Department of Children & Family Services
Building a Stronger Louisiana

Child Welfare –

(O)
(F)
www.dcfs.la.gov

**Jeff Landry,** Governor
**Rebecca Harris,** Secretary

Date:

Name:
Street Address:
City, State Zip Code:

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Dear :

The Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) received a referral to our Alternative Response and Family Assessment Program (AR) because DCFS received a report involving **(insert names of involved children)** on **(insert report date)** concerning possible harmful sexual behavior between two minor children.

The goal of the AR program is to help you keep your child/ren safe and secure. Many times, the best way to begin to help you and your child/ren is to listen to you, discuss your family's situation, find solutions and access resources to meet your needs. Alternative Response is an approach by Louisiana DCFS to help families access services, support, and other help that will help your family, without requiring a formal investigation of child abuse or neglect. It is based on the belief that families can stay together if they receive the assistance needed. This occurs by creating a partnership between families and caseworkers that ensures child safety and well-being by addressing any identified issues as early as possible. With Alternative Response, children are safer sooner and families are strengthened. If a caseworker discovers significant safety concerns, he or she may need to refer the case for investigation.

The assessment will involve interviews with you, the child, all parents, other persons who may have information about the child's care or condition, and a visit to your or the child's home. It may also involve interviews with the people who live with you or the child, a physical examination of the child, and a Child Advocacy interview, if necessary. The Louisiana Children's Code, Article 612, requires the Department to tape record all interviews with the child or the child's parents conducted in the course of the assessment, if requested by the parent.

It may also involve talking with other persons if that is needed to understand your family and your need for services. Alternative Response focuses on answering questions such as "What caused this family to experience these issues?' and, How can we work together to address this concern?'

After we assess your situation, we may:

- Close the case with no other involvement,
- Refer you to other community services, or;
- Open a case with your family in CPS or FS.

When we finish our assessment, we will send you a letter telling you our conclusions and recommendations. Cases are closed when there is assurance that the children are safe.

**What happens to the information obtained in this assessment?**

1. Louisiana law requires Alternative Response information be kept for seven years. It will be destroyed at that time unless there are subsequent inconclusive or unsubstantiated reports received during that period involving you as an alleged perpetrator. In that case, information from all such reports will be maintained until the youngest child becomes eighteen years old, or seven years, whichever is longer. If information from this assessment is used as a part of a later substantiated investigation, this case shall become part of the substantiated case, and shall cease to be a separate case. Case record destruction is automatic and requires no action on your part.

2. Information obtained by DCFS is confidential and cannot be released unless authorized by law or by court order. The information may be used in this state or other states as evidence in child custody, civil, or criminal court actions concerning a child.

**Where can I find additional information about child abuse laws and DCFS policies?**

More information is available on the DCFS website, including outcome definitions, and maintenance of records, at https://www.dcfs.louisiana.gov/. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Name of employee
Phone number
Email address

Name of supervisor
Phone number
Email address