The issue

The New South Wales Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) only deal directly with cases where there is a Risk of Significant Harm (ROSH). Valuable FACS resources are spent processing abundant Non-ROSH reports that result in no benefits to lower-risk families.

Our goal

Increase reporting accuracy (i.e. reduce Non-ROSH, maintain ROSH) by altering the standard feedback letter ("Control") to encourage mandatory reporters (people who work with children) to consider alternative responses to future lower risk situations.

What we did

We developed a new feedback letter that...

1. was easy to read and visually attractive
2. made alternative responses salient via a 'Response Guide'
3. included a persuasive message framed as a gain or loss (New:Gain and New:Loss) to encourage future use of the Response Guide

Trial Design

Step 1: People report their concerns to FACS
Step 2: FACS categorizes report outcomes
Step 3: From 6 July – 9 October 2016 we sent mandatory reporters who made a Closed report 1 of 3 letters
Step 4: We monitored the outcomes of participants subsequent reporting behaviour (11 October cut-off)

Success! We increased reporting accuracy

Reducing Non-ROSH by 3% saves 1,144 - 1,716 casework hours per year

As hypothesised the new letters, particularly New:Loss, increased the reporting accuracy of mandatory reporters’ involved in the trial:

Our trial had a notable impact on total report outcomes:

Weekly total report outcome proportions

There were: 1) No differences in ROSH, 2) New:Gain had significantly less subsequent reports than Baseline, and 3) New:Loss had significantly less, a) subsequent reports than Control & Baseline, and b) Closed reports than Baseline