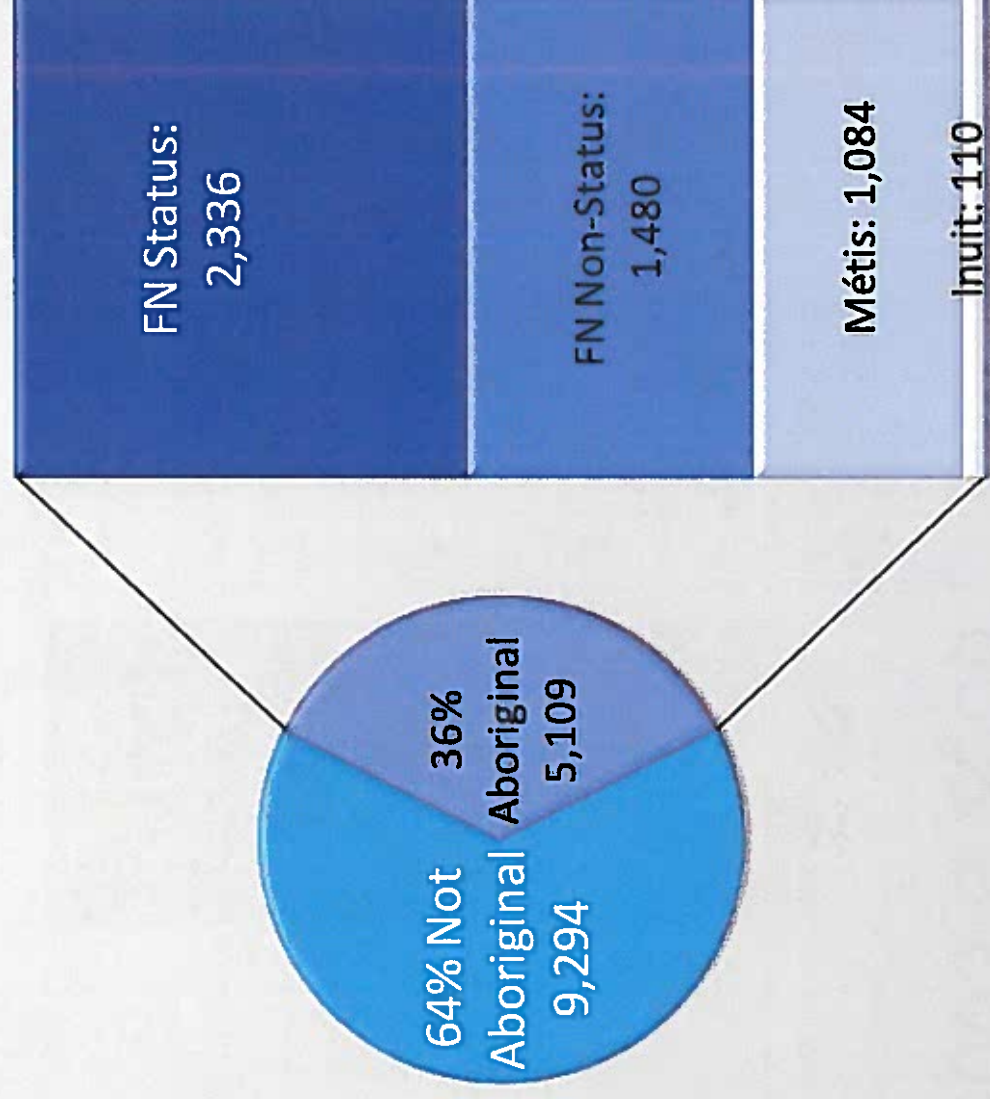
***Are there things that we can learn from the history of child welfare in Canada and North America?***

# Number of Investigations in Alberta: AIS-2003 & 2008



**Examining the Alberta Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse & Neglect (AIS-2008) to understand changing trends in child welfare data & practice**

# Indigenous Heritage of Children, Substantiated Maltreatment Investigations: AIS-2008



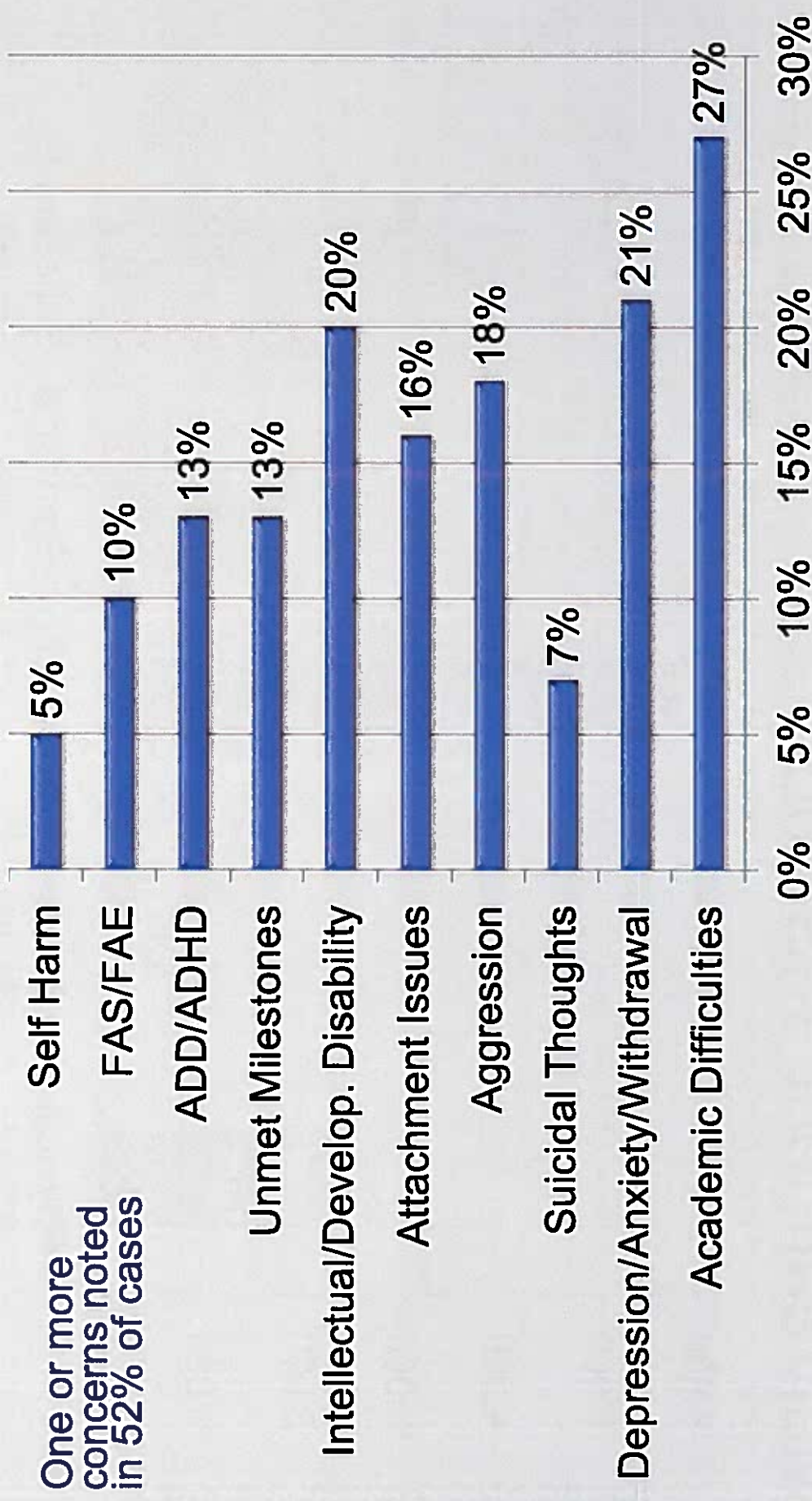
***What should Children's Services understand about the Indigenous experience?***

# Primary Category of Substantiated Maltreatment: AIS-2008



***How have forms of maltreatment changed over past decades and how should practice change to meet the current issues?***

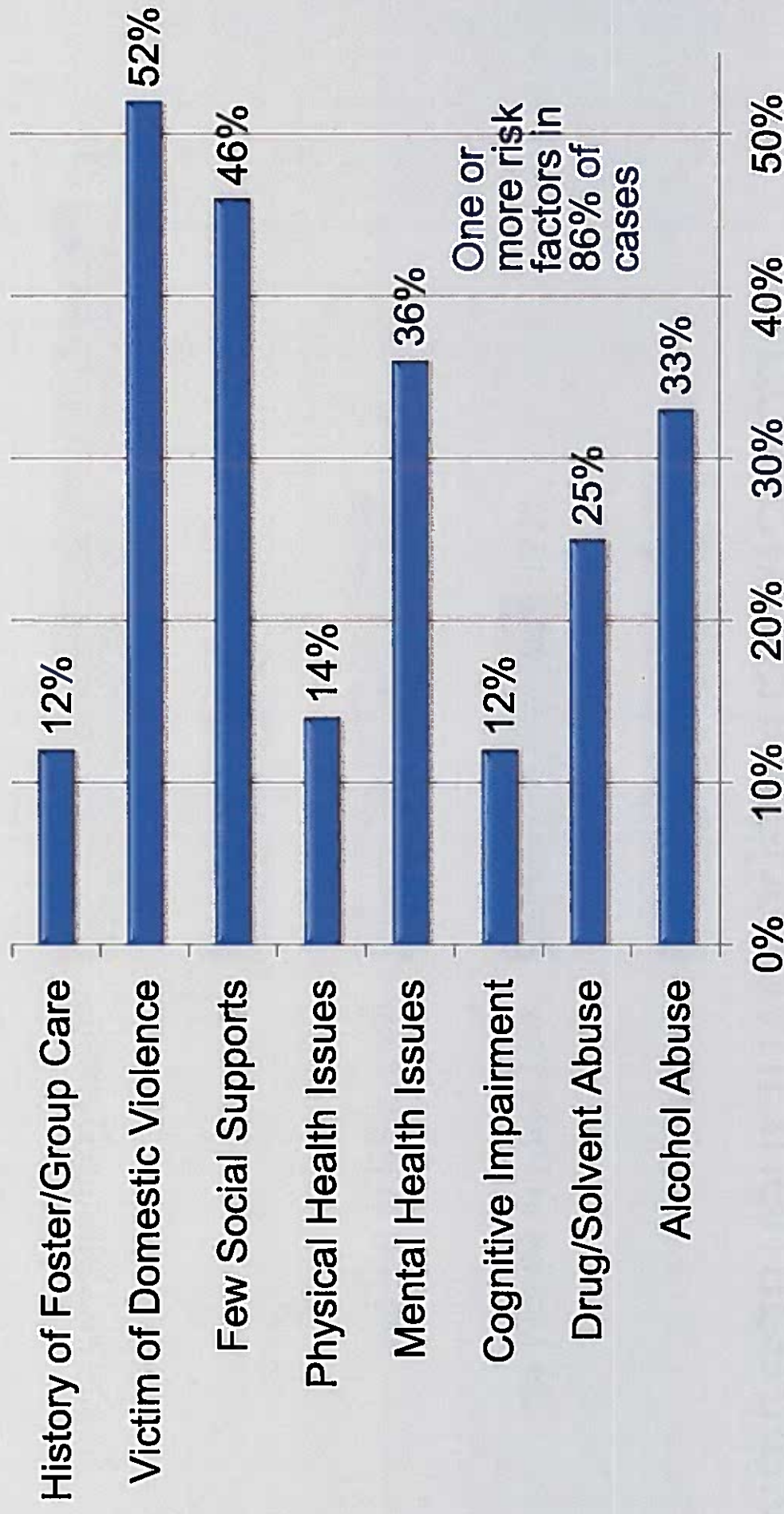
# Child Functioning, Substantiated Maltreatment Investigations: AIS-2008



***How do child risk factors complicate child investigations and what is needed to address these challenges?***

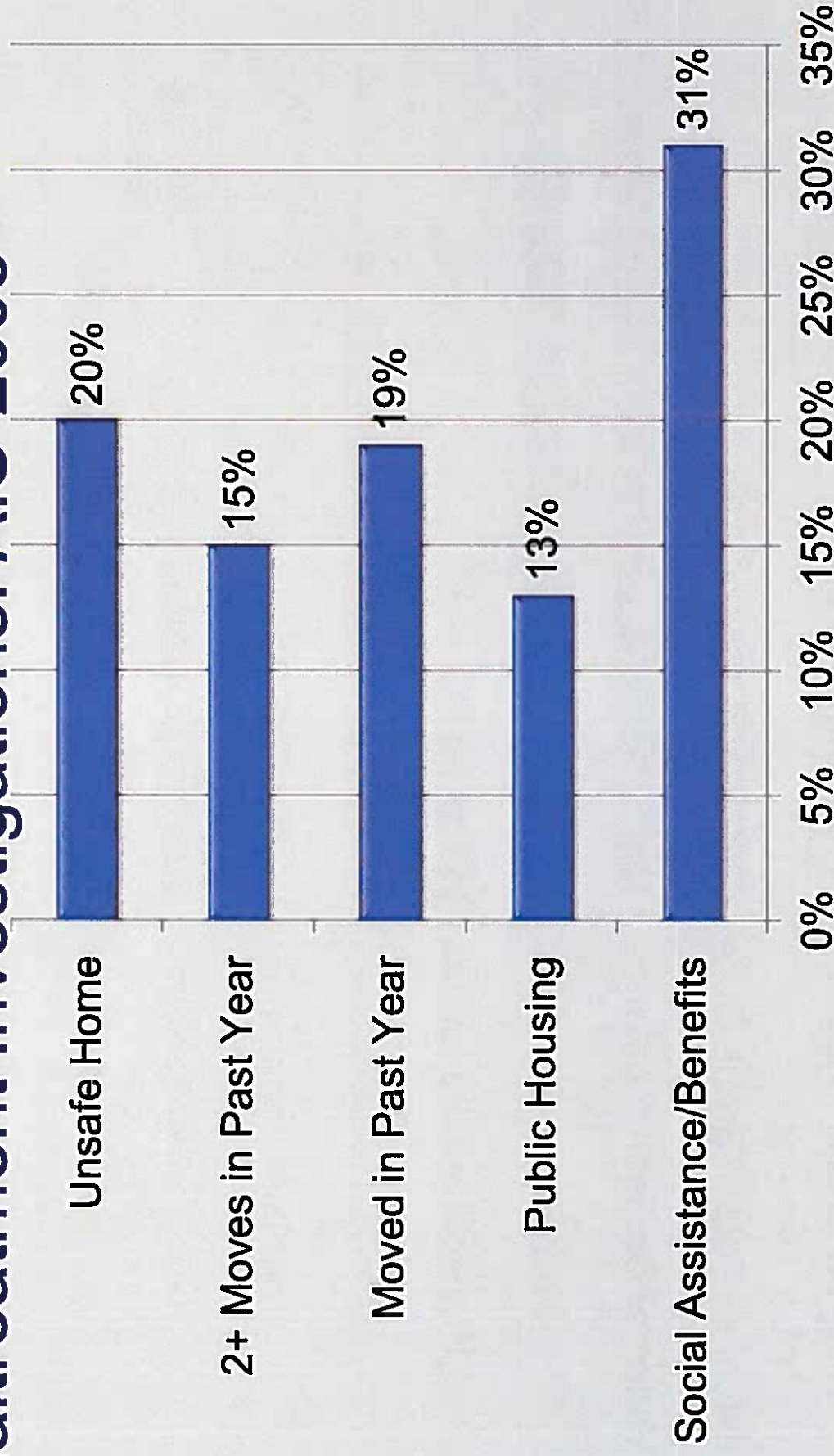


# Primary Caregiver Risk Factors, Substantiated Maltreatment Investigations: AIS-2008



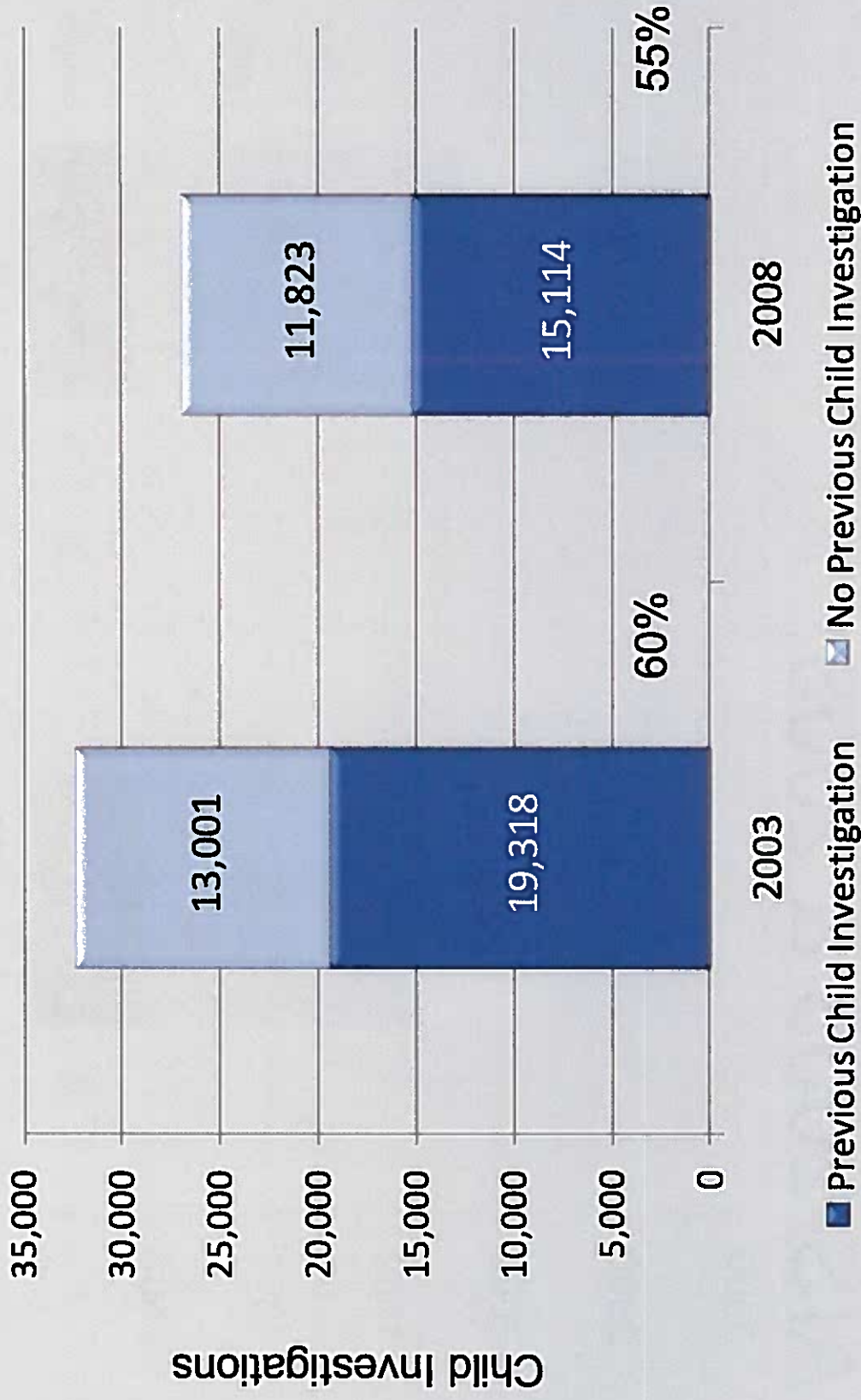
**Families present with a range of complicated issues that challenge practice**

# Household Risk Factors, Substantiated Maltreatment Investigations: AIS-2008



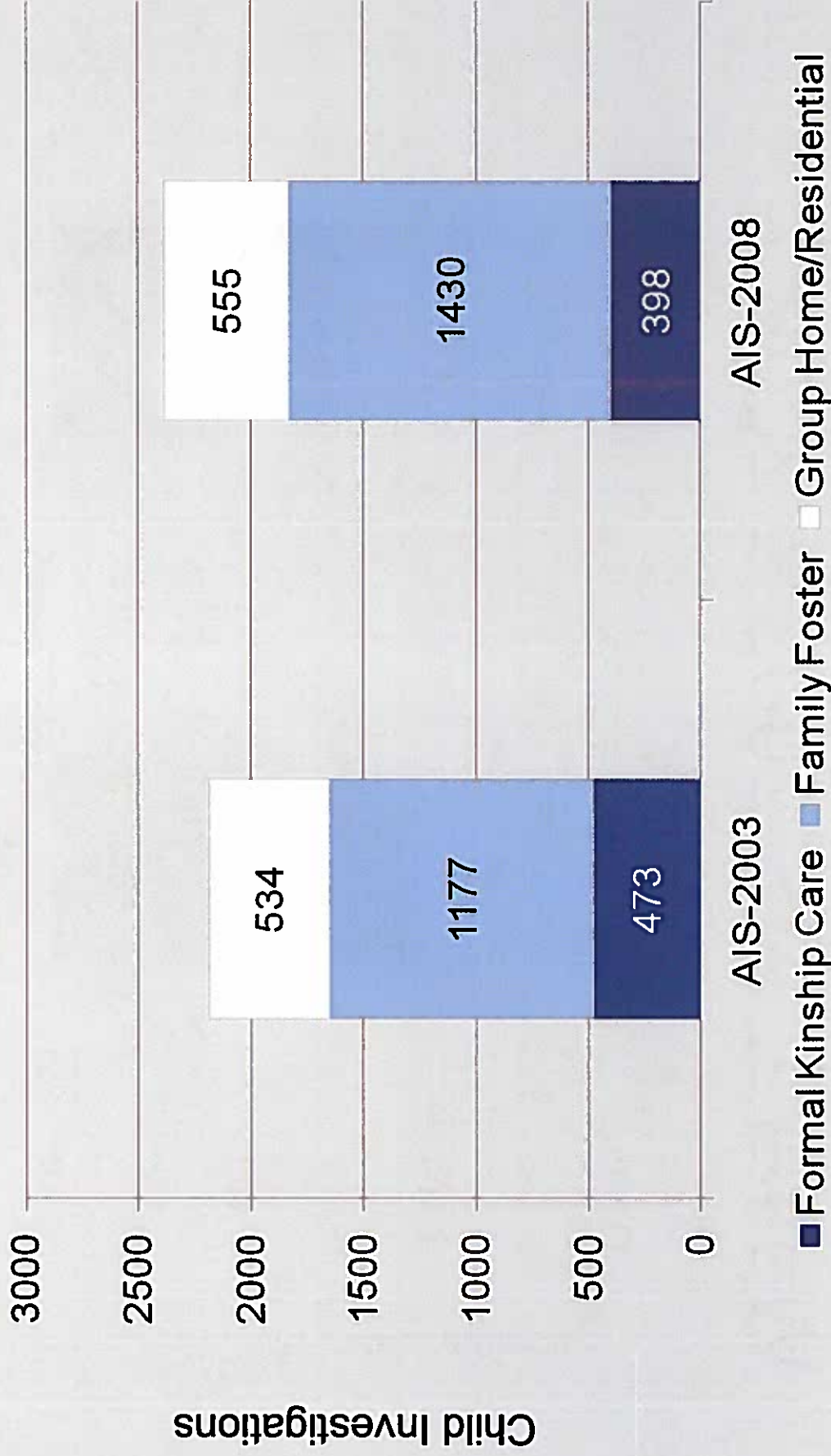
***Additional household issues are critical to understanding practice decisions***

# Previous Investigations by Child Welfare: AIS-2003 & 2008



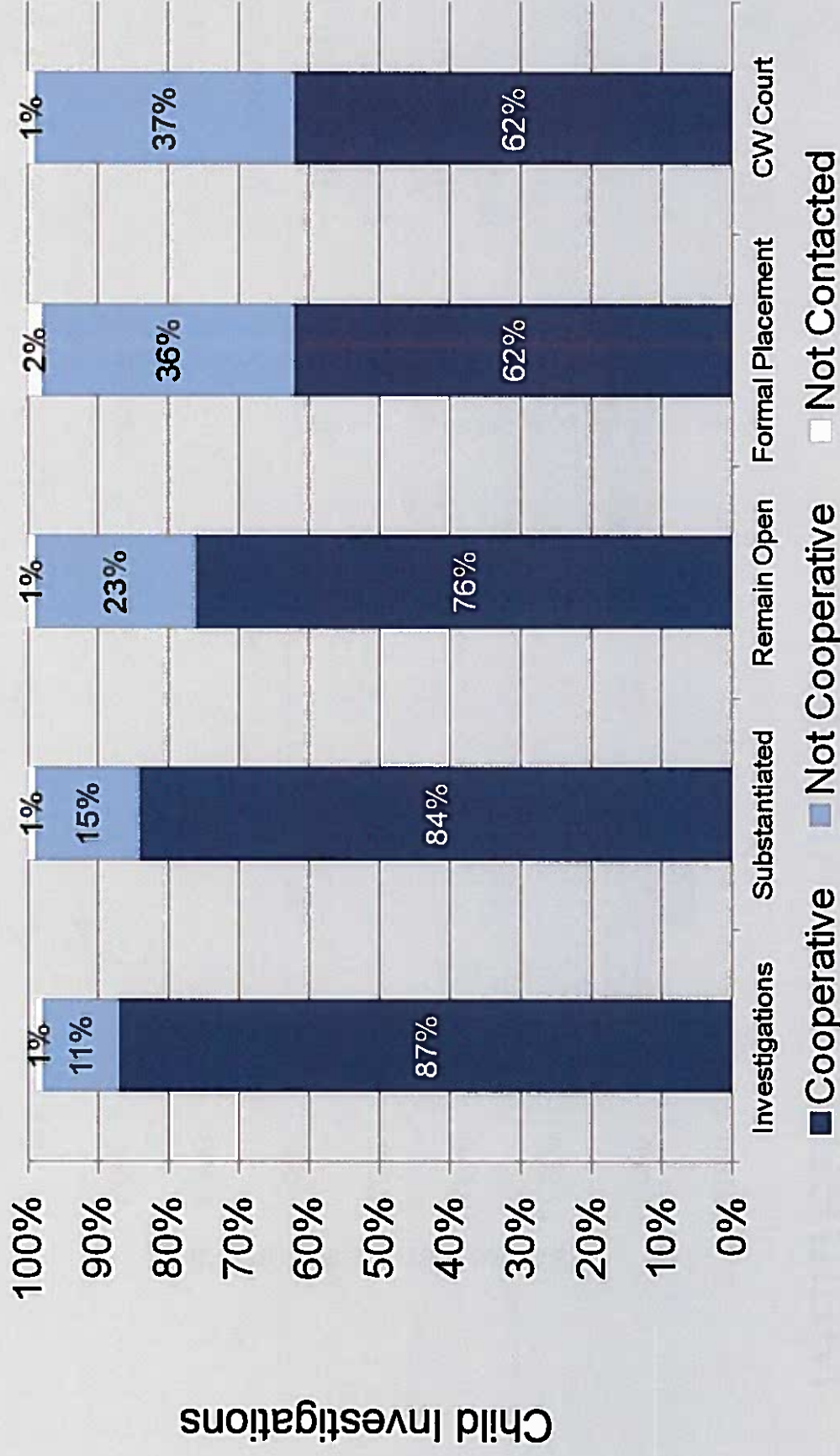
**What does recurrence of reports and recurrence of maltreatment mean and how should this be addressed?**

# Formal Out-of-Home Placements: AIS-2003 & 2008



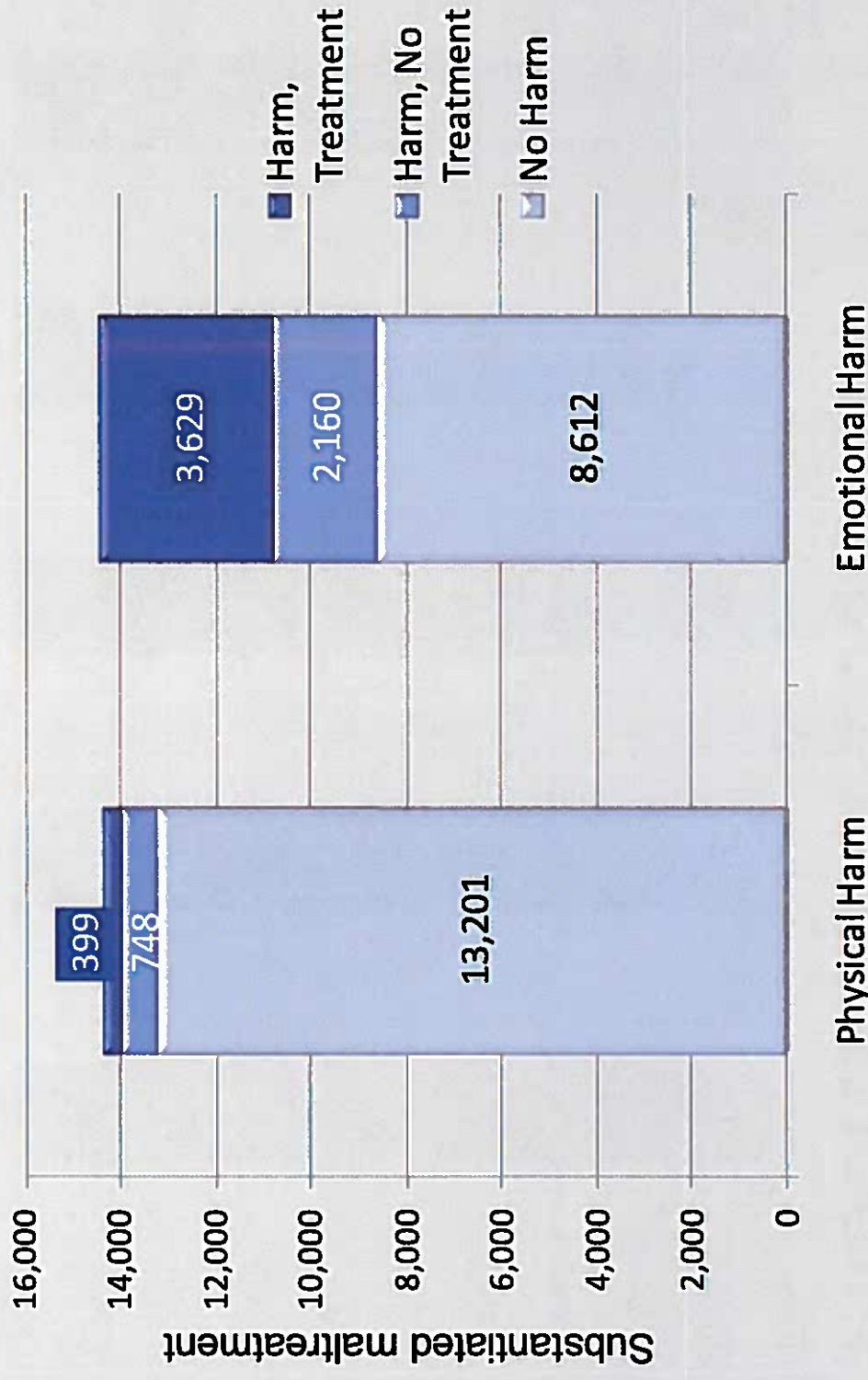
**Examining the role of kinship care and the relative merits for safety as well as family connections**

# Caregiver Cooperation by Decisions in Alberta: AIS-2008



**How can meaningful engagement with children and families be measured and when and how should this occur?**

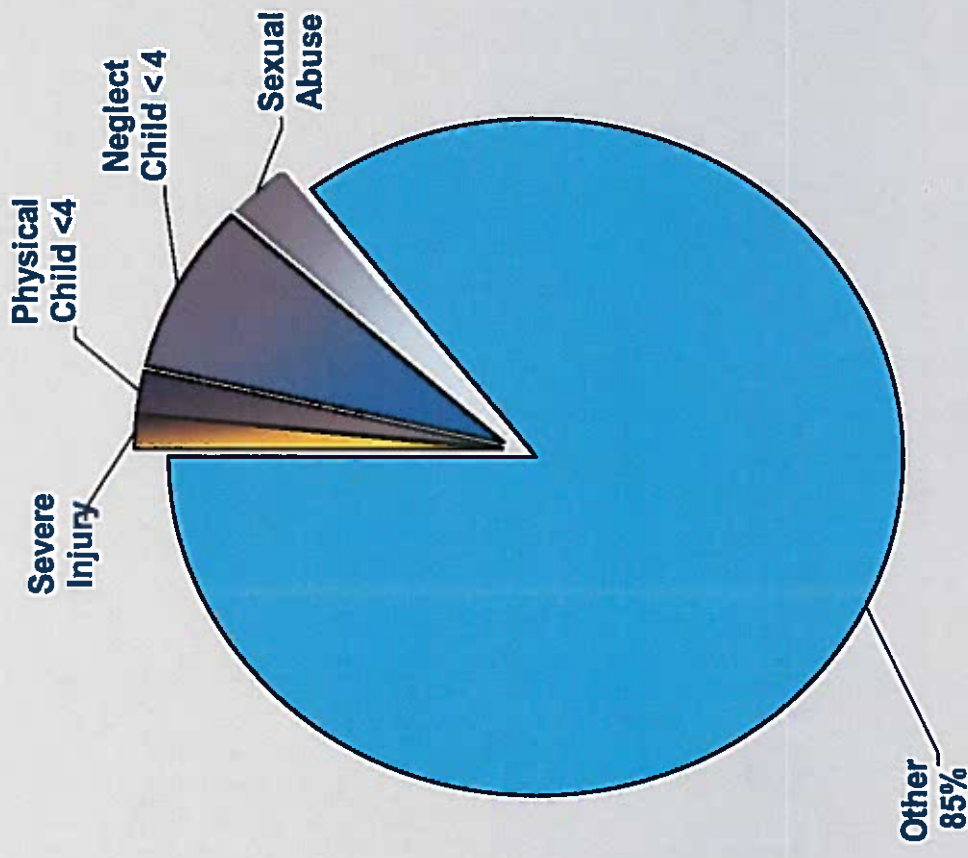
# Physical & Emotional Harm in Substantiated Maltreatment: AIS-2008



***What proportion of child investigations are in response to situations with severe harm and injury to the child?***

# Endangered Safety (AIS-2008)

- Severe physical harm: 1.7% of all investigations
- Physical abuse of child under 4: 2.0% of all investigations
- Neglect of child under 4: 8.0% of all investigations
- Sexual abuse of any age: 2.8% of all investigations
- Non-urgent maltreatment related concerns: 85% of investigations



\* MacLaurin, Trocmé, Fallon and Sinha (2014) adapted from Trocmé, Kyle, Sinha & Fallon (2014)

**Should all child investigations be conducted in a similar manner?**

# Focusing on Practice



# Focusing on Practice

- Alberta's child intervention system is moving from a compliance-focused approach to one that is focused on supporting children, youth and families to achieve positive outcomes
  - While ensuring compliance to policy and legislation is important; it is also important that children and families receive high quality services
  - Child Intervention staff are supported and expected to:
    - Think through family strengths and dangers, enabling explicit risk assessments
    - Lead explicit decision making about the best course of action for children
    - Engage with families to help them to change

# Why Principles Matter?

- Improvements to the delivery of ‘Social Services’ must account for the crucial relational, ethical and moral dimensions of the work
  - Many reform efforts in the past have focused on technical and policy adaptations which have rendered them ineffective at improving outcomes
  - Need identified to reorient the organization to the philosophy and principles of practice
  - Clearly articulated principles that ground the work in the organizational values better supports the relationship based practice require to support ‘clients’
  - Policy and technical solutions should be secondary to the principles and should exist to support the centrality of relationships

# Why a Practice Framework?

- A Practice Framework can...
  - Provide a moral authority for practice
  - Force attention to how children and families should experience the system
  - Promote consistency in approaches across the organization
  - Guide the content of policy
  - Inform the design of training
  - Shape the design of the quality assurance process
  - Reshape employee performance expectations
  - Help shape the organizational design

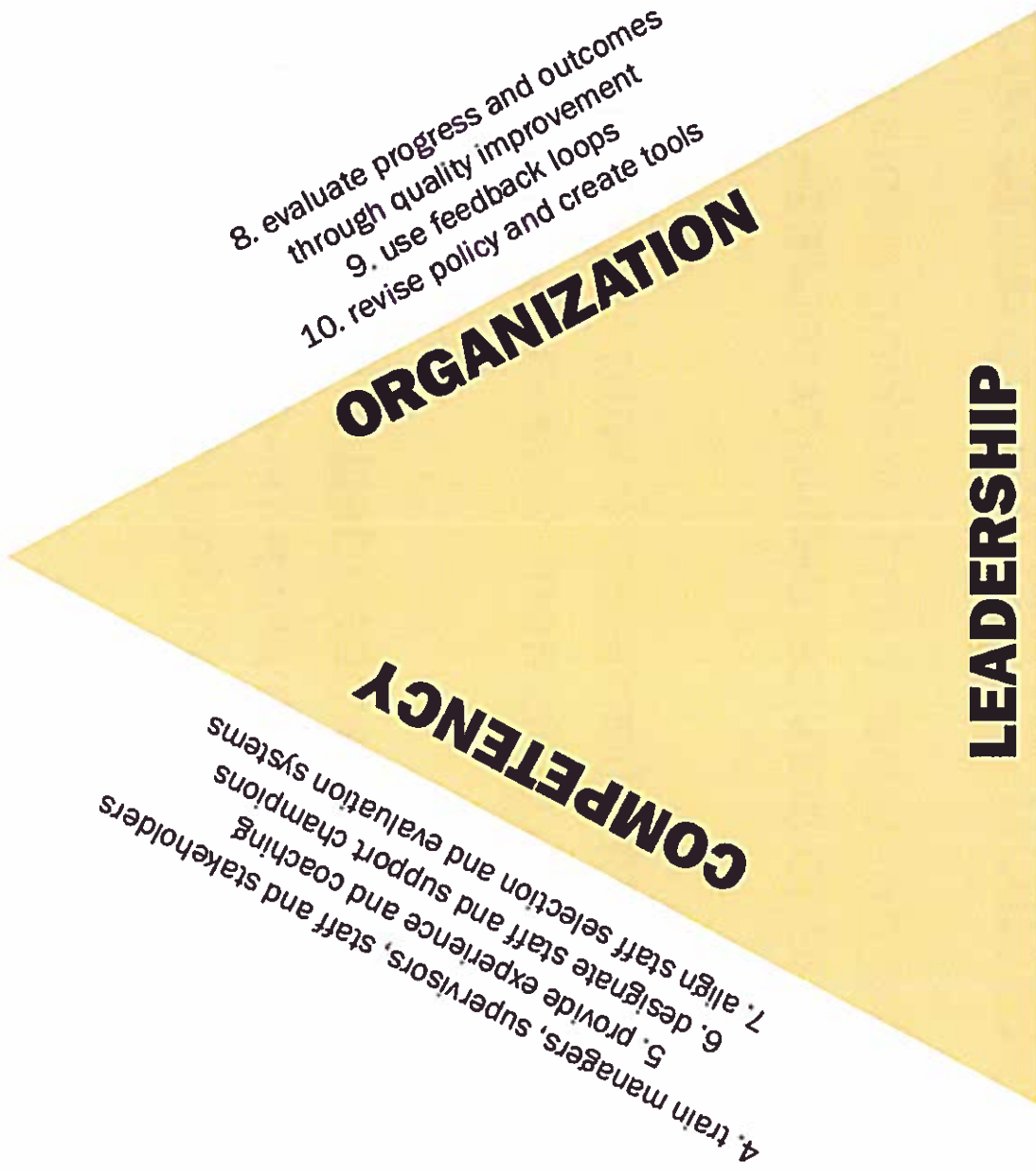
# Development of the Child Intervention Practice Framework

- Child Intervention Practice Think Tanks held in May and June 2012 identified key practice elements
- Meta-Analysis of 40 reports, reviews and consultations that spanned a five year period
- Creation of working principles and vetted through organization and practice leaders

# **Development of the Child Intervention Practice Framework**

- **Planning document and working principles presented to service delivery representatives for feedback**
- **Discussed the framework with approximately 800 staff at 19 engagement sessions throughout the province**
- **Draft principles embedded in pilot sites throughout the province re-engineering how people experience initial contact**

# Implementing Practice Models



Triangle concept  
© Fixsen and Blase, 2008

# Active Implementation

- The Child Intervention Practice Framework (CIPF) principles anchor the various practice approaches and support staff to use principle-based critical thinking tools in their work with children and families
- The principles ground the work; they also need to be explicitly linked to all aspects of the organization:
  - Legislation governing child intervention
  - Processes developed to organize the work
  - Leading practice approaches
  - Measurement
  - Communication
  - Human Resources

# Active Implementation

- **Example**
  - Competency Profiles identify the knowledge, skills and organizational values required for staff to be successful in their role
- **Competencies are a foundational component in the development of many tools that support the implementation of the CIPF:**
  - Training and learning materials
  - Change management tools
  - Performance enhancement (coaching and mentoring)
  - Learning and development planning
  - Performance management and succession planning
  - Knowledge mobilization with educational institutions
  - Job and role descriptions
  - Recruitment materials



# Principles that Guide our Work



# Part Two

- Principle Approach used in Decision Making
- Practice Approaches
- Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

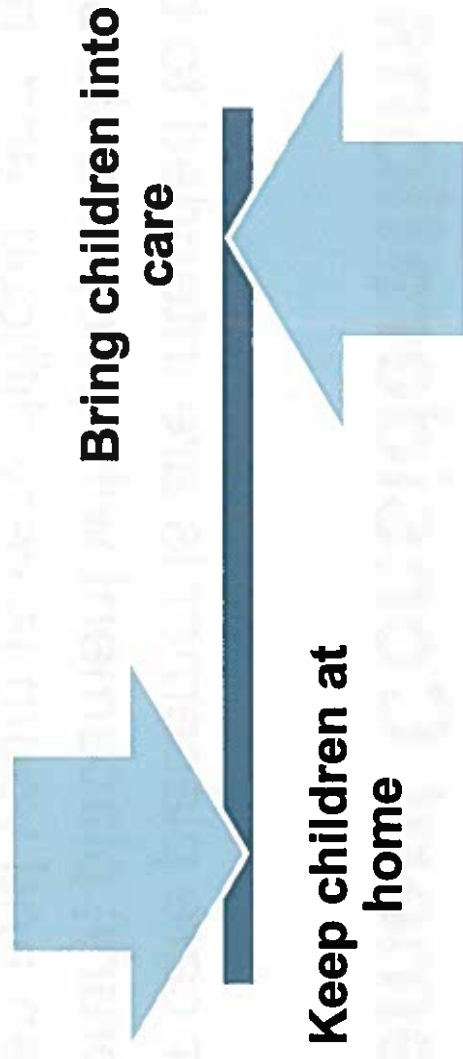
# Principle Approach to Decision Making

# Decision Making

- Keeping the ‘matters to be considered’ at the forefront, delegated staff (including frontline caseworkers, casework supervisors and managers) must balance:
  - Protection of the child, maintaining child well-being
  - Support to the family
- This creates a duality of role for staff who are investigators/agents of social control as well as the source of support for children and their families
- This is further complicated when a child comes into care, as the worker then also fulfills the role of guardian while continuing to serve those other two functions

# Decision Making

- Tension can be created when trying to reconcile opposing expectations and opinions of families, communities and other stakeholders about how to keep a child safe
- Depending on any individual's role in that child and family's life, there are often contradictory views about what is in a child's best interest



# Placement Considerations

- Foster care placements are intended to be temporary; placement with people unknown to children and youth is very difficult, and these decisions are taken very seriously
- In some circumstances, children or youth exhibiting trauma-related behavior may not be appropriate for kinship placement
- Whenever possible, family or significant others are found, and their capacity to meet the needs of the child or youth is assessed
- Appropriate supports are put in place to address issues the child or youth may be facing

# Practice Approaches

# Practice Approaches

- The approaches adopted were selected to:
  - Focus on the relational aspect of child intervention work
  - Help staff navigate the complex tension between child safety and family preservation through the adoption of evidence based tools and approaches that support critical thinking
  - Identify and support those children who are at imminent risk through multidisciplinary approaches
  - Explicitly ensure that Indigenous families and communities are engaged in planning for their children
  - Support and engage immediate and extended families in a more intentional way



# Practice Approaches

## Practice Strategies

- Supervisor Consults
- In-Care Consultations
- Family Meetings
- Immediate Kinship Placement
- Ongoing Kinship Placement
- Family Time

# Practice Approaches

## Signs of Safety

- A strengths-based, safety-organized approach to child protection casework
- What is Signs of Safety?
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6WYm4F9mik>
- Includes the following practice tools to support direct work with children and families:
  - Safety Assessment and Planning (i.e., “mapping” the case)
  - Harm and Danger Statements
  - Three Houses
  - Words and Pictures Explanations and Safety Plan

# Working with Partners and Supporting Caregivers

- Collaborative Service Delivery
  - Formally launched in 2008 in partnership with the contracted agency sector to improve the effectiveness and measurability of child intervention services
- Foundations of Caregiver Support (FCS)
  - The vision of FCS is for children and youth involved with child intervention to be nurtured by empathetic, responsive caregivers who accept them as they are, respond to them in a developmentally appropriate manner, interpret their behavior through a trauma-informed lens and have an appreciation for their loss and grief

# Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

# Overall Approach - Using Implementation Science

- Child Interventions have been intentional in its approach to monitoring and continuous improvement:
  - Rigorous approaches to the collection, analysis and reporting of system data
  - Active implementation
  - Systematic approach to knowledge and project management
  - Information sharing and ongoing learning
  - Regular feedback from staff is obtained to build on successes and address areas for growth or improvement

# Project Management

- Child Intervention uses an intentional and deliberate approach to project management:
  - Includes the delivery of data, governance, organizational and support structure, processes, tools, guiding principles and reporting
- Consistent processes have been developed for identifying and tracking projects and issues
- Recommendations are linked to Child Intervention projects and initiatives

# Project Status: An Example



Alberta Children's Services  
Child Intervention Division

## Child Intervention Practice Framework

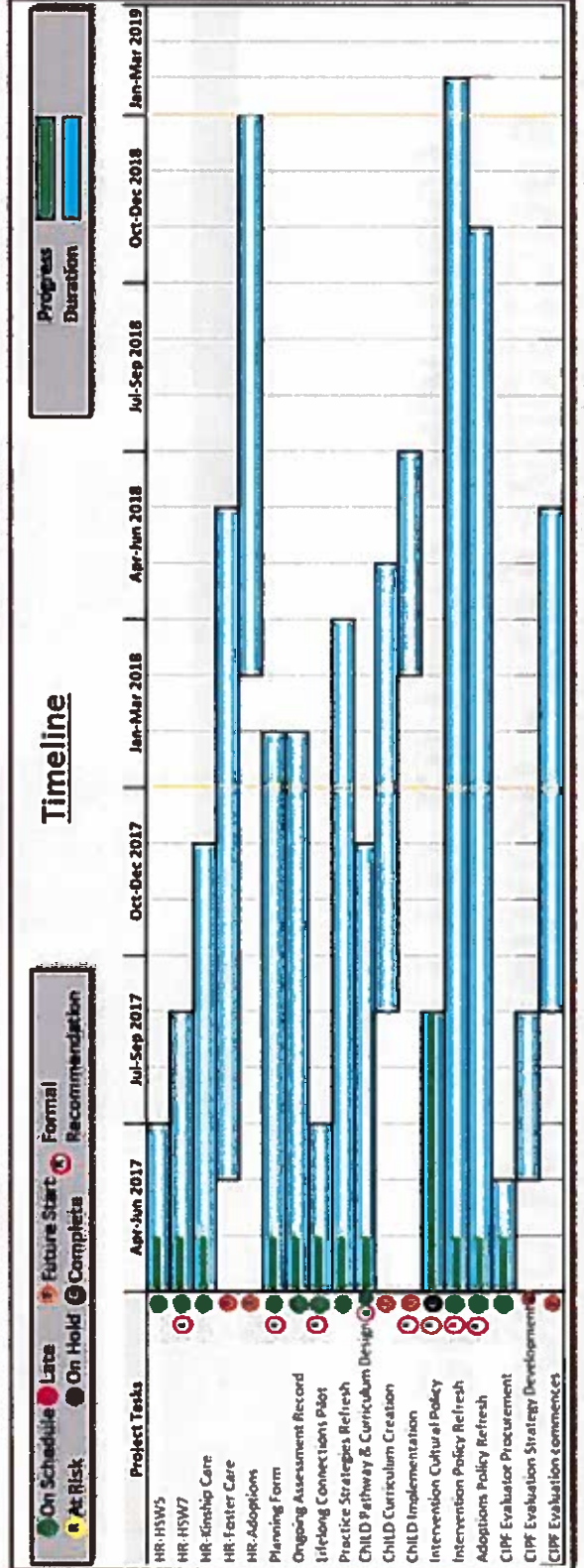
**Project Status:** Budget    Schedule    Resources    **Phase:** Implement    **End Date:** September 2020

### Child Intervention System Improvements: Strategic Directions

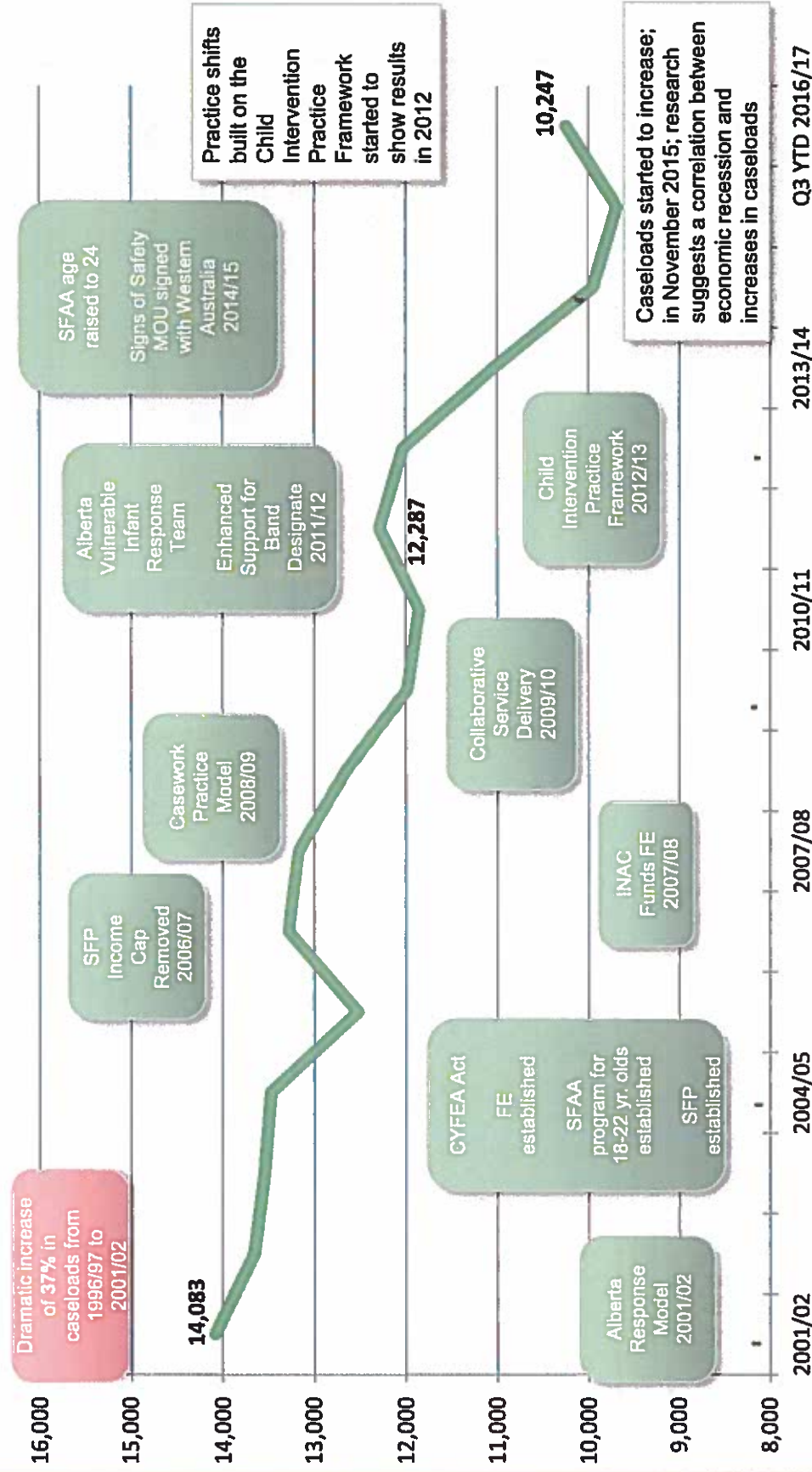
The Child Intervention Practice Framework (CIPF) initiative identifies principles and core elements of leading practice that guide work in the child intervention system. This initiative is instrumental in transforming the intervention system and supports the implementation of several formal recommendations for policy and practice.

Since inception in 2013, CIPF has nourished an environment where family strengths are recognized, and children and youth are respected and supported. A number of aligned system improvements are underway – such as training and development, human resources and program strategies like Signs of Safety and Family Finding – that will impact how services are delivered to families and children.

The CIPF builds on the Alberta Response Model of 2001, a legislative review resulting in the Child Youth and Family Enhancement Act (CYFEA) in 2004, the Casework Practice Model of 2006 and the Ministry's current roll-out of Collaborative Service Delivery. The Framework is a natural continuation of Children's Services commitment towards becoming more sophisticated through enhanced incorporation of evidence-based practice, research and a deeper appreciation of culture.



# Child Intervention - Key Milestones 2001/02 to YTD 2016/17 (Apr-Dec)



Number of Children Receiving Child Intervention Services



# The Experience to Date

- Families are more engaged - reduces anxiety
- Parents have confidence and the capacity to take ownership and implement own plans when viewed as experts
- Workers have confidence that children can be kept safe at home
- Workers and families build a joint understanding of concerns

# The Experience to Date

- Assumptions about what is harming the child and what is safe enough are challenged
- Assessment process is less reactive and considers everyone's perspective
- There is a shift from managing risk to building safety
- These shifts take time

# Knowledge Management and Mobilization

- Recognized need for solid quality assurance processes (The Child Intervention System Review: 2010)
- Child Intervention's Knowledge Management model was designed to meet the following objectives:
  - Support effective decision-making
  - Build capacity for evidence use in policy and practice
  - Facilitate knowledge exchange
  - Support the achievement of client-focused outcomes
- Increased ability to learn from past recommendations and tragic events

# Staff Experience

- Feedback from staff is gathered regularly to understand what is working well and identify areas for improvement. For example:
  - Child Intervention Think Tank Conversations
  - Learning and development programs are continually reviewed and evaluation
  - Staff engagement and focus groups in review of workplace culture and morale
  - Alberta College of Social Work studies
    - Flourishing in Child Protection: Creating Environments that helps Social Workers Thrive
    - Supervision: The Cornerstone for Caseworkers to Flourish

# Information Sharing and Learning

- Children's Services Public Website
- Child Intervention Intranet site
- Monthly Data Reporting
- Timely and Accurate Program Information Strategy (TAPIS)
- Quarterly Divisional Newsletter

# Information Sharing and Learning

- Opportunities provided for staff and agency partners to showcase their practice and build relationships:
  - Since 2013, five Community of Practice events and a SoS Gathering were held to showcase good practice from around Alberta
  - In May 2016, Calgary Region hosted a gathering for front-line child intervention staff and several lead agencies to share best practices and learn from the experiences of others

# Information Sharing and Learning

- **Policy to Practice Learning Series**
  - Monthly webinar series focused on the relationship between policy and day-to-day practice in child
- **Forty-five sessions held since December 2012**
  - Sessions were focused on a range of topics including:
    - Using Data to Inform Practice: Findings of the Alberta Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect
    - A Rights-Based Approach to Child Intervention
    - Youth Transitions to Adulthood
    - Collaborating with Indigenous Communities in Planning for their Children
    - Information on the Application for Indian Status
    - Sharing Child Information with Partners and Stakeholders

# Areas of Consideration

- Evaluation of the Child Intervention Practice Framework and Signs of Safety is required to:
  - Understand the experience of our staff and clients to know what is working well, what could be improved, as well as what is the impact on staff, children and families
  - Indicators to measure the characteristics of quality service identified in the Child Intervention Service Quality Framework will be developed
  - Staff and families will be invited to share their stories and experiences
- Intentionally focus on the positive work being done in every day practice