A Report of Performance System Analysis
presented to the Office of Family Safety of the Department of Children and Families

Produced by Zenith Performance
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The following report would not have been possible without the notable support and response from Florida’s Child Protective Investigators and supervisors of Child Protective Investigators. Their willingness to contribute their time and thoughts benefited the outcome of this study greatly, and it is the hopes of the researchers that the commitment of these individuals to this project will assist in current and future improvement efforts.

Thank you!
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An analysis of the Office of Family Safety, a branch within the Department of Children and Families, was conducted to address a performance issue among Child Protective Investigators. Specifically, this performance concern related to inconsistent determinations being made for investigative child maltreatment cases based upon similar evidence collected. Child maltreatment cases can be closed with one of three possible rankings, including verified (preponderance of credible evidence), not substantiated (credible evidence), or no indicators (no credible evidence), and the objective of the overall report analysis was to identify if investigators are consistently recommending appropriate final findings.

The project team analyzed the organization and related processes using human performance systems models. This initial study yielded a comprehensive understanding of the Office of Family Safety and the Department of Children and Families, as well as the child maltreatment investigation process. A thorough research study was designed and conducted to obtain first-hand information from both CPIs and their supervisors regarding the current situation of this performance issue. Analysis of the data results indicated discrepancies in certain aspects of the CPI job, which include a:

- lack of clear and relevant guidelines,
- inability to upload all investigation information into FSFN files,
- lack of formal incentives, and
- inadequate knowledge and skills and low morale.

These performance gaps were critically considered during a cause analysis and solution analysis. Possible solutions were brainstormed with the input of Office of Family Safety personnel, and later prioritized with a selection matrix. The four final solutions chosen to address the performance gaps listed above are as follows:

- include more case studies and authentic practice during trainings provided to CPIs,
- enhance the current file uploading feature in the FSFN system,
- provide understandable definitions in the Child Maltreatment Index, and
- introduce compulsory usage of guidelines.

An implementation plan, which consists of both a monitoring and evaluation plan, is also proposed to facilitate personnel from the Office of Family Safety and Department of Children and Families execute the advised solutions. These recommendations will ensure the successful completion of the four highest rated solutions, thus alleviating the current performance issue.
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INTRODUCTION

The client, the Office of Family Safety from Florida’s Department of Children and Families (DCF), was concerned with variances in the substantiation rate of child maltreatment cases when similar evidence is collected. Although data were analyzed indicating variances span different geographic areas and regional units, the focus of this project is to address the decision making for final case determinations of all Child Protective Investigators (CPIs) throughout the state of Florida. Zenith Performance previously conducted an organizational analysis to determine the interrelated components that may cause these variances. Concerns pertaining to (a) policies and procedures adopted for hiring and training CPIs, (b) policies and practices for CPIs’ career advancement, (c) guidelines and standards for protective investigations, and (d) individual CPI’s knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes were derived from the organizational analysis.

After identifying areas of interest, data addressing these issues were collected to determine the causes for possible variances in decision making by CPIs when making final case recommendations. A research study was held to collect data informing the situation of the performance problem. First, select CPIs and supervisors were interviewed, and later the entire CPI and supervisor populations received requests via the Florida Safe Families Network system (FSFN) welcome page to participate in a survey addressing the performance problem of variance in final recommendations. These data were used to reveal the actual conditions occurring throughout the state, then compared with the ideal performance of an exemplary CPI performing an efficient and effective investigation process. This comparison was used to identify specific gaps between the ideal performance of CPIs and the actual performance. Additionally, causes for the recognized performance gaps were developed based on data collected from the interviews and surveys. The following sections consist of an analysis of the performance gap and causes for this gap.

The purpose of this report is to present the results from the (a) performance system analysis, (b) gap analysis, and (c) cause analysis. The report also contains (d) detailed descriptions for recommended solutions to address the identified causes, (e) guidelines for implementing the recommended solutions, and (f) plans for evaluating the effectiveness of the solutions once implemented.
CONSULTANT TEAM

The Zenith Performance Consulting firm is dedicated to delivering products and services meeting the clients’ needs and interests. Our goal is to identify areas of improvement and provide customized, practical, and implementable business solutions to performance gaps. In January 2011, members of the Office of Family Safety, within the Department of Children and Families, contracted Zenith Performance to conduct a comprehensive system analysis and determine performance gaps in order to propose solutions.

Zenith Performance was formed in January 2011 for the Performance Systems Analysis course conducted at Florida State University during the Spring 2011 semester (January through April 2011). Professor A. Darabi oversaw the academic course and contributed guidance throughout the duration of this project. Group members Shuang Hao, Alison Moore, and Yvonne Phan, all Instructional Systems graduate students, comprised the Zenith Performance Team. A team work log and timeline is displayed in Appendix A.

CLIENT ORGANIZATION

The Office of Family Safety is a branch within DCF, and the purpose of the Family Safety Program is to act “in partnership with families, local communities, courts, tribes, and children themselves, when old enough, to ensure the safety, timely permanency and wellbeing or children.” Members of this office have numerous responsibilities, including offering such services as:

- The prevention of separation of children from their families,
- The protection of children who are alleged to be dependent, or are dependent children, including provision of emergency and long-term alternate living arrangements,
- The reunification of families who have had children placed in foster homes or institutions,
- The permanent placement of children who cannot be reunited with their families for whom reunification would not be in the best interest of the child, and
- The transition to self-sufficiency for older children who continue to be in foster care as adolescents.
PERFORMANCE SYSTEM ANALYSIS

From the organizational analysis performed in February 2011, the function of relative significance for the performance problem was identified to be the protective investigation process, as outlined in Chapter 39 of Florida Statutes (Florida Legislature, 2011) and Chapter 65C-29 of the Florida Administrative Code. Numerous elements are responsible for the output of final case determinations, including the workforce, functional structure, functional process, organizational environment, and performance issue. Two workforce groups of interest involve CPIs, who are responsible for responding to allegations of child maltreatment by carrying out protective investigations, and their immediate supervisors, who approve all final case recommendations. These roles make both groups key factors in the identified performance problem of inconsistent investigative findings based on similar evidence. Over 1,070 CPIs are located throughout the state of Florida, with majority of CPIs working within regional (Northwest, Northeast, Central, Southeast, SunCoast, and Southern) operation units.

Analysis of Performance System

The starting point for this analysis was the decision of appropriate methods that would direct the project. This was an imperative action because without the framework of a methodical process, the initial study of the Office of Family Safety would not be comprehensive or reliable. However, with established models of analysis in place for guidance, a thorough overview of the system was possible. Zenith utilized two models of systems analysis to perform this overview of the Office of Family Safety’s performance system: the Systemic Analysis of Performance Problem (SAPP) developed by Darabi (2002) and the iterative process created by Gharajedaghi (2006).

The purpose of the SAPP model is to assist in the identification and organization of a complex system’s interrelated components. When the Office of Family Safety is considered in the context of the SAPP model (Fig. 1), the numerous elements of the system are visible. The Office of Family Safety is situated within the larger environments of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the state of Florida. A main process of the Office of Family Safety is identified as Quality Assurance, and the services of this process include (a) quality assurance of DCF programs and (b) the development of policies and procedures for these programs aligning with state and federal legislation.
Figure 1. SAPP of the Office of Family Safety.

The second approach used to examine the Office of Family Safety was Gharajedaghi’s iterative process (Fig. 2). This tool was incorporated during the analysis to organize the dynamic nature of the Office of Family Safety further, thus leading to a more complete understanding of the system.

Gharajedaghi explained that, “Iteration is the key to understanding complexity (p. 112),” and this probing process is carried out by repeatedly addressing the various functions, structures, processes, and contexts comprising a system. Applying Gharajedaghi’s approach to the Office of Family Safety’s complex system allowed Zenith Performance to focus on two of the office’s functions, Quality Assurance and the development of policies and procedures.

Figure 2. Iterative map of the Office of Family Safety.
As a result of the Quality Assurance work performed by personnel of the Office of Family Safety, a problem was identified regarding the function of another DCF program. This concern involves the performance of Child Protective Investigators (CPIs), specifically an inconsistency in investigative findings in completed investigations across the state. Because the performance problem is located within a secondary system, an additional system analysis was required.

Again, the SAPP model was used to analyze and organize the problem system (Fig. 3). The Office of Operations, which oversees investigative functions statewide, is a subsystem within the environments of the Department of Children and Families and the state of Florida. Child Protective Investigators are responsible for implementing the child maltreatment investigation process, which is comprised of policies and procedures developed jointly by the Office of Family Safety and Operations in accordance with Florida Statute and Florida Administrative Code. Through this investigative process, CPIs make a determination of findings based on evidence collected as well as take steps to ensure the safety and well-being of children who are subjects of the investigative process.

![Figure 3. SAPP of the protective investigation process.](image)

As mentioned earlier, Quality Assurance personnel in the Office of Family Safety identified notable variance in determinations made by CPIs statewide. The performance problem of focus involves this inconsistency in the findings made by CPIs after gathering and considering evidence. This report will continue with a more detailed examination of the system, concentrating on elements pertaining to the inconsistent findings made by CPIs.
Functions of Relative Significance

Based on the systems analysis conducted using Darabi’s SAPP model and Gharajedaghi’s iterative process, Zenith Performance recognized a function associated with the identified performance problem. This function, the protective investigation process, is outlined in Chapter 39 of Florida Statutes (Florida Legislature, 2011) and Chapter 65C-29 of the Florida Administrative Code. The three products of the protective investigations process are (a) findings of maltreatment events, (b) identification of a caregiver responsible for verified findings of maltreatment, and (c) ensuring safety and well-being of any child identified as having been maltreated. Due to the performance problem of inconsistent decision-making, the reliability of case determinations and the assurance of child safety are affected negatively.

Numerous elements are responsible for the output of final case determinations, including workforce, functional structure, functional process, organizational environment, and performance issue. This report will address these five system components in detail to allow for a more complete understanding of the system and performance issue.

Workforce

The workforce group of interest involves Child Protective Investigators (CPIs). The CPIs are responsible for responding to allegations of child maltreatment, making them a key factor in the identified performance problem of inconsistent investigative findings. There are over 1,070 CPIs located throughout the state of Florida, and the majority of CPIs work within regional operation units. Also, many CPIs are not required to report daily to an on-site office, but instead are based from their homes and conduct business by phone and Internet, a practice called “hoteling.”

In order to understand the CPI workforce group fully, Zenith Performance utilized Gilbert’s Behavior Engineering Model (BEM) (1978). Regarding the workforce as individuals, the BEM focuses on three factors: knowledge, skills and capacity, and motivation. Application and training materials outline the desired qualities of CPIs’ knowledge and skills and capacity, and causes of motivation were ascertained from a variety of sources, including position descriptions and discussions with subject matter experts.

Knowledge

Child Protective Investigators are required to possess a multitude of knowledge spanning various issues. The content of this awareness mainly includes, but is not limited to, fluency in current state and federal laws and appropriate investigation procedures. Application materials provide the following list of knowledge required of CPIs:

- Knowledge of principles and processes for providing customer and personal services, including needs assessment techniques, quality service standards, alternative delivery systems, and customer satisfaction evaluation techniques,
- Knowledge of theories and practice in child protection,
• Knowledge of professional ethics relating to child protection and counseling,
• Knowledge of family-centered interviewing and counseling techniques,
• Knowledge of investigative techniques, and
• Knowledge of interviewing and observation techniques. (People First, n.d.)

**Skills and capacity**

In addition to a working knowledge of germane issues, CPIs should also be capable of demonstrating skills and abilities essential to success in the role. The identified abilities are intended to assist CPIs in specific tasks related to the completion of protective investigations. Again, application materials list the following skills and abilities as beneficial to CPIs:

• Ability to manage and resolve conflicts, grievance, confrontations or disagreements in a constructive manner to minimize negative personal impact,
• Displays high standards of ethical conduct,
• Ability to identify problems, determine accuracy and relevance of information, use sound judgment to generate and evaluate alternatives, and make recommendations,
• Ability to weigh the relative costs and benefits of a potential action to make sound decisions,
• Ability to maintain composure and perform effectively under stressful conditions,
• Ability to leverage the information available, even if all the facts are not provided to make the best decision possible. In addition, having the ability to adjust one’s actions in relation to other’s actions,
• Ability to manage one’s own time and the time of others,
• Skill in considering child development in guiding placement of children,
• Ability to conduct risk and safety investigations,
• Ability to plan, organize, and coordinate work assignments,
• Ability to understand and apply relevant laws, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures,
• Ability to actively listen to others,
• Ability to communicate effectively,
• Ability to maintain well-executed case files,
• Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with others,
• Ability to utilize computer systems, and
• Ability to write clear and accurate investigative reports. (People First, n.d.)

**Motivation**

Sources of motivation for CPIs were organized into two types, intrinsic and extrinsic. The intrinsic examples involve factors making the job meaningful to individuals. The extrinsic examples include elements of the job provided by the organization.

**Intrinsic.** Due to the service nature of the CPI position, there may be an inherent motivation for performance. Individuals typically applying for the role of CPI possess educational or professional backgrounds in social work or law enforcement, which are also service fields. There is no official recognition process (financial, general gratitude for service, etc.) instituted statewide, but some supervisors within regional sites informally express appreciation for select CPIs.

**Extrinsic.** Salaries and benefits are adequate, but change in these offerings is infrequent within the state system. Despite the limited financial prospects, opportunities for career development are possible. Furthermore, due to the high turnover rate of CPIs, many CPIs receive promotions to supervisor
appointments more quickly than would be expected. Confirmation of these statements will be completed later in the research plan when CPIs are interviewed and surveyed.

**Functional Structure**

The protective investigation process is carried out within an established functional structure. This structure is comprised of directors overseeing six regional offices (Northwest, Northeast, Central, Southeast, SunCoast, and Southern) spanning the state of Florida. Within these regions, individual counties are aligned with existing judicial circuits to form a total of 20 circuits.

Working within the Office of Operations of DCF, CPIs are based out of local offices and may conduct investigations in multiple counties. In seven counties (Broward, Citrus, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, and Seminole), however, investigations are performed via contract by the county Sheriff’s offices. Despite this variation in organization, all CPIs are responsible for meeting standard protocol, and thus must interact with numerous individuals within DCF. For example, CPIs commence investigations after receiving reports of alleged child maltreatment from Hotline Counselors. Also, CPIs are able to collaborate on investigations with other CPIs or members of law enforcement, but often choose to perform these tasks alone. During an investigation, CPIs answer to a supervisor within the local office, and these individuals should be available for guidance and are responsible for approving ongoing investigative activities, child safety assessments, and investigative closure recommendations. Should an investigation include elevated risk factors pertaining to a child, the CPI supervisor may request a second party to review the case file to ensure the appropriate course of action.

**Functional Process**

For this project with the Office of Family Safety, the function of interest is the protective investigations of child maltreatment allegations. The typical process for an investigation is illustrated in Figure 4. In this diagram, the four vertical columns represent the four primary participants involved in the process, which include a Hotline Counselor, CPI, CPI supervisor, and second party reviewer.
Figure 4. Process map of protective investigations.

The investigative process begins with receipt of a call made by a concerned reporting party to the Florida Abuse Hotline. The Hotline Counselor follows a script when taking calls to determine if the reported information meets the statutory criteria for acceptance of a report of child maltreatment. If the call does not meet these criteria, no further actions will be taken. However, if the information received by the Hotline Counselor meets the statutory requirement for acceptance of a report of child maltreatment, the Hotline Counselor then enters the initial data of the case into FSFN system and determines whether it is a report requiring an immediate response or a response within 24 hours. This process is called the screening process, and after this initial screening the resultant report is electronically submitted to the Hotline’s Criminal Intelligence Unit (CIU) to conduct criminal background checks on all known suspects of the investigative report. Once the CIU completes these checks, the report and criminal background checks results are forwarded electronically to the receiving unit in the county where the alleged victims were reported to be located.

Child Protective Investigators usually share duty shifts throughout the year to ensure a sufficient number of CPIs are working and/or on-call at all times, including nights, weekends, and holidays. In this
fashion, CPI staff is available to respond to investigations 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The on-call receiving personnel, often CPI supervisors, review reports forwarded from the hotline and assign CPIs to cases based on a variety of factors (experience levels of CPIs, current case load of CPIs, geographic location of case, etc.). If cases require immediate action, CPIs respond right away. However, if the case is not identified as imminent, then CPIs must make initial contact within 24 hours of receiving the report.

Upon receiving an investigation assignment, CPIs are to analyze the case first. The CPIs use a checklist with the same screening information as used by the hotline attendant. The first phase of the investigation usually takes 45 days. During this time, CPIs gather information from various channels to conduct a risk assessment. From these early efforts, CPIs develop a maltreatment history to determine further potential risks to the child. The CPIs make decisions regarding the frequency of contact, service intensity, and supervision of visitation. Child Protective Investigators often encounter challenging or dangerous interview or observation environments due to interactions with hostile family members. For these reasons, CPIs may need to perform their job with the protective company of law enforcement. Also, the supervisors of CPIs are available to provide formative feedback and necessary assistance.

The outcome of this first phase of investigation should be a draft report identifying the situational problems and what must change in order to keep the child safe, reduce the risk of (further) maltreatment, increase permanency, and enhance child and family well-being. This draft report will then be submitted to CPI supervisors for feedback and approval. The purpose of the review process conducted by CPI supervisors is to determine whether the report data submitted by CPIs are valid. If the CPIs’ reports lack substantiated data supporting the final decision, CPIs will start a second phase of investigation, which normally takes 15 days (thus adding to a total of 60 days for an average case investigation).

Should the report involve elevated risk factors, CPI supervisors can request a second party to review the assessment. This second party is usually another CPI supervisor or an experienced CPI, and it should be noted that not all protective investigations warrant this additional evaluation. But if a second party reviews the draft report, the report will then return to the CPI supervisor. Necessary notes will be made and any further investigatory work required by the CPIs must be completed and documented in 15 days.

Within 60 days from receiving the investigation, the CPI will prepare the investigation for closure, which includes the submission of an updated Child Safety Assessment. The findings assigned to each alleged maltreatment indicate whether information and evidence collected during the investigation constitute evidence that an event of child maltreatment occurred. The findings of maltreatment can be one of three options: verified (preponderance of credible evidence), not substantiated (credible evidence), or no indicators (no credible evidence). It is worth mentioning that the state of Florida is one of only a few
states throughout the country enacting a three-tiered finding system. The majority of states implement a
two-tiered system comprised only of substantiated or not substantiated finding options.

**Organizational Environment**

In order for CPIs to perform successfully, the organizational environment must be conducive to
make this outcome possible. This includes the environment supporting CPIs for the duration of protective
investigations. In order to understand the organizational environment completely, Gilbert’s BEM was
used again to describe three categories: (a) information, (b) resources, and (c) incentives.

**Information**

Information available to CPIs can be derived from a variety of sources, and this information
exists (a) outside investigations and (b) during investigations. Examples of information categorized as
outside investigations involve training content; job descriptions; lists of desired knowledge, skills, and
capabilities; and feedback from supervisors and peers. Topics addressed during two training sessions
include relevant issues encountered by CPIs, such as interagency protocol, legal policies, and
investigatory procedures. Job descriptions and desired characteristics are guidelines for the CPI position
and are intended to inform CPIs’ actions and decisions. They are accessible in vision and mission
statements, as well as application and training materials. Feedback from coworkers is also a type of
information that can exist outside investigations. When feedback is received from a supervisor after the
conclusion of an investigation, it often occurs in a formal review setting and can be compliance-based.

In addition to information associated with work outside investigations, CPIs also rely on
information pertaining directly to the investigatory process. Such examples can include, but are not
limited to, prior records; police reports; criminal, legal, or medical histories; information from collateral
sources; and documented investigation protocols. These types of information are obtained with the
purpose of reaching a determination for protective investigations. Also, feedback from supervisors and
coworkers can be identified as information within an investigation. This would involve informal check-
ins with supervisors via phone, email, or face-to-face or brief discussions with peers in the office
regarding the progress of open investigations.

**Resources**

Similar to available information, the resources CPIs require also vary greatly, and the majority of
these resources utilized by CPIs involve (a) standardized documentation, (b) state websites, and (c)
informal communities of practice. While carrying out investigations, CPIs rely on standardized
documents, such as forms, checklists, rubrics, official descriptions, and legal documents. An example is
the Child Maltreatment Index, which is a tool outlining the 20 types of alleged child maltreatment
recognized by the state of Florida and the appropriate course of action for referrals. Many of these
documents are created in accordance with legal statutes and are intended to assist CPIs in following mandatory investigative procedures.

A great deal of these documents and forms are accessible on various websites, which are another helpful resource for CPIs. When reliable websites are maintained efficiently, CPIs are able to locate specific information ranging various topics quickly. For example, conducting searches on current legislation, policies, or individuals within online databases allows CPIs to continue making progress with their investigations. Three example websites providing significant information and data include *The Center for the Advancement of Child Welfare Practice* (www.CenterForChildWelfare.org) and *My Florida: The Official Portal of the State of Florida* (www.MyFlorida.com).

The third key resource for CPIs is an informal community of practice. The CPIs and CPI supervisors throughout the state of Florida form a group of professionals working and sharing simultaneously towards a common goal. Despite the existence of this high-level collective entity, effective connections manifest more strongly at the regional levels and less so among individuals statewide. When CPIs interact with supervisors and peers within an office setting or over the phone or email, they often share stories of current and past case experiences. These discussions, even brief and seemingly superficial, can result in suggestions and feedback being offered to frustrated colleagues and problems being solved.

**Incentives**

Few formal incentives, if any at all, are currently instituted for the CPI position during investigations. Consequences existing within the CPI role involve investigation deadlines being ignored or missed. Strict timelines frame the investigation process, and these constructs were formed according to legislation. For example, if a report received by the hotline is determined not to be an emergency, but still meets the criteria for acceptance of a report, the CPI assigned the report must respond within 24 hours of the call to the Hotline. Consequences of failing to implement procedures correctly may include legal ramifications, but the CPI supervisors may not enact them. Similarly, if CPIs’ impressive performance distinguishes them from other employees, there is no opportunity for financial bonuses or salary upgrades to be made in recognition. Due to constructs of the system, one of the few incentives offered to CPIs is the possibility of promotion.

**Summary of the Performance Problem**

Through the implementation of Darabi’s SAPP model and Gharajedaghi’s iterative process, Zenith Performance analyzed the client system of the Office of Family Safety. The results of this initial examination furthered prior work conducted by the Office of Family Safety Quality Assurance personnel by pinpointing the location of a performance problem in a function within another DCF system. This
function, the protective investigation process, is carried out by CPIs who investigate reports of alleged child maltreatment. The performance problem was identified as an inconsistency in findings assigned to alleged maltreatments by CPIs statewide, and Gilbert’s BEM was used to assess this subsystem and its components.

As a result of this analysis, Zenith Performance identified multiple areas of concern regarding the performance issue of inconsistent findings made by CPIs. In order to learn the specific cause(s) of the performance problem, additional research was conducted. The following section will introduce how the research was designed and implemented to address the performance problem.
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Based on the information presented in the organizational analysis, Zenith Performance identified various concerns regarding the performance problem of inconsistent CPI investigative determinations. These areas of interest included the (a) policies and procedures adopted for hiring and training CPIs, (b) policies and practices for CPIs’ career advancement, (c) guidelines and standards for protective investigations, and (d) individual CPI’s knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes. Zenith Performance developed research instruments based on the components of Gilbert’s BEM to address these individual issues and identify the causes of the performance gap.

Data collection took approximately two months, lasting from early March to late April 2011. The following components comprised the research strategy: research question, required information, data collection methods, and information sources. Data analysis will be explained in depth afterwards.

**Research Question**

Records of protective investigations closed statewide show that approximately 50% of investigations are closed as no indicators, 30% as not substantiated, and 20% as verified. The existing data indicate high variance in the final determinations between different regions, which may suggest inconsistent decision making of individual CPIs statewide. Zenith Performance and personnel of the Office of Family Safety were concerned with this variance and collaborated in (a) confirming the performance gap, (b) identifying the cause(s), and (c) proposing solutions to this inconsistency.

After completing the organizational analysis, Zenith Performance was able to consider the performance problem in the context of DCF systems. Multiple concerns regarding the performance problem surfaced from this reflection, and a research plan was developed to isolate these issues. The topics of interest identified as a result of the organizational analysis include the (a) policies and procedures adopted for hiring and training CPIs, (b) policies and practices for CPIs’ career advancement, (c) guidelines and job aids for protective investigations, and (d) individual CPI’s knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitude. Zenith Performance conducted a research study addressing these issues to discover the causes for inconsistent investigative findings. The research question developed by Zenith Performance for this study was: What factors cause variation in the substantiation rate among CPIs?

Addressing the research question required a two-part consideration. First, the variance could refer to the actual percentages of investigations closed with no indicators, not substantiated, and verified findings. For example, in 2009, 59% of investigations were closed with no indicators in the Northwest region and 44% of investigations were closed as no indicators in the Southeast region. The variance in this comparison is 15%. The second perspective of this research question was the variance could also refer to the different determinations made by CPIs statewide even though similar evidence was gathered.
Taking these two possibilities into account, Zenith Performance planned to narrow the two types of variations.

**Analysis Tool**

Gilbert’s BEM was an appropriate model for the analysis and provided comprehensive diagnostic guidelines for performance problems. Use of this model assisted in analyzing the current situation of both environmental supports and individuals’ repertory of behavior. The environmental supports represent elements in the work environment affecting performance, and individuals’ behavior represent the knowledge, capacity, and motivations of the CPIs.

During meetings and communication with personnel of the Office of Family Safety, some information regarding environmental supports and individuals’ repertory of behavior was gathered. Also, detailed research and analysis was completed by Zenith Performance to identify possible causes for the inconsistent determinations. Table 1 shows the research process Zenith Performance conducted for this project, and the arrows shown in the model indicate the procedure for researching contents.

*Table 1. Gilbert’s Behavior Engineering Model (1978)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Instrumentation</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td>Instruments</td>
<td>Incentives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell 1</td>
<td>Cell 2</td>
<td>Cell 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environmental supports</th>
<th>Person’s repertory of behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge</strong></td>
<td><strong>Capacity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell 4</td>
<td>Cell 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Motivation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cell 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Required Information**

The information required to answer the research question pertains to three areas: CPI hiring, training, and maintenance of career. Factors regarding CPI hiring include the recruitment, measurement, and selection of qualified individuals. Training issues involve all new CPIs receiving (a) a standard curriculum and (b) professional preparation that aligns directly to the job tasks experienced while performing protective investigations. Maintenance of CPI careers refers to (a) necessary supports being available to CPIs and (b) guarantees that CPIs are accountable and adhering to established standards. The following are the targeted questions of interview and surveys that were conducted to confirm the performance gap and identify cause solutions:

- Are there measureable screening rubrics for CPI selection?
• Is the training scientifically designed to align with the learning objectives as required in the curriculum?
• Does the training assessment effectively evaluate CPIs’ knowledge for investigation and training across different regions?
• Are there standard, explicit performance expectations for CPIs across regions?
• Are CPIs aware of these performance expectations?
• Are there instruments to evaluate whether CPIs meet the standards and expectations?
• Do CPIs have supportive resources and job aids to help the investigation process and decision-making?
• Are CPIs aware of these resources and adopting these job aids while performing their jobs?
• Are CPIs satisfied with the current resources and job aids?
• Do CPIs experience emotional difficulties that hinder their job performance?
• What types of support would CPIs like to receive from the organization?

These questions served as guidelines for Zenith Performance to develop specific interview and survey questions because they cover all aspects of the BEM.

Data Collection Methods

A two-phase research study was conducted to answer the research question. The first portion of the study consisted of phone interviews and observation, and the second involved electronic surveys accessible online. With the assistance of the client, both research events yielded usable data.

Phase 1: Interviews and observation

First, scripted interviews were conducted with key players associated with the performance issue to scale the magnitude of the performance gap (Appendix B). The project client selected the interviewees, including CPIs and supervisors, to ensure input from (a) different positions of decision makers and (b) individuals located throughout the state. Zenith Performance also conducted an in-person observation of the current computerized system, the Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN), available to CPIs, CPI supervisors, and second party reviewers. These interviews and observations provided Zenith Performance with in-depth information from practitioners’ shared experiences and opinions. The data collected during the interviews and observations were valuable, and served in the design and development of the second phase of survey questions.

Phase 2: Surveys

The second phase of research, which consisted of items developed from data gathered from the phone interviews and observation, was implemented via two electronic surveys for CPIs and supervisors (Appendices C and D). The online delivery method enabled random sampling of both CPIs and supervisors, which ensured the results derived from the data were more representative and convincing. In this phase of research, Zenith Performance focused on individuals’ competencies, functional processes, and environmental factors that may influence the decision making of CPIs.
The electronic surveys were created within the Florida State University’s College of Education survey management system, and links to the instruments were provided to the Office of Family Safety for distribution to participants. This was accomplished by the client’s actions of posting the links to the welcome page of the FSFN system. Zenith Performance took efforts to ensure the submittals of the surveys were anonymous with no obligation to participants, so as to solicit honest opinions. The assistance of Office of Family Safety personnel helped the significance of the response number in a timely manner. The survey links were kept open for a week, from April 5–12, 2011, and a satisfactory number of responses were collected (184 CPIs and 51 CPI supervisors).
GAP ANALYSIS

In order to identify a performance gap of CPIs, the ideal performance must be compared with a measurement of CPIs’ actual performance. The specific desired condition for CPI performance involves all CPIs located throughout the state making consistent final recommendations for cases based on similar evidence collected during protective investigations. In this case, variance between CPIs’ decisions would be 0%. Although this is an impossible goal, it is the ultimate objective to which CPIs should constantly strive to achieve.

To aid Zenith Performance in completing the ideal performance versus actual performance comparison, leaders of DCF provided substantiation rate data for child maltreatment investigation cases by regions throughout Florida. (It should be noted that although this information is addressing final case recommendations by region, this is only one way to look at the larger issue of CPI determinations. Again, the purpose of this report is to consider CPI decision making as a statewide group.) Table 2 shows the substantiation rate for work year 2009–2010. Basic data analysis showed the maximum variances in the substantiation rate were 15% for cases closed as no indicator, 12% for cases closed as not substantiated, and 3% for cases closed as verified. With an ideal performance of 0%, the variances constitute a performance gap faced by DCF. The performance gap is also understood in terms of cost, and although this cannot be expressed in terms of resources lost, the performance problem involves compromised safety of children throughout the state.

Table 2. Percentages of final case determinations by region for work year 2009–2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>% No Indicator</th>
<th>% Not Substantiated</th>
<th>% Verified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SunCoast</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance (Actual)</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal</td>
<td></td>
<td>0% variance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap Cost</td>
<td></td>
<td>Compromised child safety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To corroborate the performance gap suggested by DCF’s data of regional substantiation rates, surveys were designed for CPIs and supervisors using Gilbert’s Behavior Engineering Model (BEM). The BEM model is an analysis tool that addresses six factors of human performance, including (a) environmental data, (b) environmental instruments, (c) environmental incentives, (d) individual knowledge, (e) individual capacity, and (f) individual motivation. The purpose of the two surveys was to discover the actual performance situation of CPIs.

The surveys were open for submission from April 5–12, 2011 to obtain data informing the performance issue from these key groups. A total of 184 CPIs and 51 supervisors responded to the surveys, and all submitted quantitative and qualitative information was collected for analysis. To do this, Zenith Performance utilized the BEM to perform the gap analysis and consider specific system components, which yielded the current situation of each element (Table 3).

Table 3. Gilbert’s BEM used for the gap analysis of CPI performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Instrumentation</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data</strong></td>
<td><strong>Instruments</strong></td>
<td><strong>Incentives</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of clear and relevant guidelines</td>
<td>• Inability to upload all information in FSFN system</td>
<td>• Lack of formal incentives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Time consuming</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Knowledge</strong></th>
<th><strong>Capacity</strong></th>
<th><strong>Motivation</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Inadequate knowledge and skills</td>
<td>• Sufficient ability to perform job role</td>
<td>• Inherent desire to serve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Low morale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following is a summary of information obtained from survey results as relating to the specific areas of current CPI performance. Again, this data is organized based on the BEM comprised of six human performance improvement categories.

**Data**

Ideally, CPIs should follow established guidelines during all cases so final determinations are made based on standard procedures rather than personal approaches or perceptions. Such information is disseminated by the organization to CPIs and should direct CPIs’ investigations and decision making. However, the survey results indicate CPIs do not have access to easily understandable guidelines for investigations and decision making. When asked, “Why may you not refer to . . . materials during an investigation?,” CPIs provided the following explanations:

- “the language in the Statues and Code is very complex and can be interpreted in to many ways.”
- “Some of it confusing to review prior to working a case”

Specifically regarding the three-tiered ranking system for final case recommendations, CPIs expressed confusion:
• “[there are] vague definitions of what Verified, Not Substantiated and No Indicators means”
• “The difference between Not substantiated and No indicators is not clearly defined”

Supervisors held similar opinions, as well:
• “No indicators and Not substantiated are both vague and there is no clear delineation between the two findings”

**Instruments**

While onsite in the DCF office, Zenith Performance observed the functions and operations of the FSFN system, which is an online database used to store files for case investigations. Also, specific survey items were developed to learn about CPI usage of the system. After considering the information collected through the context of the BEM, numerous performance gaps were identified pertaining to CPI use of the FSFN system. Within the BEM, FSFN is categorized as a tool provided within the work environment. When using the FSFN system, CPIs (a) cannot submit all existing case evidence and (b) expend excessive amounts of time entering information. Although 62.98% of CPIs surveyed agreed the FSFN system allows them to provide sufficient investigation information to supervisors, 64.71% of CPIs strongly agreed and 15.69% agreed the FSFN system could be improved to allow for submission of more types of evidence information.

Also, the FSFN system requires CPIs to spend an exorbitant amount of time entering information for investigation cases. Comments were provided in both CPI and supervisor surveys expressing concern for this constraint on CPIs:
• “. . . The most time consuming part of the [CPI] job is taking notes while in the field and then coming back to the office to type it all out [into FSFN].”
• “FSFN data entry continues to take too much time. A more streamlined system that self populates information w/ less narrative requirement would beneficial.”
• “This job is very demanding, and sometimes FSFN is a hinderance instead of a tool that CPIs can use to increase their ability to completed their job. . . ”

**Incentives**

Protective investigators experience a heavy workload and must abide by a tightly regulated schedule to conduct and close cases. No formal incentives exist within the job system, such as financial rewards, for CPIs’ good performance. When asked what incentives are received for good performance and prompted with example options such as salary increases, promotions, and informal recognition, 67% of CPI participants indicated “None of the above.” Additionally, the following comments were submitted in response to this survey item:
• “Is this question a joke?”
• “nothing for a good job done”
• “No incentives just MORE TO DO”
Despite the majority of negative feedback for this survey item, 27% of CPIs indicated they receive informal recognition for performance, 4% indicated they receive time off, and 3% indicated they receive financial bonuses. Other forms of incentives are present within the state, such as:

- “allowed to wear jeans other than friday”
- “Index card on a board”
- “verbal recognition from peers/supervisors”

**Knowledge**

Gaps in CPI knowledge were identified based on supervisors’ opinions on current CPIs’ abilities. For example, when asked to identify concerns, supervisors indicated numerous problematic areas of CPI behaviors. The most common issues recognized by supervisors include:

- Interview skills
  - “Interviewing skills . . .”
  - “more training in interview skills, . . .”
- Investigation and evidence collection skills
  - “Experience with all aspects of investigation allows the CPI to grow in their position as an investigator.”
  - “. . . evidence collection”
- Critical thinking and decision-making skills
  - “Ability to think outside of the box. Critical thinking skills. Maturity level and the ability to not be confined to ‘check lists’.”
  - “Critical thinking and decision making . . .”
- Time management skills
  - “. . . Time management as it related to follow up and timely service options.”
  - “we need improvement on better time management due to not enough hours in the day with the number of abuse reports we are receiving.”

**Capacity**

Regarding the capacity CPIs possess in order to perform the job, the survey data suggest individuals currently holding positions as CPIs are well suited for the requirements. Of 184 CPIs surveyed, all but two answered the item, “What educational or professional background prepared you to become a CPI?” The results overwhelmingly indicate CPIs are qualified to perform the job: 71% of CPIs possess a relevant undergraduate degree, 23% earned a relevant graduate degree, 42% have relevant work experience, 3% completed an internship with DCF, and 7% expressed various other credentials, including:

- “experience with kids . . .”
- “Relative Caregiver”
- “Undergraduate in Marketing; internship with inner-city ministry in town; desire to help community”
- “Training specialist with DCF in another state.”
- “Outreach work during undergrad”

With such strong backgrounds, it is not surprising CPIs rate their confidence in ability to perform the job of CPI highly. The survey results indicate 46% of CPIs are very confident in their capabilities and
44% are confident. Rankings for neutral (5%), somewhat confident (4%), and not at all confident (2%) drop drastically when compared to the first two options.

Motivation

The majority of current CPIs possess inherent motivation to perform the job, and this motivation mainly involves intangible personal benefits. The survey data show (by allowing respondents to select numerous options) 57% of CPIs chose their career due to professional interests and 43% due to a desire to serve the community. When asked why they became CPIs, participants stated:

- “Helping children and families”
- “previous work in child safety”
- “Have worked in all other phases (ESI, Reunification, Adoption, TPR, etc.)”

Despite a large number of CPIs choosing the profession due to personal motivation, the difficulties experienced while in the job conflict with and hinder these internal aspirations. For example, when asked to select all options that may cause them to leave their current job, 80% of CPIs indicated the demanding workload, 69% indicated understaffed offices, 67% indicated time constraints, 56% indicated emotional drains, and 47% indicated better offers in a different line of work.

CPIs offered other reasons for dissatisfaction in their job experiences by stating:

- “With regard to improving retention and morale, it is very stressful job . . . .”
- “the stress levels are so high that it would cause health problems, suchs as HBP or stress related health issues.”
- “Salary currently getting decreased by 3% due to legislator- I will be back at my starting salary.”

Conclusion of Performance Gap Analysis

Zenith Performance created survey tools based on the six components of the BEM to study the current situation of CPIs working in the state of Florida in terms of environmental supports and individual behaviors. Analysis of the survey results indicated discrepancies in certain aspects of the CPI job, including a lack of clear and relevant guidelines, an inability to upload all investigation information into FSFN files, a lack of formal incentives, inadequate knowledge and skills, and low morale. These performance gaps were critically considered in the following step, the cause analysis, of this performance analysis project.
CAUSE ANALYSIS

After identifying these specific performance gaps, a cause-and-effect analysis was conducted to identify and organize the potential causes for the variance in substantiation rate. During this analysis, the factors previously identified during the gap analysis, as well as additional potential causes brainstormed during discussions with DCF, were further considered to determine root causes. The resulting causes were organized into four components, including (a) process, (b) structure, (c) workforce, and (d) environment, which were adopted from the SAPP model of systems component organization. These four elements affect the output of the final case determination within the system process of protective investigations. A fish bone diagram was used to categorize possible causes into the four components, with the performance problem listed in a box at the right (Appendix E).

Due to limits on the project, not all potential causes were addressed in this analysis. Therefore, the identified causes listed in the fishbone diagram were critically considered in relation to the needs of DCF and the performance problem. A prioritization of all listed causes was conducted to determine the most immediate root causes to the performance problem of inconsistent decision making. In the end, three root causes were selected, which include (a) insufficient training, (b) an unsupportive FSFN system, and (c) unclear guidelines. The following are justifications why these three causes are the most critical to the performance problem, thus deserving DCF’s immediate attention.

Justification for Root Cause 1: Insufficient Training

Insufficient training for CPIs was identified as a prime cause for the performance problem of inconsistent decision making. For pre-service and field training, a total of 57% of CPIs rated the trainings neutral, ineffective, or very ineffective in preparing them for their job (Fig. 5). Similarly, a total of 51% of CPI supervisors rated the trainings neutral, ineffective, or very ineffective in preparing CPIs for their job (Fig. 5). When CPIs receive insufficient training, they are not provided with guidance to develop skills necessary for making accurate final findings for cases. This can lead to individuals relying on personal assumptions for case determinations rather than established procedures.
From additional data analysis, four main symptoms were identified as pertaining to the root cause of insufficient training received by CPIs. These symptoms include (a) lack of interview skills required for consistent determinations, (b) lack of investigation skills required for consistent determinations, (c) lack of time management skills required for consistent determinations, and (d) lack of critical thinking and decision-making skills required for consistent determinations (Fig. 6). Again, the inclusion of insufficient training as a root cause in this analysis is justified because these four symptoms stem from this issue and also negatively affect the performance problem.
Symptom 1: Lack of interview skills

From a total of 158 responses to the survey question, “Which parts of training did not prepare you for the requirements of the CPI position?,” 10.12% of CPIs indicated a lack of attention to interview skills during current training. Also, 26.83% of supervisors mentioned CPIs’ interview skills should be improved.

Symptom 2: Lack of investigation skills

The second most quoted skill not covered sufficiently in pre-service training was investigation and evidence collection skills. From the CPI survey, 7.59% of participants responded that the pre-service training did not help them to achieve these skills, and 39.87% stated the field training was insufficient in preparing them to become a CPI. Also, many CPIs consider the current field training more valuable than classroom training:

- “I feel that trainees need more field training than classroom training because classroom can not prepare you for what is in the field.”
- “New CPI’s need more time in the field for training prior to pre-service training so they can have more comprehension of what it is we do in the field. The best way to learn this job is hands on experience and almost every case is always different. I think less class time and more field time would be beneficial.”
- “There needs to be more in the field work instead of classroom work. None of teh training I received in the classroom prepared me for this job. Only field days helped.”
- “Preservice did not help at all, It was al the fieldwork.”

Symptom 3: Lack of time management skills

The survey results from supervisors indicate 29.27% of respondents believe CPIs’ time management skills require improvement. Furthermore, when CPIs were asked, “Which parts of training did not prepare you for the requirements of the CPI position?,” survey participants responded:

- “I would add time management classes, . . . That could help employees with skills needed to not become overwhelmed.”
- “time management, organizational skills and multil-tasking would be helpful during training.”
- “. . . More time needs to be spent on time management due to the high caseloads were carry . . . .”

Symptom 4: Lack of critical thinking and decision-making skills

Data collected from the CPIs suggested a dearth of training directed at critical thinking and decision-making skills. When asked which parts of training required improvement, one CPI explained:

- “. . . [there was ] no decision making training.”

Numerous supervisors agreed and stated:

- “. . . One of the areas that investigators seem to have the most difficulties in is critical thinking and decision making. . . .”
- “Ability to think outside of the box. Critical thinking skills. . . .”
- “Critical thinking and decision making . . . .”
Justification for Root Cause 2:
Unsupportive FSFN System

The second root cause involves limitations of the FSFN system. Ideally, CPIs should be able to use the FSFN system as a supportive tool throughout the investigation process. This would involve the FSFN system allowing CPIs to submit all collected evidence into case files within FSFN for supervisor review, as well as to complete necessary tasks within FSFN in a satisfactory amount of time. The survey data indicate two symptoms for this root cause, which include (a) denying CPIs the ability to submit all case information and (b) demanding CPI time with excessive submission requirements (Fig. 7).

![Root Cause 2: Unsupportive FSFN system](image)

**Figure 7. Root cause 2 and resulting symptoms negatively affecting the performance problem.**

**Symptom 1: Incomplete evidence submission**

Because the FSFN system does not allow for the submission of all types of investigation information collected, such as photographs or audio recorded witness statements, all individuals involved (supervisor and second party reviewer, if needed) in the decision-making process may not base their opinions on the same sources of evidence. This scenario is corroborated by survey data in which 51% of CPI supervisors claimed they are constantly requesting hardcopies of case files, 18% claim they often request hardcopies, and 14% claim they sometimes request hardcopies. Again, due to the FSFN system’s inability to allow for submission of all available case information, many supervisors must rely on hardcopies of case files. When supervisors do not obtain the hardcopies, they may review incomplete investigation reports within FSFN, and thus make a decision regarding a case based on varying evidence. Such a situation caused by limitations of the FSFN system may contribute to the performance problem of inconsistent decision making throughout the state.

Furthermore, even though 12.71% of CPIs strongly agreed and 62.98% agreed that FSFN currently enables them to provide accurate and sufficient information to supervisors for case review, a total of 76.37% of CPIs strongly agreed or agreed that FSFN should be improved (Fig. 8). Such
modifications include making uploading evidence files, including documents, photographs, or audio files, easier or more convenient.

Figure 8. CPI responses to FSFN performance.

Similarly, 64.71% of supervisors strongly agreed and 15.69% agreed the FSFN system could be improved to allow for submission of more types of evidence information (Fig. 9). Although 62.98% of CPIs surveyed agreed the FSFN system currently enables them to provide sufficient investigation information to supervisors, 41.21% of CPIs strongly agreed and 35.16% agreed that the FSFN system would be improved by modifications to information submission.
### Figure 9. Supervisor responses to FSFN performance.

**Symptom 2: Redundant or unnecessary submission**

Because report entry into FSFN is a time consuming process, CPIs may fall behind in work responsibilities and rush to maintain deadlines. The FSFN system requires CPIs to spend an exorbitant amount of time entering information for investigation cases. Comments were provided in surveys expressing concern for this constraint on CPIs:

- “. . . The most time consuming part of the [CPI] job is taking notes while in the field and then coming back to the office to type it all out [into FSFN].”
- “FSFN data entry continues to take too much time. A more streamlined system that self populates information w/ less narrative requirement would beneficial.”
- “This job is very demanding, and sometimes FSFN is a hinderance instead of a tool that CPIs can use to increase their ability to completed their job. . .”

Of the total CPIs surveyed, 93% indicated *time constraints* was a difficulty experienced during investigations, and this outcome may be due to excessive FSFN requirements. When asked about the effect of job stress and workload on CPIs’ ability to make decisions, 29.41% of CPI supervisors claimed workload is *very influential* in causing variance in decisions and 25.49% claimed it was *influential*. Of the total CPI survey participants, 32.22% indicated workload was *very influential* and 35.56% indicated the factor was *influential* on their decisions. From this information, it can be assumed if the FSFN system
offered a more streamlined process for data entry and case maintenance, CPIs may experience a less stressful workload. In turn, this would result in CPIs being able to devote more time to investigations and careful consideration of evidence when making recommendations.

**Justification for Root Cause 3: Unclear Guidelines**

The third root cause for the performance problem of inconsistent decision making involves unclear guidelines given to CPIs for reference during investigations. For this section, “guidelines” refers to information provided to CPIs, such as definitions of the three-tiered rankings (no indicator, not substantiated, and verified), through the organizational environment. While guidelines are meant to provide clarity and standardize the decision-making process, certain guidelines accessible to CPIs were described with concern in the surveys. This leads to two symptoms that also negatively impact the performance problem, (a) inconsistent understanding of guidelines and (b) a failure to reference guidelines (Fig. 10).

![Root Cause 3: Unclear guidelines](image)

*Figure 10. Root cause 3 and resulting symptoms negatively affecting the performance problem.*

**Symptom 1: Inconsistent understanding of guidelines**

If the guidelines provided by the organization are too complex or not easily understood by CPIs, the possibility exists for multiple interpretations of what are intended to be objective resources. When asked, “What could cause variance in substantiation rates?,” CPIs responding to the survey stated:

- “Poor understanding of the allegation matrix”
- “Vague definitions of what Verified, Not Substantiated and No indications means.”

Similarly, supervisors responded to the same survey question with comments such as:

- “Not being clear of what the allegation matrix requires”
- “No Indicators and Not Substantiated are both vague and there is not a clear delineation between the two findings”
• “Interpretation of the allegation matrix”

All of these opinions held by current CPIs and supervisors suggest individuals involved with decision making during the investigation process hold varying internal perspectives of fundamental resources. Should decision-makers possess different mindsets, final case recommendations based on the same evidence may still conflict.

**Symptom 2: Failure to reference guidelines**

An additional symptom affecting the overall performance problem involves CPIs not utilizing guidelines regularly during investigations. When asked why they may not use resource materials, 58% of CPIs responded they are familiar with the procedures, 32% responded the excessive amount deters use, 31% responded they already know the information, 13% responded it was a waste of time, and 12% responded they were not required to reference materials (Fig. 11). For the 9% who chose others, more than half of the reasons were due to insufficient time to refer to the guidelines. Because CPIs do not refer to provided guidelines for every case, perhaps 50% of the time, their personal judgment begins to veer from the standard originally established during initial training. As this pattern of performance continues, additional experiences continue to contribute to and may skew individuals’ judgment.

![CPI reasons for failure to reference guidelines](chart)

**Figure 11. CPI reasons for failure to reference guidelines.**

Also, when asked what could cause variances in substantiation rates, CPIs stated:

• “A CPI may be going on their experience or ideas instead of looking at the definitions in the Child Maltreatment Index.”
• “Lack of following the matrix when it comes to determining the findings”

Similarly, a supervisor responded to the same question by stating,

• “They [CPIs] are not following the allegation matrix.”
RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS

Identification of Solutions

In the cause analysis, the three root causes contributing to the performance problem of inconsistent decision making were (a) insufficient training, (b) an unsupportive FSFN system, and (c) unclear guidelines. In order to reduce or eliminate these causes, suitable solutions must be identified. To ensure only appropriate and acceptable solutions are recommended, Zenith Performance developed four criteria to brainstorm and measure possibilities. The following criteria were chosen for this project due to the specific constraints and needs of DCF:

1. Address the root causes
2. Acceptable to clients
3. Feasible to implement
4. Cost effective to implement

A list of causes and potential solutions was presented to the client prior to the submission of this report to elicit immediate feedback regarding the practicality of initial ideas. The client acknowledged that (a) providing sufficient training provided to CPIs, (b) improving the FSFN system, and (c) improving CPI guidelines would be effective in improving the performance problem. After collaborating with the client and receiving consent, Zenith Performance developed a final list of solutions with considerations of feasibility and effectiveness for each possibility (Table 4).

Table 4: Root causes, symptoms, and corresponding potential solutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Root Causes</th>
<th>Symptoms</th>
<th>Potential Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient training</td>
<td>Lack of relevant skills</td>
<td>Include interview, investigation, data collection, time management and decision-making skills in training provided to CPIs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Include more case studies and authentic practice during trainings provided to CPIs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increase allotted field training statewide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive FSFN</td>
<td>Incomplete evidence submission</td>
<td>Enhance file uploading feature in the FSFN system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>system</td>
<td></td>
<td>Redesign FSFN system to one that is more user friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Redundant or unnecessary submission</td>
<td>Replace FSFN system with an electronic performance support system (EPSS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear guidelines</td>
<td>Inconsistent understanding of guidelines</td>
<td>Provide understandable definitions in the Child Maltreatment Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do not refer to</td>
<td>Update or eliminate the CPI checklist, quality of standard practices, and Florida administrative code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Introduce compulsory usage of guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guidelines</td>
<td>Make guidelines easy to access</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistent ratings</td>
<td>Redesign FSFN system to one that is more user friendly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide understandable definitions in the Child Maltreatment Index</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Selection of Solutions

To prioritize the list of possible improvements actions, all solutions listed in Table 4 were evaluated independently against the four criteria listed earlier. Based on how well the solution met each criterion, it was ranked on a 5-point score system. The scale for the matrix is displayed in Table 5, and each solution could receive a possible total of 20 points.

**Table 5. Five-point scale for measuring potential solutions against criteria**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Very relevant</th>
<th>Relevant</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Slightly relevant</th>
<th>Not relevant at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Points Allotted</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the scoring of each proposed solutions against each criterion is displayed in Table 6.

**Table 6. Matrix for evaluating potential solutions against criteria**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Root Causes</th>
<th>Potential Solutions</th>
<th>Criteria 1: Address the root causes</th>
<th>Criteria 2: Acceptable to clients</th>
<th>Criteria 3: Feasible to implement</th>
<th>Criteria 4: Cost effective to implement</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient training</td>
<td>1. Include interview, investigation, data collection, time management and decision-making skills in training provided to CPIs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Include more case studies and authentic practice during trainings provided to CPIs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Increase allotted field training statewide</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive FSFN system</td>
<td>4. Enhance file uploading feature in the FSFN system</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Redesign FSFN system to one that is more user friendly</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Replace FSFN system with an electronic performance support system (EPSS)  5  3  3  2  13

7. Provide understandable definitions in the Child Maltreatment Index  5  5  5  5  20

8. Update or eliminate the CPI checklist, quality of standard practices, and Florida administrative code  5  5  4  4  18

9. Introduce compulsory usage of guidelines  5  5  4  5  19

10. Make guidelines easy to access  5  4  4  4  17

Unclear guidelines

The scores of the solutions reflect the return of investment of each solution. Solutions with the highest scores would yield greater effectiveness and efficiency in solving the performance problems. It would be ideal to implement all listed solutions to solve the system problems holistically. However, this is not possible with limited resources such as time, space, and budget. In view of the limits, Zenith Performance recommends that DCF focus on the top four solutions that will result in the greatest improvement directly to the performance issue (Table 7).

Table 7. Selected solutions with corresponding causes and points earned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Selected Solutions</th>
<th>Points Earned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient training</td>
<td>1. Include more case studies and authentic practice during trainings provided to CPIs</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsupportive FSFN system</td>
<td>4. Enhance file uploading feature in the FSFN system</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear guidelines</td>
<td>7. Provide understandable definitions in the Child Maltreatment Index</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Introduce compulsory usage of guidelines</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These top four solutions will aptly address the three root causes identified in the cause analysis. Also, these solutions should be implemented throughout the state of Florida through conscientiously planned and orchestrated action. A detailed plan for such a task is outlined in the next section of this report. Zenith Performance recommends a project team be created to lead the complex implementation process.
PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Due to the deeply invested sentiment held by CPIs and supervisors regarding the importance of their jobs, Zenith Performance believes introducing this action plan through a persuasive approach (rather than a coercive or normative reeducative approach) would yield the most effective buy-in from stakeholders (Rothwell, Hohne, & King, 2007). The purpose of the persuasive approach for change management is to involve pertinent individuals in the process. From the survey data, it is evident that a significant majority of CPIs and supervisors are engaged in the exploration for a solution to the performance problem. Therefore, investing time to communicate the proposed plan, which was developed directly from their immediate survey responses, and ensure CPI and supervisor concurrence will benefit the final implementation. Again, because these individuals are greatly interested in solving current problems, gaining initial buy-in should not be difficult.

A change management model outlining a persuasive approach was chosen to facilitate the implementation of identified solutions. This model consists of seven consecutive steps, which are outlined in Table 8.

Table 8. Seven steps of the persuasive implementation plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Provide an overview of the problem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Describe solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Describe organization and personal benefits of the solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
<td>Describe the likely consequences of not taking action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 5</td>
<td>Seek support and facilitate changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 6</td>
<td>Establish specific and measurable objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 7</td>
<td>Monitor progress, gather feedback, and communicate about the value of the performance improvement effort on a continuing basis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This seven-step approach aims to assist the project team in implementing the solutions by interacting with key stakeholders, namely the CPIs and supervisors. All steps, such as Step 4: Describe the likely consequences of not taking action, are directed at involving these personnel in the rationale behind the recommended solutions. Thus ensuring a more devoted base from the actual individuals who will be carrying out the intended corrective solutions. An initial implementation analysis for the four selected solutions is displayed in Table 9.