

SCAN Policies Database State Profile 2023: Alabama

Overview of the SCAN Policies Database

The State Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) Policies Database compiles data on the definitions and policies that states use in their surveillance of child maltreatment, along with data on associated risk and protective factors. The SCAN Policies Database is funded by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in collaboration with the Children's Bureau in the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Mathematica leads this project in partnership with Child Trends.

The project's purpose is to review and compile information from states' definitions and policies to create a database of those definitions and policies that can be used for analysis. The SCAN Policies Database is a resource for researchers, analysts, child welfare agency staff, and others interested in examining differences between states in their definitions and policies on child maltreatment and how they change over time.

Content

The scope of the SCAN Policies Database includes information about state definitions and policies related to child abuse and neglect for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The SCAN Policies Database team gathered this information through a document collection, review, and coding process. The team obtained input from states on data collection through a confirmation and verification process. More information about these data collection procedures can be found in the data user's guide and data collection protocol, accessible at <https://www.scanpoliciesdatabase.com/data-use-resources>.

The SCAN Policies Database 2023 represents data collected, reviewed, and verified between June 2023 and July 2024. The data reflect the state definitions and policies for the calendar year 2023. The scope of topics in the database includes states' definitions of child abuse and neglect, as well as information about policies related to reporting, screening, and investigating child maltreatment. Key aspects of the child welfare systems' response and context are also included.

The content in the SCAN Policies Database is organized into six domains. The state profiles, codebook, data collection protocol, and data file are also organized by these domains. In the protocol, each question begins with a letter prefix identifying the domain for each variable. The six domains with the identifying protocol number prefix are listed below.

Domain	Question prefix
Definitions	D
Reporting	R
Screening	S
Investigation	I
Child welfare response	W
Child welfare system context	C

State profile

This SCAN Policies Database state profile is a summary of the information collected about the definitions and policies for the identified state. Each of the six domains contain a set of tables that depict the state's information for all variables within that domain.

The state profile presents data for each variable with “yes,” “no,” “unknown,” or other response, as appropriate. The response of “unknown” appears for topics that could not be located from the state's available resources or verified with that state. In some cases, “logical skip” appears when a question was not applicable to a particular state, given a related response on a preceding question. Some information was not included in the state profile to ensure alignment with Executive Orders or other Presidential Actions.

Data use resources

Several data use resources are available to support users of the SCAN Policies Database:

- **Data user's guide:** The guide has detailed information about the data set, including the process used to collect and review the data, the scope of information included in the data set, guidance on using the data, such as how to link the data with other data sources, and notes about specific topics. The data user's guide includes appendices, including information about changes to the data between 2021 and 2023 that reflect changes to state laws and policies during that time period. There is one data user's guide that is updated and applicable for all rounds of data collection for the SCAN Policies Database.
- **Codebook:** The codebook provides information about each variable in the data set, including variable names, labels, definitions, protocol number, variable type, and frequencies. There are separate codebooks to summarize the data from each round of data collection.
- **Errata statement:** The errata statement presents corrections applied to previous rounds of data for the SCAN Policies Database. Starting in 2023, there is one errata statement that is updated and applicable for all rounds of data collection for the SCAN Policies Database.
- **Data collection protocol:** The protocol has the questions used to collect information about states' laws and policies as part of the data review and coding process for each round of data collection. There are separate data collection protocols for each round of data collection for the SCAN Policies Database.

These data use resources can be found on the SCAN Policies Database website (<https://www.scanpoliciesdatabase.com/data-use-resources>) or from the National Data Archive for Child Abuse and Neglect (NDACAN) (<https://www.ndacan.acf.hhs.gov/>).

More information

More information about the SCAN Policies Database can be found at <https://www.scanpoliciesdatabase.com>. General inquiries can be submitted to SCANPoliciesDatabase@mathematica-mpr.com.

State identifying information

Table I. State Identifying information

	Response
State abbreviation	AL
State Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) code	01
Census region code	South
State verified coding of information	Yes
State confirmed documents reviewed	No
State definitions and policies for calendar year	2023
Data version	2023v1

Domain D: Definitions of child maltreatment

Table D.I. State's definition of child maltreatment

	Response
1. Types of maltreatment included in state definition	
a. Physical abuse	Yes
b. Excessive corporal punishment	Yes
c. Sexual abuse	Yes
d. Emotional maltreatment	Yes
e. Neglect	Yes
f. Inadequate clothing	Yes
g. Inadequate shelter	Yes
h. Malnourishment, inadequate food	Yes
i. Medical neglect, inadequate medical care	Yes
j. Failure to thrive	Yes
k. Educational neglect	No
l. Abandonment	Yes
m. Injurious environment. Likelihood of harm to child's health, physical well-being	No
n. Drug lab. Child present within structure where methamphetamine is being created	Yes
o. Inadequate supervision. Failure to meet parent or caretaker responsibilities	Yes
p. Drug or alcohol misuse. Parental drug or alcohol misuse causing harm to child	Yes
q. Prenatal exposure to drugs or alcohol	Yes
r. Illicit substance. Illegally providing a controlled substance to a child	Yes
s. Human trafficking, involuntary servitude, sexual servitude	Yes
t. Female genital mutilation	No
u. Shaken baby syndrome, abusive head trauma	Yes
v. Failure to protect. Failure to protect from harm	Yes
w. Domestic violence. Exposure to domestic violence	Yes
x. Factitious disorder by proxy	Yes
y. Institutional abuse/neglect	No
z. Other definition (specify)	Yes - Other threat of serious harm
2. Subtypes of maltreatment included in state definition	
a. Subtypes of maltreatment considered abuse	Abuse includes physical abuse, emotional maltreatment (mental injury), sexual abuse, trafficking (sexual exploitation), and punishment
b. Subtypes of maltreatment considered neglect	Neglect includes inadequate clothing, inadequate food, inadequate shelter, medical neglect, failure to thrive, abandonment, failure to protect, failure to provide supervision, and mental abuse/neglect
c. Subtypes of maltreatment considered other than abuse or neglect	Chemical endangerment includes exposure to a drug lab and illegal substances

Table D.1 (*continued*)

	Response
3. Level of harm included in state's definition of child maltreatment	
a. Inflicts harm	Yes
b. Imminent danger or substantial risk of harm	Yes
4. Differences in level of harm included in state's definition of child maltreatment by type of maltreatment	Yes - Abuse definition includes harm or risk of harm; Neglect definition includes failure to protect from risk of harm
5. Type of harm or injury specified in state's definition of child maltreatment	
a. Death, bodily injury, impairment of physical condition	Yes
b. Impairment of mental or emotional condition	Yes
c. Harmful environment, conditions	Yes
d. Type of harm or injury not specified	No
e. Other (specify)	No
6. Variation in extent of injury or harm by maltreatment type in the state's definition of child maltreatment	Yes - Physical abuse and its subtypes of maltreatment include death, bodily injury, or impairment of physical condition; Neglect and its subtypes of maltreatment include impairment of mental or emotional condition and harmful environment or conditions (e.g., inadequate supervision, food, shelter, clothing, etc. which put children at risk of harm)
7. Perpetrator identified as part of state's definition of child maltreatment	Yes
8. Types of perpetrators specified as part of state's definition of child maltreatment	
a. Any person	No
b. Parent	Yes
c. Guardian	Yes
d. Caregiver/caretaker	Yes
e. Family member or parent's paramour	No
f. Household member	No
g. Person responsible for child	No
h. Other (specify)	Yes - Any person age 14 or older

Table D.I (*continued*)

	Response
9. Types of perpetrators vary by type of maltreatment	Yes
10. Explanation of variation in types of perpetrator by maltreatment type	For all categories of neglect, the perpetrator is a parent or primary caregiver; For medical neglect, the perpetrator is a parent and guardian; For abuse, the perpetrator is any person age 14 or older
11. Child age included in definition of child maltreatment	Yes
12. Specific child age in definition of child maltreatment	Under age 18 with variability under 18 and over 18
13. Variability of child age by type of maltreatment	Yes - Failure to provide adequate clothing/personal hygiene to the extent it poses a risk of serious harm to the child applies to children under age 12 and to those, regardless of age, who have a disability that prevents self-care; Child's age is under age 19 when person is in need of protective services and does not qualify for adult protective services

Table D.II. Child maltreatment definition exemptions

	Response
1. Exemption included in state's definition of child maltreatment	
a. Financial issues, financial inability to provide for a child	No
b. Discipline; physical discipline, if it is reasonable and causes no bodily injury to the child	Yes
c. Safe haven exemption; newborn relinquished or abandoned in accordance with infant safe haven and safe surrender laws	Yes
d. Infant testing positive for drugs – medical; newborn with positive test for controlled substance due to parent's medical treatment	No
e. Religious observance; parent relies on spiritual or religious forms of medical treatment	Yes
f. Other exemption (specify)	No
2. Safe haven exemption included in state's definition of child maltreatment	
a. Must leave a child at specific safe haven locations or designated providers	Yes
b. Child must be left by parent or parent's agent	Yes
c. Child must be left by a certain age (specify)	Yes - 45 days old or younger
d. No intent to return	Yes
e. Child must be left unharmed	Yes
f. Other (specify)	No

Table D.III. Definitions and response for child fatalities and near-fatalities cases

	Response
1. State's definition of fatalities or deaths caused by child maltreatment	.
a. Not specified or defined	No
b. Injury from abuse or neglect caused death	No
c. Abuse or neglect was contributing factor in death	Yes
d. Death of child who was in child welfare custody or foster care	No
e. Other (specify)	No
2. State conducts case reviews with a child fatality review team or a similar review process for fatalities caused by child abuse or neglect	Yes, reviews are required for all or some cases
3. State's definition of near-fatalities or near-deaths caused by child maltreatment	
a. Not specified or defined	No
b. General reference to a serious or critical condition or injury that is life threatening with a substantial risk of death	Yes
c. Specific injury or specific medical treatment or intervention (specify)	No
d. Other (specify)	No
4. State conducts case reviews with a review team or similar review process for near-fatalities caused by child abuse or neglect	No

Domain R: Reporting child abuse and neglect

Table R.I. Reporting policies

	Response
1. Statewide centralized reporting	No
2. Decentralized reporting	Other - County departments of human resources and local law enforcement agencies accept reports of suspected child abuse or neglect
3. Standard for reporting child maltreatment	
a. Known abuse and neglect	Yes
b. Reasonable cause to believe a child was abused or neglected	Yes
4. Universal mandated reporting	No
5. Required training for mandated reporters	No
6. Penalties for failure to report	Yes, all mandated reporters
7. Specific penalties for failure to report	
a. Criminal charges	Yes
b. Civil charges	No
c. Professional licensure suspended or revoked	No
d. Other (specify)	Yes - Sentence of not more than 6 months imprisonment or a fine of not more than \$500
8. Penalties for false reporting	No
9. Specific penalties for false reporting	Logical Skip
10. Immunity for reporters of child abuse and neglect	Yes
11. Information requested at the time of report	
a. Identifying information of child	Yes
b. Location and contact information of child and family	Yes
c. Type and severity of suspected maltreatment	Yes
d. Date of suspected maltreatment	No
e. Identifying and other information of alleged perpetrator(s)	Yes
f. Identifying and other information of reporter	No
g. Identifying information of child's parents, guardian, or caregiver/caretaker	Yes
h. Identifying and other information of family or household members	No
i. Information on prior maltreatment	Yes
j. Other (specify)	No

Table R.I (continued)

	Response
12. Anonymity of reporter	General public (not mandated reporters) can remain anonymous
13. Tribal involvement in state or local public child welfare agency's process to accept reports of Tribal cases	Yes, Tribes directly accept reports and collaborate with state/local public child welfare agency - Poarch Creek Indians
14. State requires all notifications of substance-exposed newborns (SENs) to be submitted as reports of child maltreatment	
a. State does not require all cases of SENs to be reported for child maltreatment, but they could be reported if they meet certain criteria	No
b. State requires all SENs to be reported as child maltreatment	Yes
c. Other (specify)	No
15. Accepts reports of risk without an allegation of child maltreatment (risk-only reports)	Yes

Table R.II. Types of mandated reporters

	Response	Response	Response
1. Types of mandated reporters	Included in state's definition of mandated reporters	Training required ¹	Subject to penalties for failure to report ²
a. Foster parents	No	Logical Skip	Logical Skip
b. School staff - teachers	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes
c. School bus drivers or other transportation staff	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes
d. Before- /after-school program staff	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes
e. Child care staff	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes
f. Camp counselors, directors, or administrators	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes
g. Athletic coaches or staff	No	Logical Skip	Logical Skip
h. Medical or dental professionals	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes
i. Substance abuse disorder treatment providers	No	Logical Skip	Logical Skip
j. Mental health, counselors, or other social service professionals	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes
k. Police or other law enforcement	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes
l. Emergency medical technicians, firefighters, or other emergency personnel	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes
m. Judges	No	Logical Skip	Logical Skip
n. District attorneys or other attorneys	No	Logical Skip	Logical Skip
o. Guardians ad litem or court-appointed special advocates	No	Logical Skip	Logical Skip
p. Other court personnel	No	Logical Skip	Logical Skip
q. Shelter staff	No	Logical Skip	Logical Skip
r. Those who work in fields processing or monitoring print, film, or computer images	No	Logical Skip	Logical Skip
s. Religious clergy	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes

Table R.II (*continued*)

	Response	Response	Response
t. Volunteers	No	Logical Skip	Logical Skip
u. Coroners or medical examiners	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes
v. Staff or contractors of state and county agencies	No	Logical Skip	Logical Skip
w. Other type of mandated reporter (specify)	No	Logical Skip	Logical Skip

¹ Responses in this column can equal logical skip when the given type of mandated reporter is not included in the state's definition of mandated reporters or when no training is required for mandated reporters (Table R.II). Responses in this column can be yes when a state has universal mandated reporting (Table R.I) and all mandated reporters require training (Table R.II).

² Responses in this column can equal logical skip when the given type of mandated reporter is not included in the state's definition of mandated reporters or when no mandated reporters are subject to penalties (Table R.I). Responses in this column can be yes when a state has universal mandated reporting (Table R.I) and when all adults or all mandated reporters are subject to penalties (Table R.I).

Domain S: Screening reports of child abuse and neglect

Table S.I. Screening policies

	Response
1. Statewide centralized screening	No
2. How screening is decentralized	Each county/region has own screening unit
3. Information required to screen in report	
a. Identifying information of child	Yes
b. Location and contact information of child and family	Yes
c. Type and severity of suspected maltreatment	Yes
d. Date of suspected maltreatment	Yes
e. Identifying and other information of alleged perpetrator(s)	Yes
f. Other (specify)	Yes - Vulnerability of the child and potential risk of harm to child

Table S.II. Screening decision process and activities

	Response	Required cases	Conditions or types of cases
4. Decision processes used during screening			
a. Supervisory review	Yes	Required for all	—
b. Team-based decision	No	Logical Skip	—
c. Individual screener	No	Logical Skip	—
d. Other (specify)	No	Logical Skip	—
e. Unknown	No	—	—
5. Variability of decision process used for screening			
a. Consistent statewide	No	—	—
b. Varies locally	Yes	—	—
6. Certain activities or information are required as part of screening	Yes		
7. Activities or information required as part of screening			
a. Safety or risk assessment	Yes	Required for all	Not applicable
b. Review agency records for prior involvement with child protective services	Yes	Required for all	Not applicable
c. Other (specify)	Yes - Report to the district attorney's office and local law enforcement agency any report of child abuse or neglect	Required for some	Reports must be reported to the District Attorney's office and the local law enforcement agency, according to the County Department's written working agreement with the District Attorney and law enforcement
8. Types of safety or risk assessment used during screening			
a. Structured decision making	No	—	—
b. Other (specify)	Yes - CA/N assessment	—	—
9. Consistency of screening activities/information			
a. Consistent statewide	Yes	—	—
b. Varies locally (specify)	No	—	—

Table S.III. Screeners

	Response
1. Screener of abuse and neglect reports	
a. Caseworkers (frontline staff)	Yes
b. Case managers (supervisors)	Yes
c. Staff in specialized screening unit	No
d. Other (specify)	No
2. Qualifications of screener	
a. Associate's degree	No
b. Bachelor's degree	Yes
c. Master's degree	No
d. Training for screening (specify)	No
e. Years of experience (specify)	No
f. Other (specify)	No
3. Degree in social work or related field for screeners	No
4. Tribal involvement in state or local public child welfare agency's process to screen Tribal cases	Yes, Tribes directly conduct screening - Poarch Creek Indians

Domain I: Investigations of child abuse and neglect

Table I.I. Investigations policies

	Response
1. Findings from child maltreatment investigations can lead to criminal penalties	Yes
2. Investigator for reports	
a. Caseworkers (frontline staff)	Yes
b. Case managers (supervisors)	No
c. Staff in specialized investigations unit	No
d. Law enforcement	Yes
e. Other (specify)	No
3. Qualifications of investigator	
a. Associate's degree	No
b. Bachelor's degree	Yes
c. Master's degree	No
d. Training for conducting investigations (specify)	Yes - Training is unspecified
e. Years of experience (specify)	No
f. Other (specify)	No
4. Degree in social work or related field for investigators	No
5. Level of evidence required for substantiation (founded/indicated/confirmed)	Credible or substantial evidence
6. Investigation determination can result in an "inconclusive" finding	No

Table I.II. Required activities/information for investigation

	Response	Required cases	Conditions or types of cases
1. Certain activities or information required for the investigation process	Yes		
2. Specific activities or information required for investigation			
a. Review agency records for prior involvement with child protective services	Yes	Required for all	Not applicable
b. Visit to child's home	Yes	Required for all	Not applicable
c. Interview or observation of child victim	Yes	Required for all	Not applicable
d. Interview or observation of other children living in child's home	Yes	Required for all	Not applicable
e. Risk or safety assessment	Yes	Required for all	Not applicable
f. Evaluation of home environment or home study	Yes	Required for all	Not applicable
g. Interviews with child's parents, caregivers, or other adults residing in child's home	Yes	Required for all	Not applicable
h. Check of criminal records for adults in home	No	Logical Skip	Not applicable
i. Check of child welfare or central registry for prior child maltreatment allegations against adults in home	Yes	Required for all	Not applicable
j. Medical evaluation	Yes	Required for some	If considered necessary
k. Mental health evaluation	Yes	Required for some	If considered necessary
l. Interview alleged perpetrator	Yes	Required for some	Required unless the person is being criminally investigated, and law enforcement, the District Attorney's office or the defense attorney does not authorize the interview
m. Interview reporter or collateral source	Yes	Required for all	Not applicable
n. Other (specify)	Yes - Photographs to document physical injuries or conditions of children, or neglectful conditions of child's home	Required for some	If considered necessary

Domain W: Child welfare response

Table W.I. Differential or alternative response

	Response
1. Differential/alternative response	Yes--implemented statewide
2. Types of maltreatment eligible for differential/alternative response	Only certain types of maltreatment are eligible
3. Types of maltreatment <u>not</u> eligible for differential/alternative response	
a. Cases involving child fatalities and near-fatalities	No
b. Substance-exposed infants	No
c. Physical abuse	No
d. Sexual abuse	No
e. Neglect	No
f. Abandoned infants	No
g. Other (specify)	Yes - Any child abuse and neglect based on the definitions of state statutes and the Department
4. Eligibility for differential/alternative response determined by a risk determination	Yes
5. Tools used to determine risk for differential/alternative response	No
6. Risk level eligible for differential/alternative response	
a. No risk	No
b. Low risk	No
c. Moderate risk	No
d. Other (specify)	Yes - Family conditions or circumstances that, if left unchanged, can cause child abuse or neglect
e. Unknown	No
7. Other types of cases or conditions eligible for differential/alternative response	
a. No other cases or conditions	No
b. No immediate safety concerns	No
c. No or few prior reports of child abuse or neglect	No
d. Other (specify)	Yes - Child at risk of maltreatment and the conditions or circumstances described do not constitute a child abuse or neglect allegation; Children who would be considered abused/neglected except for the fact that the person allegedly responsible is under age 14; Children for whom school personnel have reported concerns other than school attendance that indicate there may be a risk of maltreatment
8. When is determination made for differential/alternative response	
a. At the time of screening to assign to differential response	Yes
b. After a report is screened in	No
c. Other (specify)	No

Table W.I (continued)

	Response
9. Referrals to community services for cases engaged in differential response	
a. No	No
b. Yes - for all cases	No
c. Yes - when families express interest	No
d. Yes - when there is a determination of risk	No
e. Yes - other (specify)	Yes - The provision of on-going services is voluntary unless a safety threat exists or services have been court ordered. When the Child Protective Services (CPS) Prevention assessment reveals the children are safe, no significant risks have been identified, and the parents or primary caregivers have protective capacities sufficient to protect the children, the provision of on-going services is not necessary.

Table W.II. In-home services, foster care, and permanency

	Response
1. In-home services provided for unsubstantiated cases to maintain intact families	Yes--implemented statewide
2. In-home services provided post reunification	Yes--implemented statewide
3. Permanency	
a. Kinship guardianship as a permanency option	Yes
b. Subsidized guardianship	Yes
c. Subsidized kinship guardianship	Yes
d. Subsidized adoption	Yes
4. Foster care case management staff	
a. State/county public agency staff	Yes
b. Contracted provider staff	No
c. Tribal agency staff	No
5. Qualifications of foster care case managers	
a. Associate degree	No
b. Bachelor's degree	Yes
c. Master's degree	No
d. Training for case management (specify)	No
e. Years of experience (specify)	No
f. Other (specify)	No
6. Degree in social work or related field for foster care case managers	No

Table W.III. Tribal foster care and Tribes that directly operate Title IV-E programs through an agreement with HHS

	Response
1. Tribal involvement in foster care for Tribal cases	Yes, Tribes within state provide foster care - Poarch Creek Indians
2. Tribes directly operate a Title IV-E program through an agreement with US HHS	No
3. Number of Tribes that directly operate a Title IV-E program through an agreement with US HHS	Logical Skip
4. Specify Tribes that directly operate a Title IV-E program through an agreement with US HHS	Not applicable

Table W.IV. Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

	Response
1. Federal ICWA requirements codified in state law	No
2. Federal ICWA requirements that are codified in state law	Logical Skip
3. State law codifying ICWA includes state-recognized Tribes	Logical Skip

Table W.V. Extended foster care

	Response
1. Foster care extension for youth older than age 18	Yes
2. Age youth are allowed to remain in extended foster care	Up to age 21 (until 21st birthday)
3. Youth must proactively request, provide consent, or opt-in to receive extended foster care	No
4. Criteria for youth to remain in extended foster care	
a. There are no criteria to remain in extended foster care	Yes
b. Enrolled in school	No
c. Employed	No
d. Participating in workforce development/training program	No
e. Comply with independent living/self-sufficiency plan	No
f. Receive independent living or other services	No
g. Medical condition exemption	No
h. Other (specify)	No
5. Reentry to extended foster care allowed for youth older than age 18 who aged out or left foster care	Yes
6. Conditions for youth to reenter extended foster care	
a. Youth consent or sign a voluntary placement agreement	No
b. Youth develop an independent living plan	No
c. It is in the best interest of the youth	No
d. Other (specify)	Yes - Youth may request reentry if they are living in a situation where there is identifiable risk of harm that would typically result in the provision of child welfare services if they were under age 19; Youth's reentry may be authorized through the Department of Human Resource's resumption of legal custody if the case remained open on the court's administrative docket or it may be authorized through completion of an Agreement for Foster Care

Domain C: Child welfare system context

Table C.I. Child welfare system context

	Response
1. State- or county-administered child welfare system	State-administered
2. State operates under legal consent decree or other court-ordered monitoring	No

Supplemental Notes on State

Definitions

Alabama defines emotional maltreatment as mental abuse/neglect.

Reporting

Reporting is decentralized, and some counties have their own child abuse reporting hotline. People who wish to report suspected child abuse and neglect should call their county Department of Human Services (DHR) office or local law enforcement.

If athletic coaches and staff are school staff, they are mandated reporters.

If substance abuse treatment providers are included in the category of mental health providers, they are mandated reporters.

DHR accepts child abuse and neglect reports on children with possible Indian or Alaska Native heritage who reside off a reservation. DHR child welfare staff conduct assessments on these children. In addition, DHR must meet the immediate safety needs of Indian or Alaska Native children in the following circumstances:

1. Indian children are residents of or are domiciled within an Indian reservation but are temporarily located off the reservation and safety threats have been identified;
2. Regardless of whether a child is a ward of the Tribal court or the Tribe has exclusive jurisdiction, DHR must provide protection and meet Indian children's immediate safety needs.

Screening

The intake/screening process is used to determine investigative response time and whether the child is at risk of maltreatment, even if the report does not rise to the statutory definition of child abuse and neglect.

DHR Units and responsibilities vary across counties based on the discretion of county directors. Some county departments have intake units that accept reports.

Investigations

For assessments involving out-of-home care settings, it may be appropriate for licensing staff to assist the worker with the CA/N assessment, in some (unspecified) cases.

In addition to social service caseworkers, social workers and senior social workers investigate cases, and they might require additional qualifications such as social work licensure and a master's degree.

Any deviations from normal standards for conducting CA/N assessments must have supervisory consultation and approval.

Child welfare response

Regarding differential response, when the intake information reveals the child might be at risk of maltreatment, the information is considered a "Child Protective Services (CPS) Prevention Referral" and an evaluation of the child or family situation is required. The evaluation process is called a "CPS Prevention Assessment." For referral to CPS prevention or a differential response to occur, the information provided at the time of report does not rise to the level of child abuse or neglect according to statutory and departmental definitions or is insufficient to determine whether a child abuse or neglect report exists.

Child welfare context

The consent decree is only for safety plans.

State Statutes and Policy Documentation Sources

Alabama Child Placing Agency Inclusion Act, Ala. Code § 26-10D-2 (2024).
Alabama Department of Human Resources. (2023). Child abuse and neglect reporting.
Alabama Department of Human Resources. (2023). Indian Child Welfare Policies and Procedures.
Alabama Department of Human Services. (n.d.). HHS Nondiscrimination Statement.
Alabama Department of Human Services. (2019). Safe haven for newborn babies.
Alabama Department of Human Services. (2023). Child protective services FAQs.
Alabama Department of Human Services. (2023). Child protective services policy.
Child Abuse Generally, Ala. Code § 26-15 (2023).
Child Death Review, Ala. Code § 26-16-90 (1997).
Human Trafficking, Ala. Code § 13A-6-150 (2023).
Kinship Foster Care Program, Ala. Code § 38-12 (2019).
Protective Services for Children, Ala. Code. § 660-5-22 (2016).
Protective Services for Children, Ala. Code. § 660-5-28 (2003).
Protective Services for Children, Ala. Code. § 660-5-34 (2008).
Protective Services for Children, Ala. Code. § 660-5-36-.04 (2014).
Protective Services for Children, Ala. Code. § 660-5-48 (2002).
Reporting of Child Abuse or Neglect, Ala. Code § 26-14 (2019).
State of Alabama Personnel Department. (2023). Social Service Caseworker I.