

# *Focus INVESTigation*

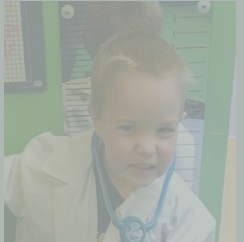
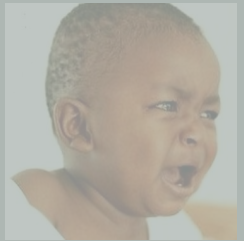
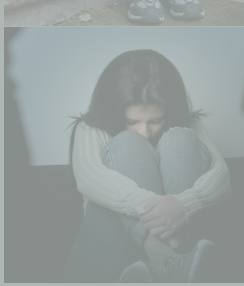
A Revision to

The Tennessee Child Abuse/Neglect Intake  
Assessment Policy & Procedures (Version 2.4)

Presented By: Kim Ford, Kirsten Meneses, Patti O'Shea,  
Adam Turner & Cleö Wilde



# What is Focus INVESTigation?

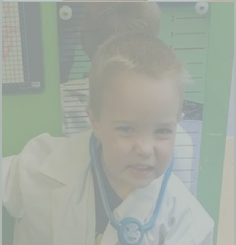
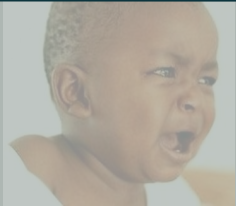


- A coalition advocating for the welfare of children in Tennessee
- Reforming Child Protective Services' (CPS) case reviews
- Putting safeguards in place





What is the  
current  
policy and  
procedure?



Options for processing a report of child abuse/neglect include:

- Assessment
- Open an investigation
- Resource Linkage
- ***Screen out the report***

(Children's Resource Center, 2015)





What is the problem with the current policy and procedure?

The current policy allows for reports of child abuse or neglect to be too easily screened out and children are being left in abusive homes when they should be removed, or at minimum, checked on.

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- ***Tennessee screened out 42% of its child abuse or neglect referrals***



# What is the history of child welfare reform in the United States?

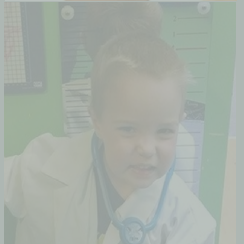
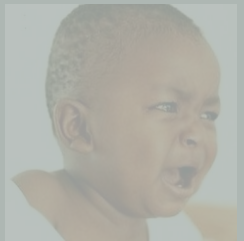
Per Dr. Nelson: missing from this would be concerns about child fatalities and development of review panels of fatalities see-[https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/canf\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/canf_final_report.pdf) including what was set up and the legislation that ordered it

- 1875 New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NYSPCC)
  - Mary Ellen Wilson
- 1956 National inventory of CPS
  - Vincent De Francis
- 1962 Article “The Battered Child Syndrome” gave rise to public concern
  - Dr. C. Henry Kempe
- Social Security Act in 1962

(Courtney, 2013)

# What is the history of child welfare reform in the United States?

- 1974 Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)
- 1980s Family Preservation - Permanency Plans
- 1994 Congress passed the Multiethnic Placement Act 2010
- CAPTA – defined child abuse and neglect





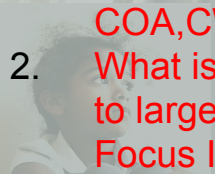
Who is  
affected by  
the current  
policy and  
procedures?


- Children
- Child Welfare Agencies
- CPS Workers
  - Investigation case managers:

*large caseloads*

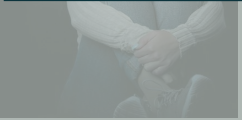


Per Dr. Nelson:

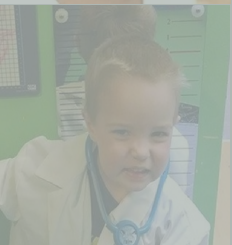
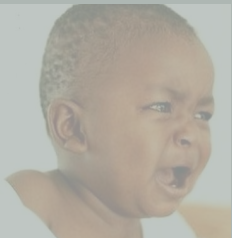
1. explain abbreviations  
COA, CWLA)
  2. What is the connection  
to large caseloads to  
Focus INVESTigation?
- 



What does  
Focus  
INVESTigation  
propose?



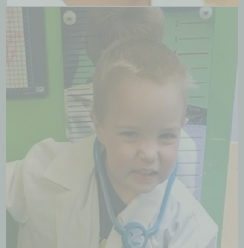
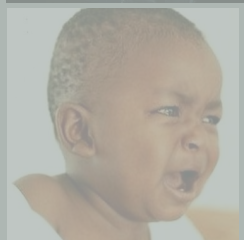
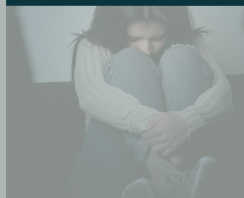
# Focus INVESTigation is calling for reform to the Decision Tree in the Tennessee Child Abuse/Neglect Intake Assessment Policy & Procedures (Version 2.4)





# What does Focus INVESTigation propose?

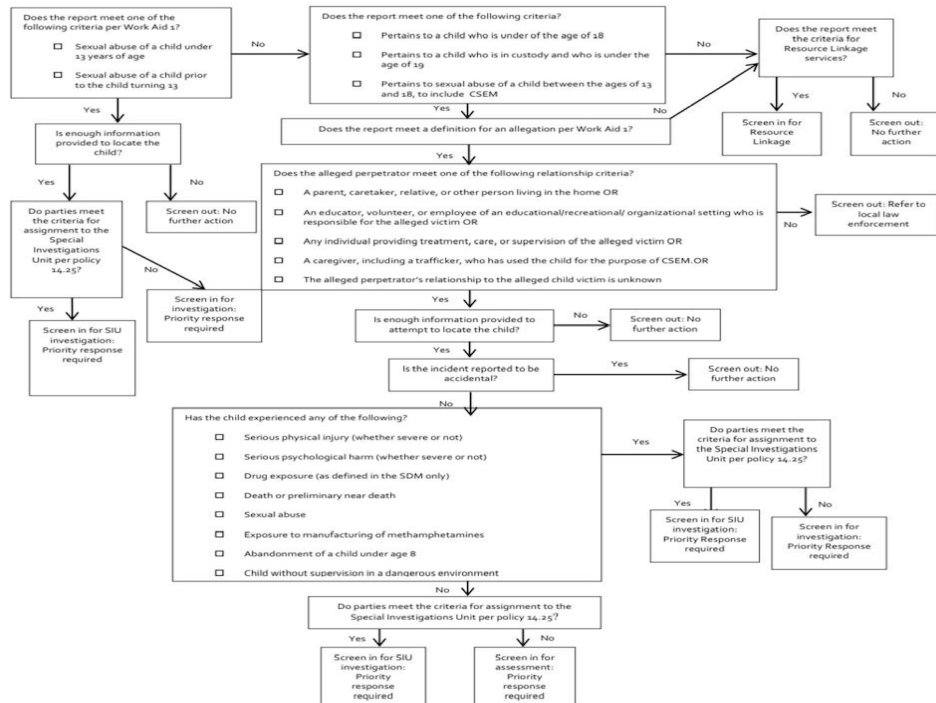
## The Decision Tree



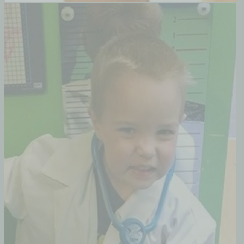
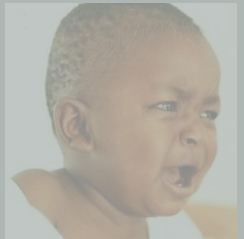
### SECTION 1. SCREENING AND TRACK ASSIGNMENT

#### Part A. Screening and Track Assignment Decision Tree

Complete the decision tree for the allegation(s) reported. Refer to DCS policy, Work Aid 1, and SDM definitions. When the report contains multiple allegation types, the assigned track is based on whether or not any one of the allegations meets the criteria for a CPS investigation.



# What does Focus INVESTigation propose?



# The Decision Tree

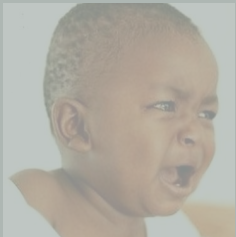


- Accidents
- Additional confirmation before 'screen out'
  - Receive follow-up
  - Flow to other options



## Why is a change in this policy and procedure necessary?

- 980 children in TN died<sup>3</sup>
- 98 of these children died as a result of poor or absent supervision<sup>3</sup>
- 43 of these children died from child abuse or neglect<sup>1</sup>.
- 113 of these children were known to DCS within three years preceding their deaths<sup>2</sup>
- ***Tennessee screened out 42% of its child abuse or neglect referrals<sup>1</sup>***



<sup>1</sup> (Children's Bureau, 2019)

<sup>2</sup> (Tennessee Department of Children's Services, 2018)

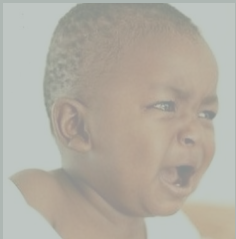
<sup>3</sup> (Tennessee Department of Health, 2019)

Why is a  
change in  
this policy  
and  
procedure  
necessary?

Reason #1: **Dakota Arndt**

## **August 29, 2014: Three year-old beaten to death by mother's boyfriend**

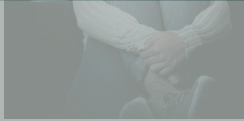
- Autopsy report:
  - “He died a horrible death”
- June 2014: Dakota was treated at Erlanger Hospital
  - DCS was called
  - DCS closed the case



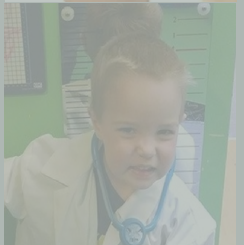
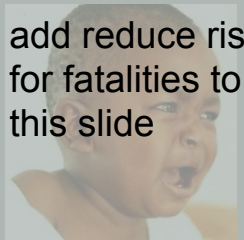
# How will these revisions make a difference?

- More scrutiny
- Additional level of security
  - Follow-up on reports of accidents
  - Second set of eyes to 'screen out' and close case
- Reduce exposure to traumatic experiences

*Having extra precautions will give Tennessee's children a better chance of being saved from abusive and neglectful homes*



add reduce risk for fatalities to this slide



Is  
Tennessee  
alone?

## Action by Other States

### **Chicago: CPS Plan of Action**

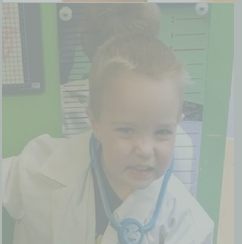
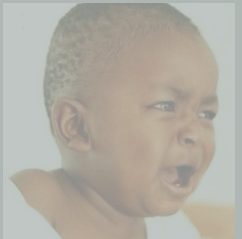
The city of Chicago advocated to enhance CPS investigation within the school system<sup>1</sup>

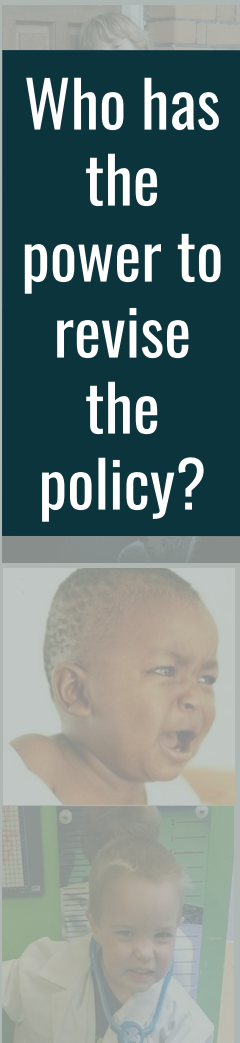
### **Kansas: Child Welfare Task Force**

Recommendations were made to the Kansas Department of Children and Families (DCF)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>(Protecting Chicago's Students, 2018)

<sup>2</sup>(Kansas Child Welfare System Task Force, 2018)





Who has  
the  
power to  
revise  
the  
policy?


# TN Department of Children's Services (DCS)

- Jennifer Nichols, Commissioner of DCS
- Kim Garland, coordinator at DCS Investigations
  - DCS Review Policy Review Committee meeting at 9:00 am on December 17 in Nashville.
- Influencers: State Senator Sara Kyle & House Representative John DeBerry, Jr. of the TN General Assembly



## ADVOCACY:

What  
YOU  
can do  
to help  
Tennessee's  
children...

- **Follow** *Focus INVESTigation* on Facebook, Instagram & Twitter 
- **Email** Kim Garland at [Garland\\_K@tn.gov](mailto:Garland_K@tn.gov)
- **Attend** the annual DCS Policy Review Committee meeting at 9:00 am on December 17, 2019 at 315 Deaderick, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Nashville, TN 37243





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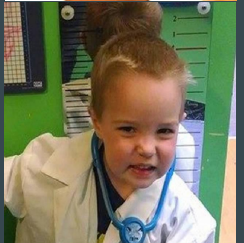
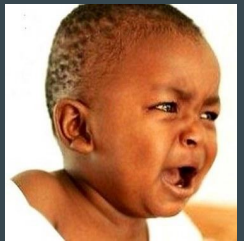
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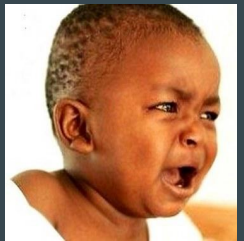
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