

Letter from Dr. Kathryn Piper in Support of SF 3690/HF 4385

Who is Kathryn Piper?

Kathryn Piper is one of the leading experts nationally on Differential Response (DR), known in Minnesota as Family Assessment (FA). She spent 19 years representing children in child abuse cases in Vermont before obtaining her doctorate in social policy at Brandeis University.

Why is her opinion important?

Katherine surveyed all the published and unpublished research on DR between 2011 and 2018 and in December published the most up-to-date assessment of DR nationally.

What she found

Evaluations obtained to support DR are flawed. Contrary to their claims Piper found that:

- Children in this program are not safer than those receiving a traditional response
- DR programs do not accurately differentiate high risk from low risk families
- Service utilization is not higher for families served on the voluntary AR track

What is happening in other states?

Twelve of the 22 states that had implemented DR statewide have since discontinued or limited it due in part to growing concerns about child safety, particularly in jurisdictions that had abandoned fact finding.

Her recommendations

Dr. Piper supports SF 3692 and says its goals are fully consistent with her report including:

- Intensive fact-finding is essential to an accurate assessment of risk
- Interviewing the child separately from and prior to notification to parents is necessary for child safety
- Minnesota's high rate of utilization of FA results in inappropriate cases being assigned to that track