

## RESPONSE X CHILD MALTREATMENT DISCLOSURE

Effectiveness on reforming response-approaches to potential child maltreatment unclear.

<b>Evidence status</b>	<b>Some concerns</b>	Mixed results suggest reforming the response to alleged child abuse can encourage disclosure that is substantiated.
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### The summary in brief

This cell has two primary studies and one review. Both primary studies - one from Australia and the other from the US – are about reorganizing the response to alleged cases of child abuse. One is called *Differential Response (DR)*, a policy approach which engages families considered low- to moderate-risk for child abuse and guides them away from formal investigates. DR is followed in more than 20 US states. The other study is on *MIST*, based on the US Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) model. Multiple agencies come together to form a team and respond to a specific case in a coordinated and collaborative manner.

The results on actual disclosure are mixed. More evaluations of these programmes are needed.

### Contents of the cell

The cell has two studies (*Herbert 2021, Johnson-Motoyama 2022*) and one systematic review (*Radford 2017*)

A full summary of *Herbert 2021* is available in the guidebook.

<p><i>Herbert 2021</i></p> <p>QED, moderate risk of bias</p>	<p>Australia (city of Perth). Children of all ages.</p> <p>Evaluation of the <i>Multi-Agency Investigation &amp; Support Team (MIST)</i> programme.</p>
<p><i>Johnson-Motoyama 2022</i></p> <p>QED, moderate risk of bias</p>	<p>US. Children of all ages.</p> <p>Evaluation of <i>Differential Response (DR)</i>, a policy for families with low- to moderate-risk for child treatment to receive family engagement, services, and diversion for child protection investigations.</p>
<p>Radford 2017</p> <p>Rapid evidence assessment, low quality</p>	<p>A rapid evidence synthesis commissioned by the <i>Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (UK)</i>.</p>

### A. Primary Studies (Herbert 2021, Johnson-Motoyama 2022)

#### The interventions

*MIST or Multi-Agency Investigation & Support Team (Herbert 2021)* is a collaborative response to child abuse allegations. By bringing together representatives from different agencies in one location, MIST reduces the number of individual responses from different agencies. A case involves detectives, social workers, child family advocates, and therapists working together.

*Johnson-Motoyama (2022)* assesses a policy approach called *Differential Response (DR)*. This is an alternative approach to child protection that focuses on providing a range of responses based on the needs and risks of each individual case, as opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach. The goal of this program is to provide early intervention and support to low- to moderate-risk families to prevent the occurrence or recurrence of child maltreatment. Families receive engagement, access to various services, and diversion from child protection investigations.

### **Do the interventions work in improving child maltreatment disclosure?**

Unclear. *MIST* reported lower disclosure rates during child interviews compared to usual practice, but the rate of substantiated offences was not different for the two groups. However, the US states with DR programmes had 19% fewer substantiated reports for any abuse and 25% fewer for neglect. Additionally, foster care utilization in DR states was lower (by 16%).

### **Have the interventions been implemented at scale?**

Yes. *MIST* received over a third of reported cases in Perth during the study period. More than 20 US states used DR during 2004-2017.

### **Which type of organisation delivered the intervention?**

*MIST* included multiple public agencies involved in investigating child abuse cases. DR is a different approach or system to respond to allegations of child abuse. There is no deliverer per se.

### **What do the interventions cost?**

Neither study reports costs.

### **How are the programmes meant to work? The theory of change**

No specific theories are mentioned. *MIST* is modelled on Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) from the US.

### **Are the results generalisable?**

Likely. The DR programme results are likely generalizable to high-income county settings with access to child protection and family engagement services. *MIST* is based on the US model and could be replicated in other high-income countries.

### How reliable is the evidence?

Not very. There are only two studies, both QEDs with one rated as ‘low risk of bias’ and the other as ‘moderate risk of bias/some concerns.’

### *Risk of Bias for Quasi-Experimental Designs (QEDs)*

Study (Author and year)	Overall risk of bias	Confounding	Selection bias	Bias in intervention classification	Deviation from intended intervention	Missing outcome data	Measurement of the outcome	Selection of the reported result
<i>Herbert 2021</i>	Low risk of bias	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk	Low risk
<i>Johnson-Motoyama 2022</i>	Some concerns	Low risk	Low risk	Moderate risk	Low risk	Moderate risk	Low risk	Low risk

### B. Systematic Review (Radford 2017)

#### What is the systematic review about?

*Radford 2017* is a rapid review commissioned by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in England and Wales (IICSA). It investigates whether public and non-state institutions have adequately protected children and young people from CSA and exploitation. The rapid review sought to learn how institutions (state and non-state) outside of England and Wales have prevented and responded to CSA and exploitation.

#### What are the findings on disclosure?

The review included 21 papers, both primary studies and systematic reviews, almost all on disclosure, identification, and reporting on child sexual abuse. All individual studies came from high-income countries, mostly the US. Different approaches at the institution and community-levels are described in the studies. Some of these are “*proactive outreach and engagement with minority communities, training those who work with children to be alert to the signs of sexual abuse and exploitation, co-located multi-disciplinary investigation and response models, protocols and best practice approaches for investigative interviewing, improved assessment methods and training for professionals (Radford 2017).*”

#### What information is available on cost and cost-effectiveness?

No information is provided on cost or cost-effectiveness.

**Are results generalisable?**

Probably to high-income country settings, but some of the intervention approaches, such as training for professionals and those who work with children, should be transferable to low- and middle-income countries.

**How reliable is the evidence?**

Not very. The quality of the systematic review is rated as **low**. This means that there is at least one major flaw in how it was conducted, which reduces our confidence in the findings.