

Oregon Children's Justice Act Three Year Assessment 2024 to 2027

Overview of the 2024-2027 Three Year Assessment Process

To help inform Oregon's CJA priorities related to improving the investigation, prosecution, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation, in ways that limit additional trauma to the child victim, the Oregon CJA Task Force completed a needs assessment. The process for, and results of, the assessment are summarized here.

The assessment process began in August 2023 and was completed in May 2024. The assessment involved multiple components including several workgroup meetings focused on increasing input from survivors and their families, two statewide surveys, Task Force member "Field Reports," small group discussions among Task Force members, and a facilitated meeting of the Task Force. All members of the Task Force participated in the process with coordination and support provided by Oregon's CJA administrator. The Oregon Department of Justice, Crime Victim and Survivor Services Division Training and Curriculum Policy Coordinator assisted in developing and executing the assessment. Copies of the Field Report form and a printed version of the surveys are included with this report.

Field Reports

The Field Report tool is a set of questions created to guide Task Force members in gathering information about, and reflecting on, the strengths, weaknesses, and trends in child abuse intervention in Oregon. The purpose of having Task Force members engage in these discussions was to bring a broader perspective to their input regarding Oregon's needs related to the investigation, prosecution, and judicial handling of child abuse in Oregon. As a large state with tribal land, urban, rural and frontier counties and a diverse population, Oregon's opportunities and challenges related to child abuse intervention are varied. Task Force members are selected to serve on the Task Force because of their experience and expertise in the field. They are expected to apply that expertise to represent a particular group involved in or affected by child abuse intervention in Oregon. Task Force members are also expected to connect with their colleagues or constituents in the field. The CJA administrator recognizes that even for those actively involved in their professional communities, representing a broad group with diversity of experiences and opinions is challenging. For the Field Reports, members were asked to identify a minimum of three individuals from the group they represent on the Task Force who might bring diverse perspectives to the questions presented. They were encouraged to use the tool to prompt conversation with these individuals about the current state of child abuse intervention in Oregon. Following these discussions, Task Force members were asked to reflect on those responses and synthesize them with their their own reflections into their Field Report.

Survivor and Parent Workgroup/Community Survey

Based on observations and feedback about the last three year assessment, the Task Force decided to create a workgroup focused on improving inclusivity of the survey. The workgroup consisted of the Parent Representative, Lived Experience Expert, and Individual Experienced in Working with Children with Disabilities. The group met several times with support from the CJA administrator and the Training and Curriculum Policy Coordinator. The workgroup designed a separate survey with questions focused on the experiences of individuals who may have accessed or

interacted with child abuse intervention as non-child abuse professionals, and what they think should be improved. The group consulted with Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging experts from the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) who provided input on survey design and distribution and assisted with distribution of the survey to groups historically overrepresented in child welfare investigations. Based on input from ODHS, the survey was translated into several languages (Spanish, Russian, Somali, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Chinese simplified) and support materials were developed to introduce the purpose and goals of the community survey. The survey was distributed to organizations and community groups likely to have contact with survivors and parents. These organizations and groups agreed to provide a warm introduction to potential survey participants. Survey participants were offered gift cards as a thank you for their time and input.

MDT Professional Survey

The Task Force electronically distributed a survey broadly to professional stakeholders across the state through several listservs and contact lists for the purpose of providing an opportunity for the field at large to have a direct voice in the development of Oregon's priorities.

Distribution included child welfare, law enforcement, prosecutors, assistant attorneys general, judges, children's advocacy center staff, public health professionals, mental health professionals, teachers, and others involved in child abuse intervention.

Summary Meeting

At the May meeting, results of the field surveys were presented to the membership. Task Force members then shared highlights from their Field Reports and participated in small group discussions to identify themes related to investigation, prosecution and judicial handling of child abuse. Following the small group discussions, Task Force members shared and discussed the themes.

Survey Highlights and Findings

We received 462 responses between the professional and community surveys. There were 418 unduplicated responses to the professional survey and 44 to the community survey.

Community Survey

The community survey was a branching survey consisting of a maximum of ten questions. The survey included more opportunity than the professional survey to provide narrative feedback about the individual's experience with the child abuse intervention system in Oregon.

Questions included what the individual recommends for improving system response and what went well or badly in their experience. Responses were sorted based on respondents' answers about their status as a survivor or parent and shared with the appropriate Task Force representative for review and summary presentation to the Task Force membership.

Response Summary

There were 22 survivor responses, evenly divided between those identifying as living in rural areas and those identifying as living in urban. There were 33 parent responses. (Individual respondents could indicate status both as a survivor and as a parent).

Themes

Responses from both survivors and parents emphasized the importance of:

- Believing children’s disclosures
- Good communication by professionals with system involved children and families
- Appropriately balancing child safety and family unity
- Providing support to parents
- Increasing school based resources to support children and families

Respondents would like more guidance information about child abuse intervention systems and about explanation regarding decision making. They emphasized the importance of maintaining focus on child safety regardless including but also beyond decisions of system partners.

Professional Survey

The professional survey consisted of demographics, priority areas, and legislative concepts.

Demographics

Of the 418 unduplicated responses to the professional survey, 267 answered at least one substantive question. (In 2018, 463 individuals began the survey and 363 answered at least one substantive question. In 2021, 979 began the survey and 854 answered at least one substantive question).

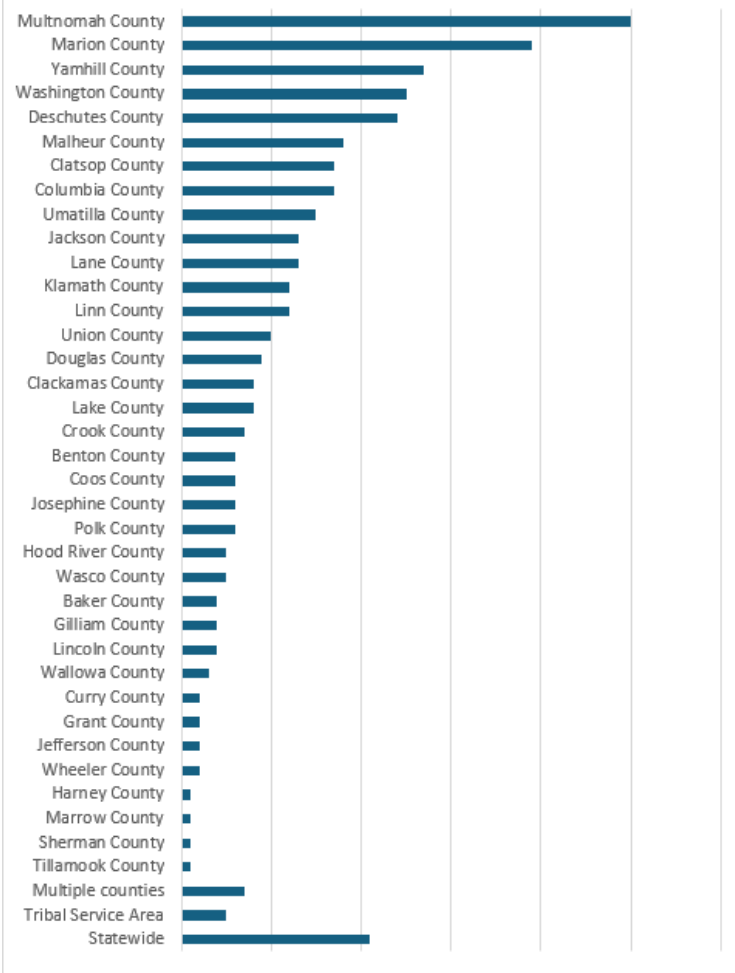
Partial Responses:

Answered 1 substantive question	9
Answered 2 substantive questions	2
Answered 3+ substantive questions	256

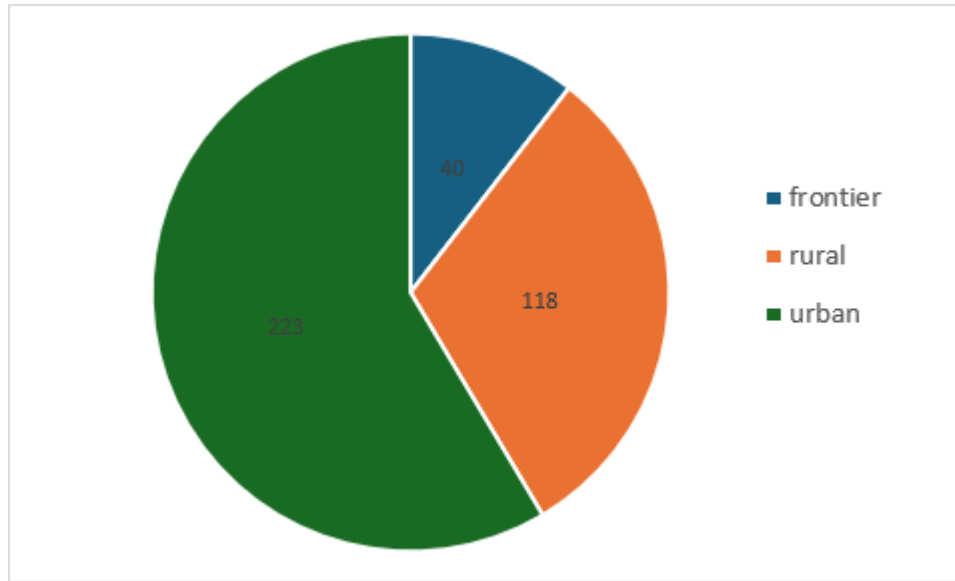
After experiencing a significant increase in response in 2021, the response rate to this survey is closer to that of prior years. Demographic information presented below includes only those who responded to at least one substantive question.

Respondents were asked to identify the county in which they work. Respondents were also given options for Tribal service area, multiple counties, or statewide.

Identify the primary county where you work.



Respondents represented a mix of professionals who worked in urban, rural and frontier counties.



URBAN	RURAL	FRONTIER
Benton	Clatsop	Baker
Clackamas	Columbia	Grant
Deschutes	Coos	Gilliam
Jackson	Crook	Harney
Lane	Curry	Lake
Linn	Douglas	Malheur
Marion	Hood River	Morrow
Multnomah	Jefferson	Sherman
Polk	Josephine	Wallowa
Washington	Klamath	Wheeler
Yamhill	Lincoln	
	Tillamook	
	Umatilla	
	Union	
	Wasco	

Of the respondents, 223 were from urban counties, 118 from rural counties, and 40 from frontier counties.

Respondents were asked their role in addressing child abuse. Response options were based on the required professional roles of the CJA Task Force and Multidisciplinary Intervention Team roles. Respondents were allowed to select “other” and write-in their answer. Respondents were able to select more than one role, for example, a respondent might indicate they serve as both a civil and a criminal court judge. Hence the total number of responses is more than the number of unduplicated respondents.

Role	Responses	Percentage
Law Enforcement	77	15.0%
Assistant Attorney Generals / DOJ	59	11.5%
Court Appointed Special Advocate	58	11.3%
Child Advocacy Center Professional	46	8.9%
Other (please specify)	43	8.3%
Victim Advocate	32	6.2%
Health Professional	28	5.4%
Criminal Court Judge	24	4.7%
Civil Court Judge	23	4.5%
DHS Child Protective Services	17	3.3%
Mental Health Professional	16	3.1%
Attorney for Children	16	3.1%
Attorney for Parents	16	3.1%
Prosecutor	11	2.1%
School Official	10	1.9%
Defense Attorney	8	1.6%
Person who works with children with disabilities	8	1.6%
Juvenile Department Representative	7	1.4%
Person who works with homeless children and youth	6	1.2%
Tribal Service Area	5	1.0%
Health Department Professional	2	0.4%
Citizen Review Board	2	0.4%
Tribal Organization or Department including ICWA or CAC Services	1	0.2%

273 respondents indicated that all, most or some of their daily work involved investigating, prosecuting, or otherwise responding to allegations of child abuse. 189 indicated that all, most or some of their daily work involved serving children and families. Of those whose work involved serving children and families, only 12 respondents indicated they had not received any training in child abuse intervention in the past 5 years, 5

had not received training in reporting child abuse within the past 5 years, and only 11 indicated they felt somewhat unprepared or unprepared to identify child abuse. Three indicated feeling unprepared to report child abuse and 7 indicated they did not know where to go to find information about child abuse.

Discussion of substantive responses begins on the next page.

Substantive Responses

Questions 12, 13 and 14 asked respondents to rank the priority areas. The responses below include the rankings grouped by those respondents identified as working in investigation, prosecution, or judicial handling, followed by the ranking by all respondents for the sake of comparison of perspectives: specialists versus the field at large. The information in italics specifies the responses included in the subset.

Investigation

DHS, Law Enforcement, and CAC Staff Responses



All Responses

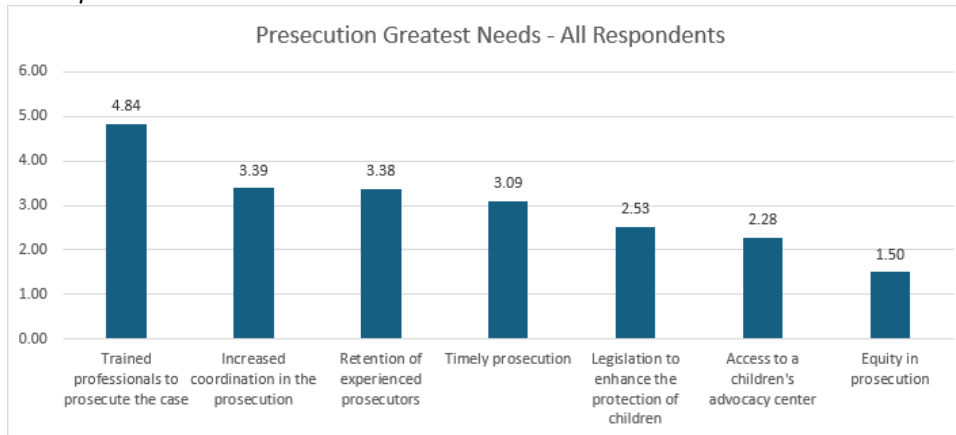


Prosecution

Prosecutors and AAGs

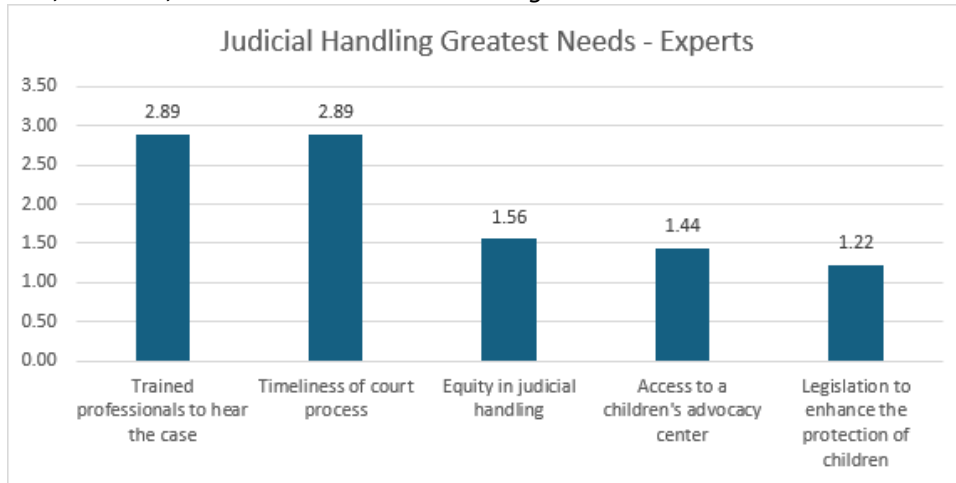


All responses

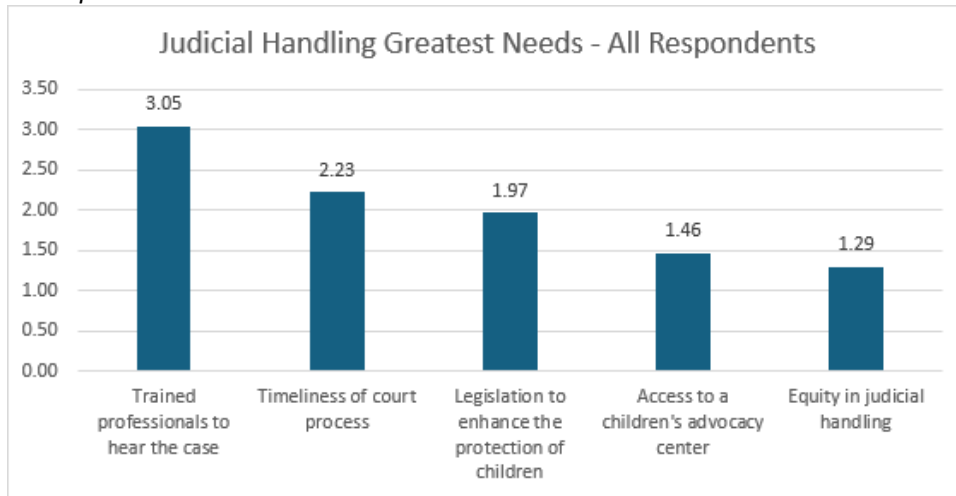


Judicial Handling

Civil, Criminal, Juvenile and Circuit Court Judges

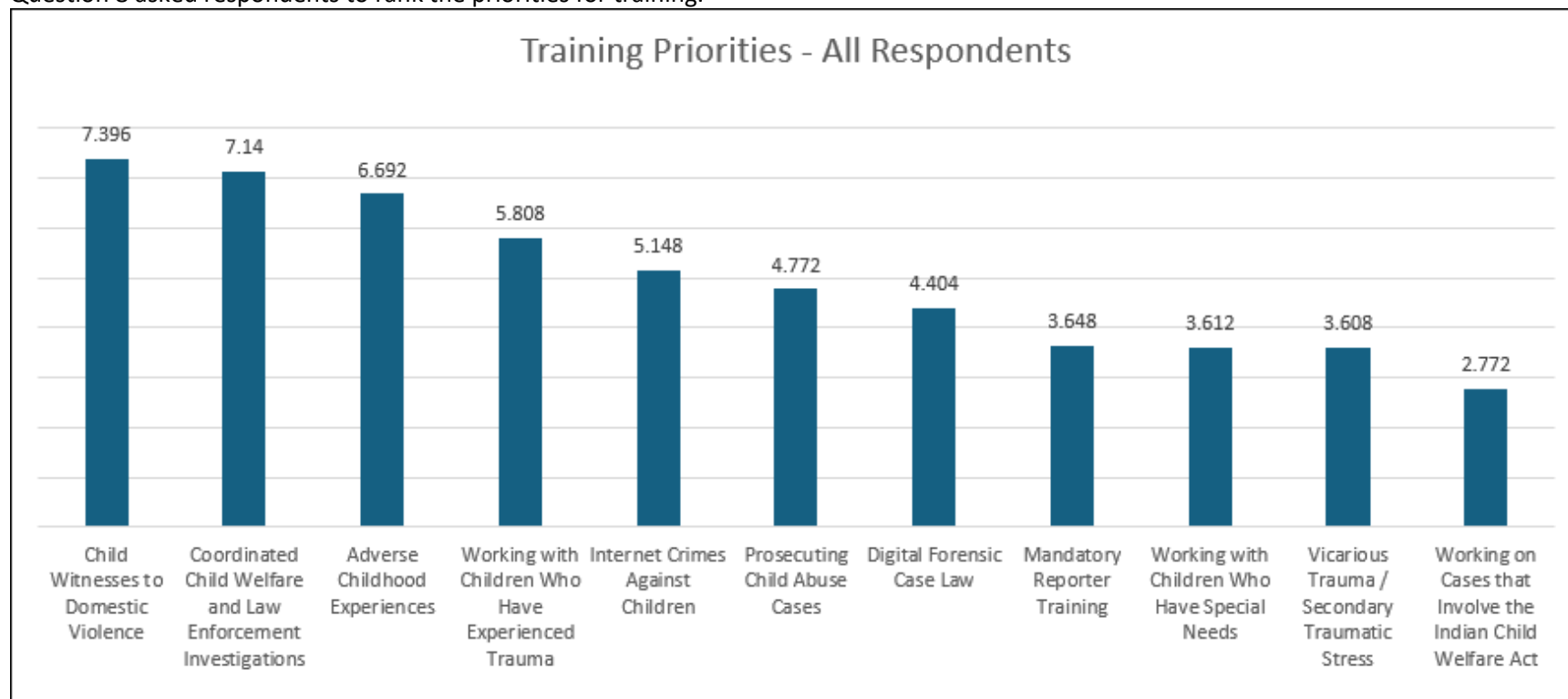


All responses



Training

Question 8 asked respondents to rank the priorities for training.



Legislation

Question 15 asked respondents, “Do you have a suggestion for legislation to enhance the protection of children?” We received 90 narrative responses that were reviewed and considered for incorporation into the recommendations. These will be further reviewed with the Task Force to discuss whether further action may be taken in implementing these suggestions.

Task Force Priorities Discussion

Following presentation of the needs assessment professional survey data, Task Force members discussed the themes of the field reports.

Investigation

Task Force discussion focused on the Family Preservation Model used by DHS CW. Task Force membership expressed a desire for more information and data about the model and its effect on CW response. The Task Force suggested a study of CW data and practice to understand what effect the decrease in cases referred, assigned and investigated has had on child safety.

- Invite Child Welfare to present information about the Family Preservation Model

- Request Child Welfare share data

- Promote consistency in response across the state

- Explore research funding opportunities

Prosecution

Discussion focused on the theme of supporting consistent and rigorous prosecution of child abuse statewide by increasing supports available for DAs and DDAs prosecuting child abuse and AAGs working dependency cases.

- Support a listserv to promote resource sharing and communication among DA/DDA/AAG

- Support consistent and robust training for prosecutors

Judicial Handling

Discussion focused on solutions to timeliness challenges in court process.

- Share information about ways to ensure prioritization of child abuse cases on court dockets.

Recommendations are included on the following page.

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2024-27 Policy and Training Recommendations

Federal Priority Area ¹	A	B	C
Recommendation 1: Support experimental or demonstration projects to improve processes and procedures in investigation, prosecution, and judicial handling of abuse cases to improve timeliness, equity, and fairness	√	√	√
Possible Projects: *Support research and information sharing on child welfare response and child safety outcomes *Engage expertise in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging to consult on projects and Task Force operation *Pilot project to support active case review or coordinated response *Pilot project to improve timeliness of court process or prosecution *Support development of new trainings			
Recommendation 2: Provide consistent and reliable support for established, effective trainings & resources for investigation, prosecution and judicial handling of child abuse cases including improvement of communication with children and families	√	√	√
Possible Projects: *OCFIT *Project Ability *Medical Academy *Prosecuting Child Sexual Abuse Cases			
Recommendation 3: Support preservation of, and access to, existing trainings, resources, technical assistance and expertise to improve investigation, prosecution, and judicial handling of child abuse cases	√	√	√
Possible Projects: *Support access for MDT members to new or existing learning management platforms *Support hosting of learning management platforms for MDT members *Support information sharing through listservs, peer groups, gatherings or other means			
Recommendation 4: Support projects to evaluate the efficacy of protocols, policies, procedures, or trainings related to investigation, prosecution and judicial handling of child abuse	√	√	√
Possible Projects: *Engage independent evaluator to develop and implement training evaluation process for grantees *Projects focused on evaluating and providing recommendations for improvement of legislation, protocols, procedures or practices in child abuse cases			

¹ A. Assessment and investigation of suspected child abuse and neglect cases, including cases of suspected child sexual abuse and exploitation, in a manner that limits additional trauma to the child and family;
 B. Investigation and prosecution of cases of child abuse and neglect, including child sexual abuse and exploitation; and
 C. Assessment and investigation of cases involving children with disabilities or serious health related problems who are suspected victims of child abuse or neglect.