Overview of Path Through the Child Welfare System in Alameda County

**Allegation Reported to Hotline:**
Suspicion of child abuse or neglect is reported to the Department’s Hotline.

**Referral Screening:**
Hotline worker determines what response, if any, is needed for the referral.

**In-Person Investigation**
Emergency Response Worker investigates evidence of child abuse or neglect.

**Referral Closed:**
Allegations are unfounded or child is safe

**Referral to Differential Response:**
Child is at low/no risk but family may benefit from voluntary community-based services.

**Referral Evaluated Out:**
Evidence available is insufficient for in-person response or there are no unaddressed safety concerns present.

**Can child remain safely at home?**

**Dependency Investigations:**
Petition filed seeking court dependency for child, beginning court process. Case plan created with family. Under law, reunification services are not required for certain types of abuse. Child can remain home, enter foster care, or case may close if safety concerns are addressed.

**Family Preservation:**
Extra service to assist families moving towards reunification, or those maintaining their children at home.

**Family Reunification:**
Provided under court jurisdiction; Department creates reunification plan with parents; child remains in least restrictive, most family-like placement setting. Reunification efforts extend for 6 – 24 months.

**Family Reunified:**
Family has addressed need for out-of-home placement and child ordered home by court. Court may order Family Maintenance services to support family.

**In-person response needed?**

**Informal Family Maintenance:**
Voluntary in-home services without court involvement; services provided in 6-month increments and service plan developed with family. Case may close when safety issues are addressed.

**Extended Foster Care (AB-12):**
Continued services for youth ages 18-21, in PYC, transitioning to independence

**Family Reunification Successful?**

**Formal Family Maintenance:**
Court leaves child at home and orders services from Department provided in 6-month increments, based on service plan created with family. Case may close when safety issues are addressed.

**Alternative Permanent Plan Ordered:**
Court order for permanent plan for child when unable to return home safely.

**Adoption or Guardianship:**
Ordered by court as plan for the child.

**Permanent Youth Connections (PYC):**
Permanently Planned Living Arrangement for youth, ordered by court.