



Social Work Research Center

Research for Results

The Family Voice in the Evaluation of Differential Response

Conference on Differential Response in
Child Welfare

Marc Winokur, PhD

November 14, 2012

Henderson, NV

**Colorado
State**
University

COLLEGE OF
APPLIED HUMAN SCIENCES
School of Social Work

Who Are We?

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Family Research Center, University of Illinois at
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Project Context

- ❑ Quality Improvement Center on Differential Response (QIC-DR)
- ❑ Three National Sites: Colorado, Ohio, and Illinois
- ❑ Project Timeline: February 1, 2010 – September 30, 2013

Workshop Objectives

1. Describe the development of a survey administered to families receiving CPS services in Colorado, Illinois, and Ohio as part of a larger RCT of DR.
2. Understand the critical issue of survey non-response when conducting research with child welfare populations and discuss strategies to increase response rates.
3. Review preliminary results from family surveys and interviews and their implications for CPS practice.



The Family Voice in the Evaluation of Differential Response

7th Annual Conference on Differential
Response in Child Welfare

Raquel Ellis, PhD

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Overview of Presentation

- Cognitive Testing of Family Exit Survey
- Colorado Incentives Study using the Family Exit Survey

Family Exit Survey

- Purpose is to assess the experience, engagement, and satisfaction with CPS services received
- 23-item survey being conducted in three demonstration sites
- Constructed using instrument developed by Institute of Applied Research (IAR)
 - Site evaluators adapted the instrument
 - Subjected instrument to cognitive testing

Cognitive Testing of Family Exit Survey

- What is cognitive testing?
 - Examines whether respondents understand a question correctly and if they can provide accurate answers.
- Why is cognitive testing important?
 - Ensures question captures the scientific intent of the question and makes sense to respondents.

Cognitive Testing Methodology

- Questionnaire design and survey pre-testing methodologists at Westat led the testing activities
- Completed one-hour in-person, in-depth interviews with 12 former child welfare clients
- Respondents took survey using pen/paper while interviewer administered probes
- Respondents received \$25 for their participation

Cognitive Testing Participants

- Participants (N = 12)
 - Over 90% female
 - Ethnicity
 - ✦ Half (50%) were White/non-Hispanic
 - ✦ 2 White/Hispanic
 - ✦ 1 Black/African-American
 - ✦ 1 Biracial (White/American Indian)
 - ✦ 2 did not respond
 - Education
 - ✦ Most completed some college or trade school (50%) or a high school diploma or GED (25%)

Cognitive Testing Findings

- Easy for respondents to read survey
- Time for survey administration was shorter than expected
- Issues with answering caseworker questions

Cognitive Testing Survey Revisions

- Added instructions to caseworker questions
- Inclusion of “Child Protective Services” to questions that may not have applied just to the caseworker
- Dropped questions found to be hard to interpret or irrelevant

Colorado Incentives Study for Family Exit Survey

- Prepaid incentives plan resulted in low response rate (20%) 6 months into the study
 - All potential respondents received a \$10 prepaid incentive
- Purpose of Colorado Incentives Study
 - Explore alternative ways to encourage families to return the survey
 - Determine the most effective way to use incentives and non-response re-mailings

Colorado Incentives Study Methodology

- Randomly assign families ($n = 351$) to one of three conditions:
 - Resend Survey with Promise of Additional \$20 Incentive
 - Resend Survey Only
 - Do Nothing Different (control group)
- Included families:
 - Whose cases closed in the past 3 months
 - Who have not returned the survey within 6 weeks of it being mailed

Colorado Incentives Study Findings

- 17 surveys received from group we resent survey to with a promise of an additional incentive
- One survey received from the group who received a resent survey
- No surveys received from the control group
- Adopted New Incentive Strategy (January 2012)
 - Sent 579 surveys with promise of additional incentive as of September 2012
 - Received 62 (11%) surveys thus far



Human Services
Research Institute

Family Voice in DR: Ohio's Preliminary Family Survey Findings

7th Annual Conference on Differential
Response in Child Welfare

November 14-16, 2012

Henderson, Nevada

Julie Murphy
Human Services Research Institute



Ohio Family Surveys

- Download: May 18, 2012
- Sampling and Incentives
- Surveys Received: 222 AR, 85 IR
- No cleaning/weighting completed-
PRELIMINARY FINDINGS
- Response rate: ~32% (38% AR, 23% IR)

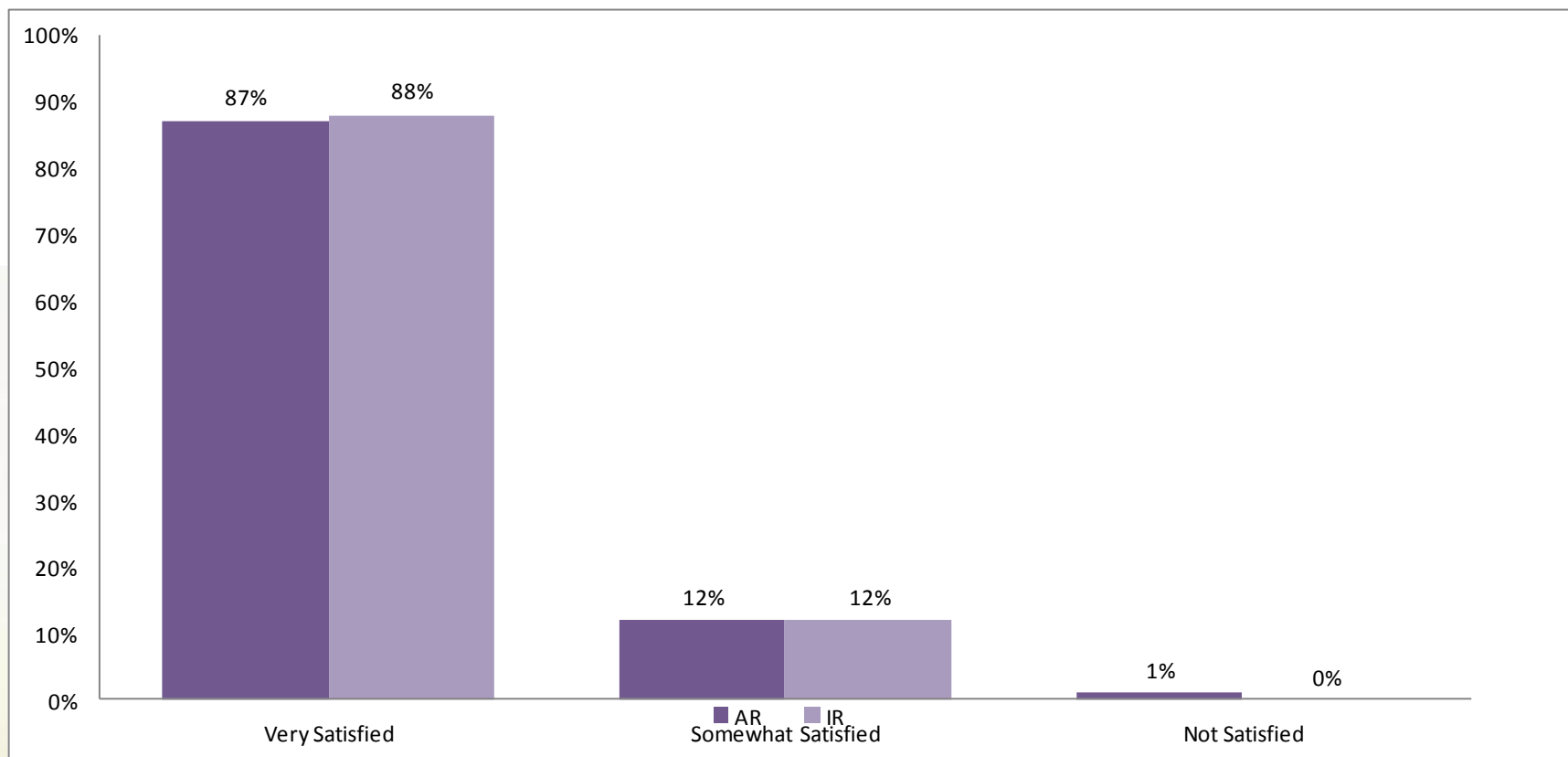
Family Surveys

| | AR | IR |
|------------|-----|----|
| Champaign | 22 | 7 |
| Clark | 35 | 6 |
| Madison | 11 | 8 |
| Montgomery | 50 | 16 |
| Richland | 14 | 9 |
| Summit | 90 | 39 |
| Total | 222 | 85 |

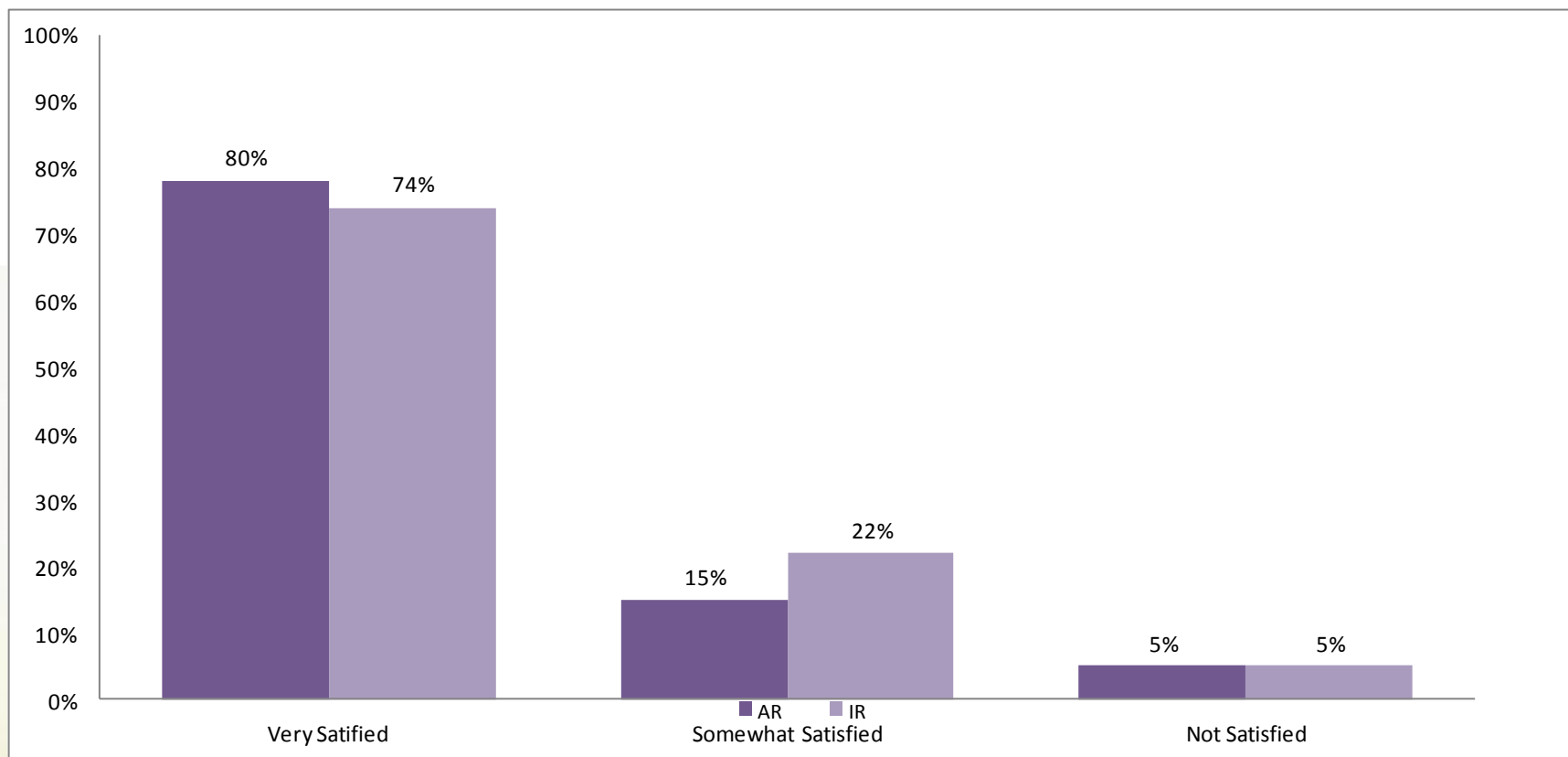
Demographics of Respondents

| | TOTAL | AR | IR |
|--------------------------------|----------|------------|------------|
| Male | 6% | 6% | 7% |
| Female | 94% | 94% | 93% |
| White Only | 79% | 78% | 84% |
| Black or African American Only | 18% | 19% | 16% |
| Other | 3% | 3% | 0% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 3% | 4% | 2% |
| Mean Age | 31 years | 31.3 years | 30.4 years |

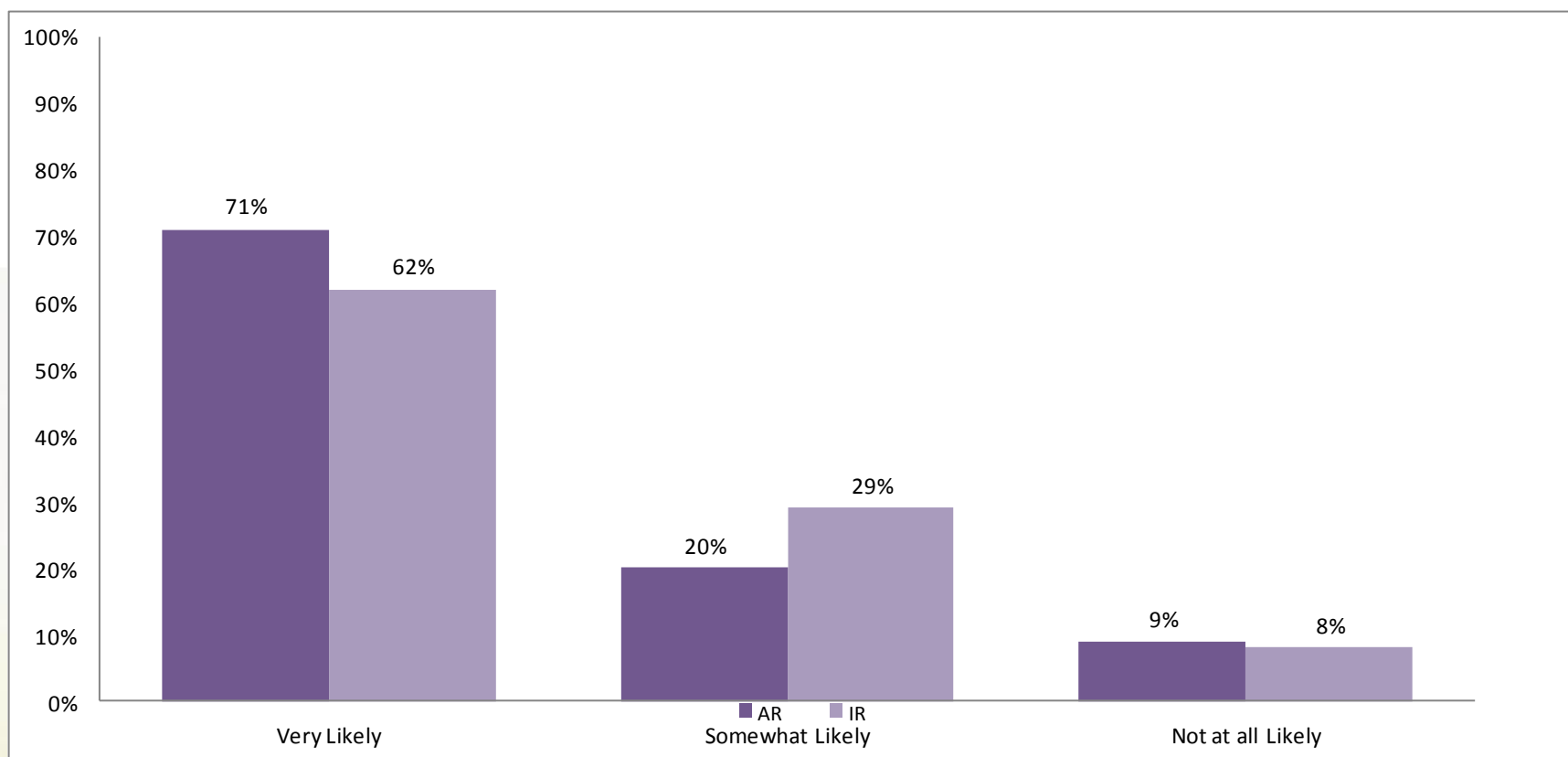
Satisfaction with Way Treated by Worker



Satisfaction with Help Received



How Likely is it you would Call the Caseworker if you Needed Future Help



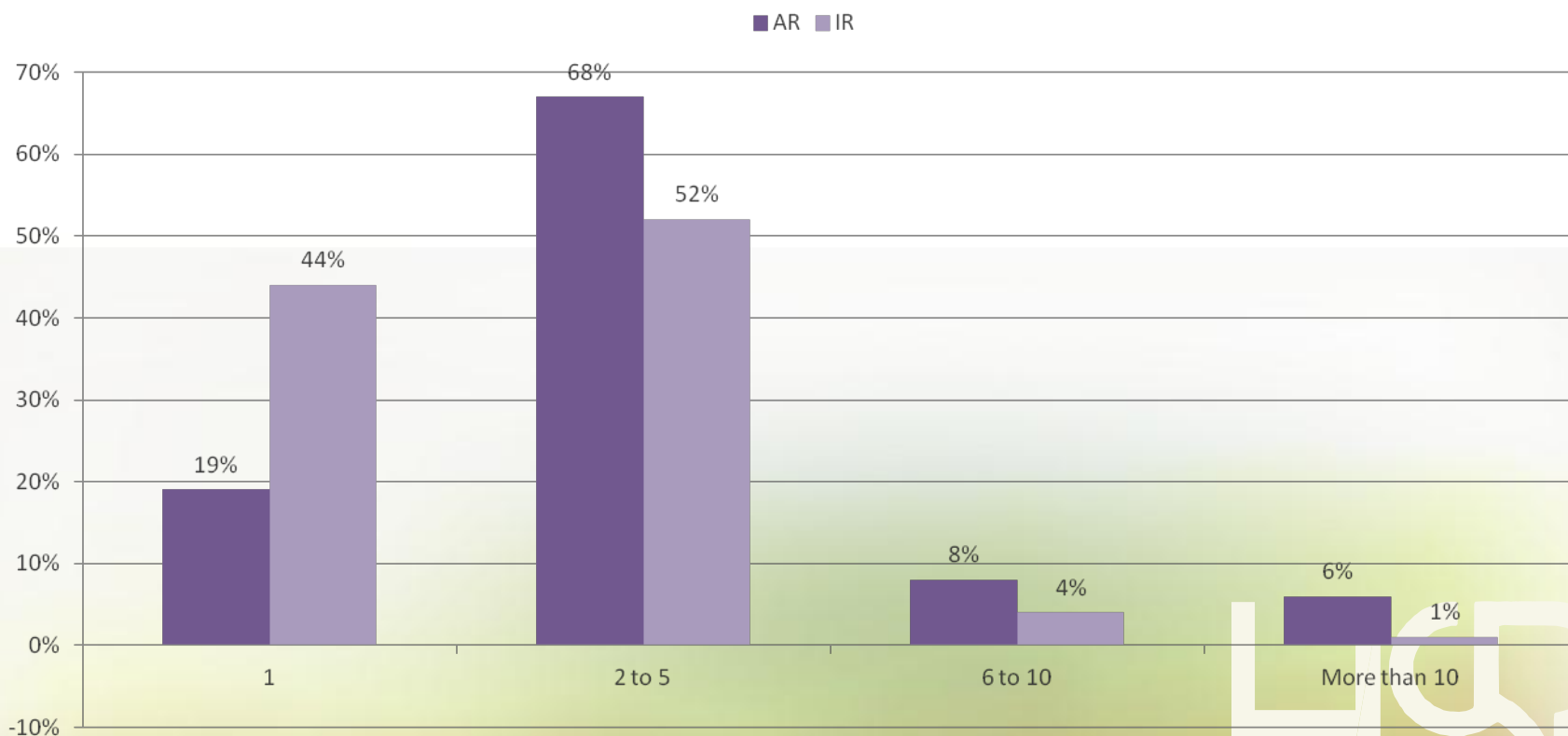
Relationships

- 90% (AR); 91% (IR) felt the caseworker listened very carefully to the family
- 81% (AR); 77% (IR) felt the caseworker understood the family's needs
- 13% (AR); 18% (IR) felt there were important things that did not get discussed with the caseworker

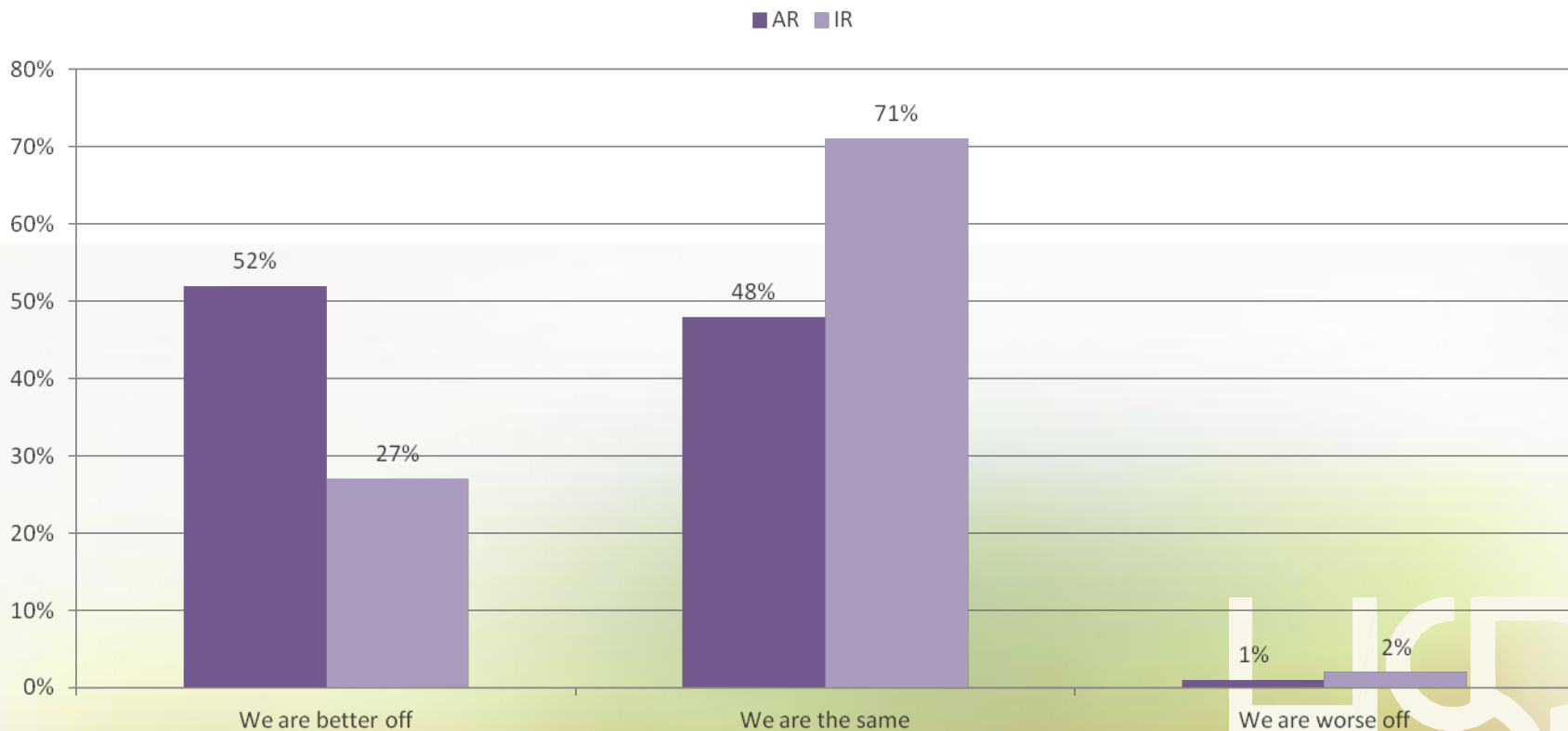
Relationships

- 83% (AR); 78% (IR) thought the caseworker considered the family's opinions before making decisions
- 95% (AR); 92% (IR) thought the caseworker recognized things the family did well
- 75% (AR); 67% (IR) thought it was very easy to contact the caseworker

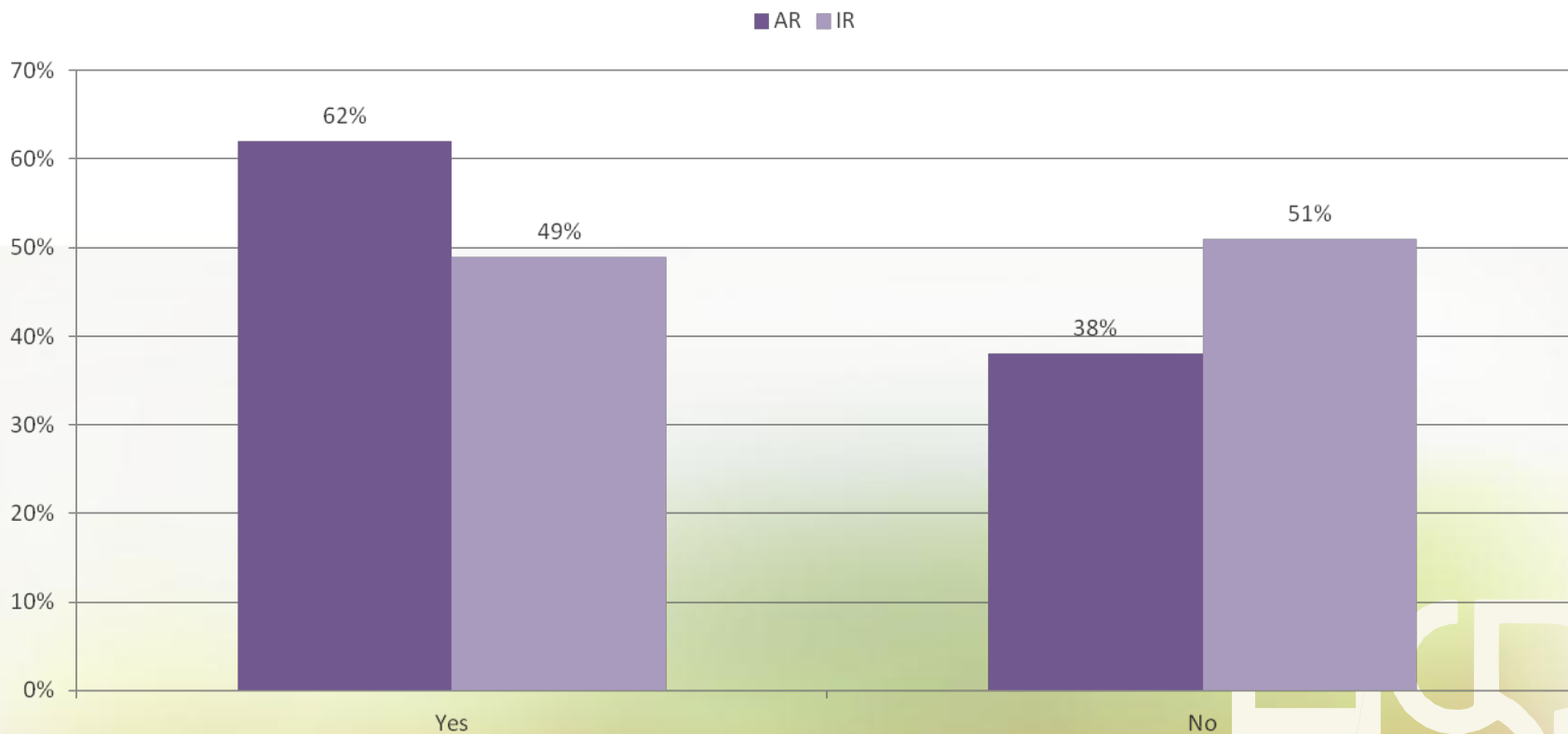
Number of Times Family met with Caseworker



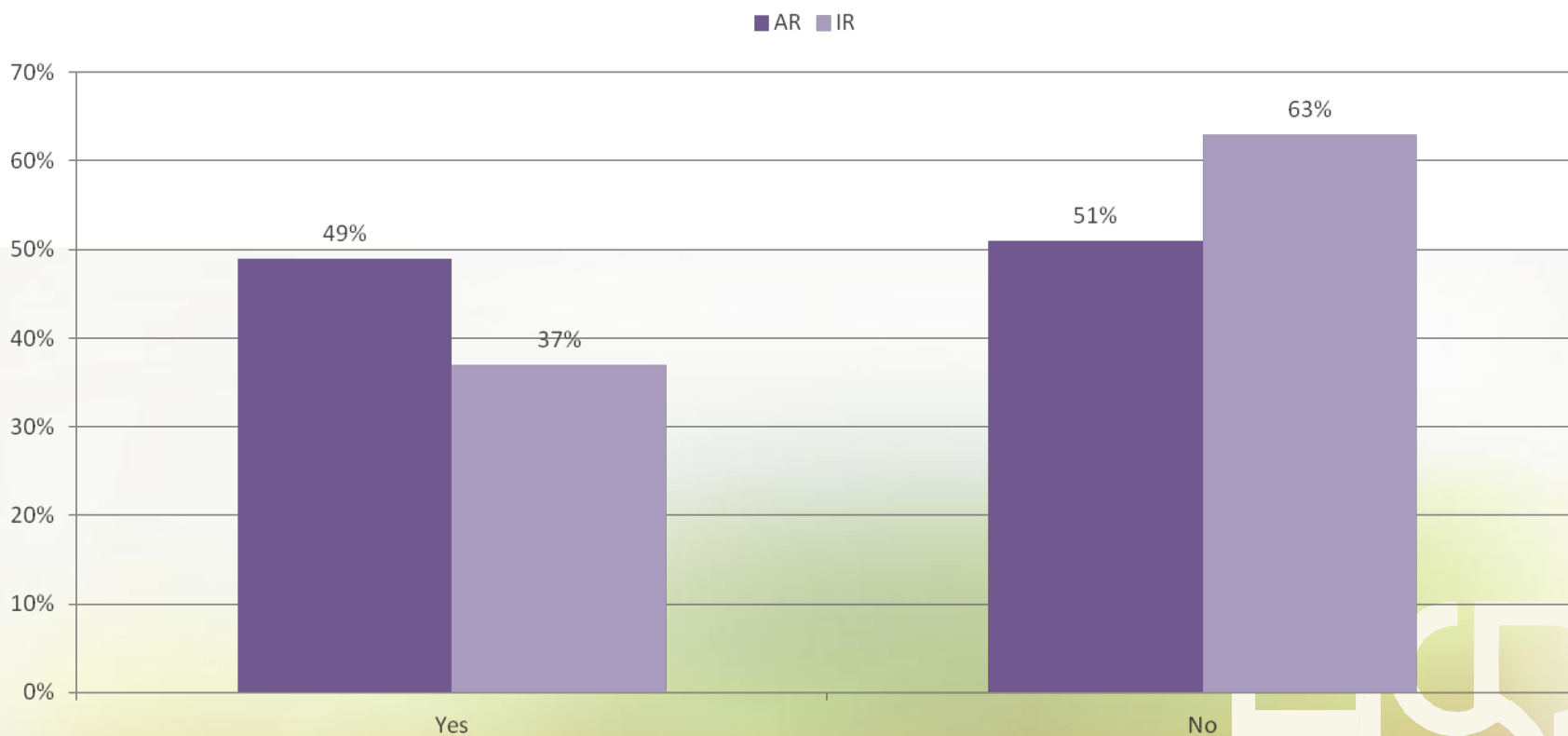
Family Feels Better or Worse off Because of Experience with Agency



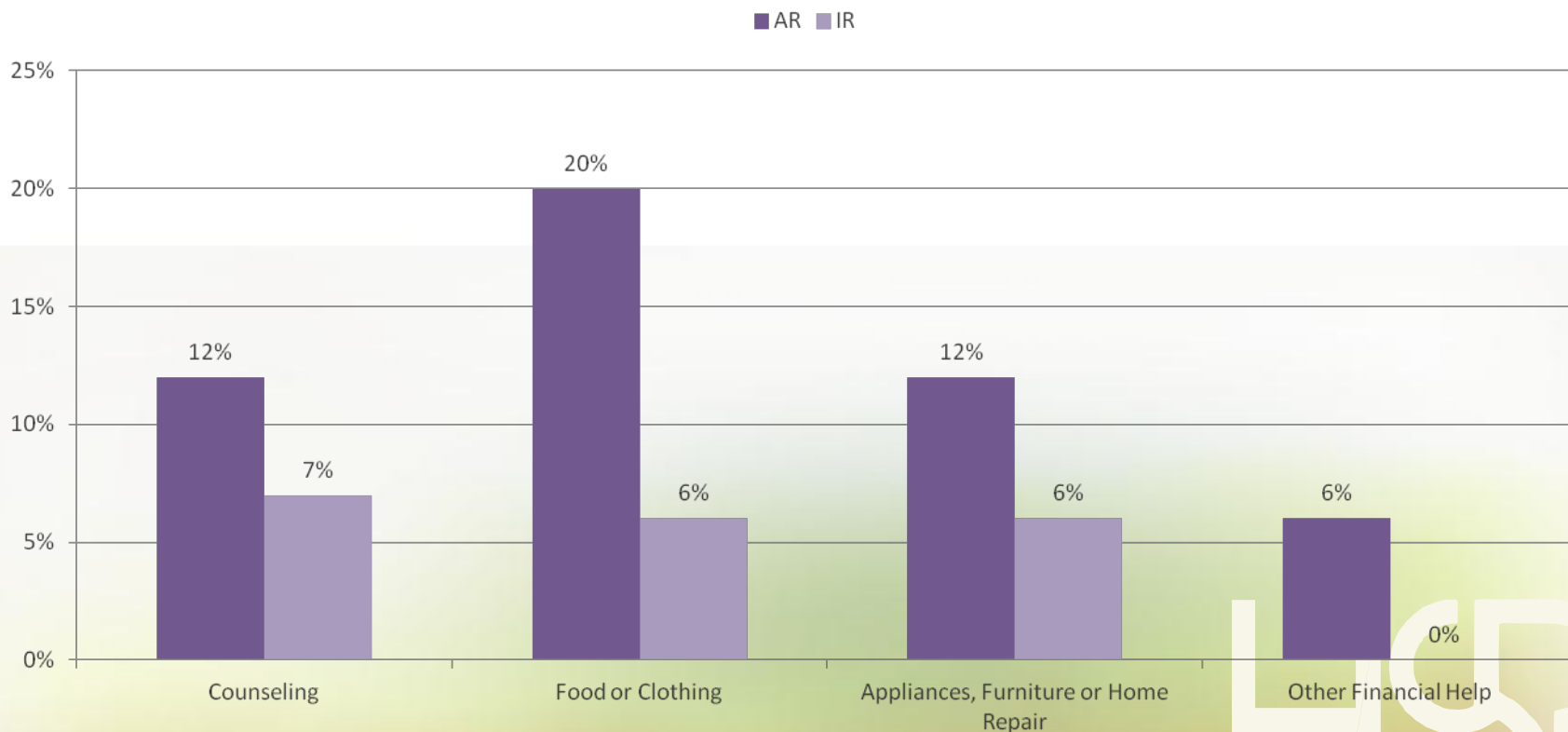
Better Parent Because of Experience with Agency



Family is Better Able to Provide Necessities Because of Experience with Agency



Top Services Agency Assisted Family to Receive



Ohio Family Survey

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Differences between AR & IR Families

- *Contact*
- *Better off and better parents because of experience with agency*
- *Assistance with Food and Clothing*

No Differences

- *Satisfaction*
- *Relationship*
- *Ability to provide necessities*



**CHILDREN AND FAMILY
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SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Capturing the Family Voice Through Qualitative Interviews

Tamara Fuller, Ph.D.

Children and Family Research Center

7th Annual Conference on Differential Response in Child Welfare

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www.cfrc.illinois.edu



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The Illinois Differential Response Evaluation

Family Exit
Survey

Worker Survey

Case-specific
Report

Administrative
data

Caregiver
Interviews

Key Informant
Interviews

Stakeholder
Focus Groups

Field
Observations

Cost data



Why Bother Collecting Qualitative Data?

- Costs and benefits to collecting both quantitative and qualitative information
- Cost: qualitative data can be very expensive and time-consuming to collect
- Benefit: provides much deeper and richer meaning and understanding around key concepts that are less understood, such as parent engagement in CPS



Research Questions

- How do parents view their relationship with caseworkers?
- What caseworker characteristics and actions influence engagement?



Methods: What Did We Do?

- Parents indicated willingness to participate on the Family Exit Survey
- Goal was to interview 20 parents from each group: Investigation and Differential Response
- Selected parents were first sent a letter that described the interview, then called to solicit participation



Methods: What Did We Do?

- Interviews were done over the phone, audiotaped and transcribed
- Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions such as:
 - What happened during the first visit? Tell me everything you remember.
 - How did the two of you get along? Did you work well together? Why or why not?
 - What was the most helpful thing that your worker did for you?



Data Analysis-Caregiver Interviews

- Data coded using analytic coding¹
- Five themes emerged
 - Perceptions of DCFS
 - Needs, problems, and services
 - Caregiver emotional response
 - Processes
 - Relationship between caseworker and caregiver
- Current analyses combine results for DR and investigation

¹ Lofland, J. & Lofland, L. H. (1995). *Analyzing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis*. 3rd Edition. Albany, NY: Wadsworth Publishing Company.



Fostering Engagement

Three sets of skills or behaviors that fostered engagement with parents:

- Professionalism and Competency
- Communication Style
- Care



Professionalism and Competency

It eased parents' anxiety when they thought that their worker was "good at her job:"

- Appearing neutral and unbiased
- Maintaining a calm demeanor
- Having a respectful and polite attitude
- Explaining their role and responsibilities
- Returning calls promptly



Communication

Certain verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors increased parent engagement:

- Asking questions respectfully and thoughtfully
- Providing clear and honest information and explanation
- Active listening, giving them a voice, even if they were angry or upset (let them “vent”)



Care and Concern

Parents indicated more engagement with workers who demonstrated care and concern:

- Providing reassurance when appropriate
- Expressing concern for well-being of family
- Noticing strengths
- Providing or referring to resources
- Connecting through shared experiences



Implications for CPS Practice

- Parents don't distinguish between DR and traditional investigation when you knock on door
- These skills can be equally applied by *both* kinds of workers
- Easily teachable skills that can be included into pre-service or in-service training and coaching

Top Takeaways

1. It is very challenging, yet essential, to have families evaluate their own experiences in the child welfare system
2. Preliminary results indicate that families served through alternative response report high levels of engagement
3. Program evaluation can and should be a family engagement approach

Next Steps

- ❑ Data analysis of family exit survey including cleaning of data, weighting of samples, non-response bias testing, and comparison of results between AR and IR tracks
- ❑ Comparison of results from family exit survey and caseworker case-specific reports to measure alignment in perceptions of engagement, satisfaction, and services

Discussion



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