

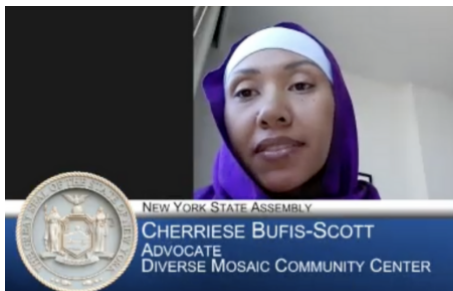


Impacted Community Members Call Out Unjust SCR Practices

Representatives from several RHF partner organizations testified before the New York State Assembly on October 9th. The hearing centered on the real-life ramifications of false accusations and overreporting to the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR), which operates within the Office of Children and Family Services. The hearing was prompted by the [No Filter report](#) released in March 2024 by RHF grantee the [NYC Family Policy Project](#).

The SCR manages the child abuse/neglect hotline and determines whether or not to dispatch a local child protective service investigator to a home based on allegations. For nearly six hours, system-impacted parents gave examples of how current SCR practices trigger unnecessary, invasive investigations that traumatize children, harass families, and intimidate communities of color.

Policy analysts and researchers shared compelling data points, including that New York State has a much lower screen-out rate than the national average, the ineffectiveness of the SCR at identifying indicated cases, and the racial disparities exhibited in and exacerbated by investigations.



“In just one year, I faced over 20 CPS reports. To listen to lies every other week and have your children questioned in fear of removal is an additional form of trauma, every single call. Every single time the report has to be read to the children, their hearts drops, my heart drops. My children fear their name being called to be put in a room with a CPS worker at school.”

“New York’s child abuse reporting system allows anonymous callers. For this reason, the system is harmful because it creates a loophole for abusers to revictimize survivors.”

Shamara Kelly • Black Families Love and Unite (BLU)

“Black and Brown families comprise 88% of the investigated families... Families under investigation are subject to inspections of their homes and their bodies, demands for medical and school records, and intrusive interviews with their neighbors, doctors, and teachers that can damage their reputation, all while holding their breath not knowing if their children may be taken.”

Chijindu Obiofuma • Children’s Defense Fund - NY

"The SCR's job is to ensure that families are not investigated unless that is truly required under state law. New York's low screen-out rate suggests that many reports now being referred for investigation are not justified... We need much greater accountability and transparency."

Nora McCarthy • NYC Family Policy Project

"Our conversations with mandated reporters reveal that they often report 'just in case,' fearing professional or legal consequences if they don't... They assume that the SCR is going to filter out inappropriate reports, but that doesn't always happen... SCR practice changes must be coupled with other policy efforts to achieve family integrity."

Meredith Giovanelli • Children's Rights

"New York screens out calls to the SCR at a lower rate than the national average (25% vs. 50%). This results in a higher investigation rate than the national average. Calls to the SCR from anonymous reports (many of which are repeated, false reports) account for 16% of all calls to the SCR. 76% of reports to the SCR are unfounded."

Crystal Charles • Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy



Partners also offered their perspectives on potential solutions to avoid adverse outcomes for families historically impacted by unwarranted investigations, including:

- Improve SCR accountability and transparency by sharing data on screened-in/screened-out reports by county, reporter type, and closure codes.
- Disclose how SCR specialists are trained and improve trainings.
- End the practice of anonymous reporting, which is often used to harass survivors of domestic violence.
- Eliminate educational neglect as a reportable allegation to CPS.
- Change current policy so that substance use during pregnancy does not lead to a call to the SCR or acceptance of the case.
- Provide families with more tangible resources to alleviate conditions of poverty that often trigger CPS investigations.
- Ensure that families know their rights at the start of an investigation.

Click [here](#) to watch a recording of the full hearing.

See press coverage from [Spectrum Local News](#) and [The Imprint](#).

Read the NYS Comptroller's recent SCR [report and recommendations](#).