DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

2024 Session Priority

Supporting child welfare workers by modernizing the Social Service Information System database

An improved system will reduce the administrative burdens on county and Tribal child welfare workers and give them more time to spend with children and families.

Challenge

County and Tribal child welfare workers rely on Minnesota's Social Service Information System (SSIS) to track and manage child welfare casework. The 6,000 daily users of SSIS are forced to navigate a database designed in an outdated programming language, resulting in excessively long load times and performance and stability problems.

Clear feedback from counties and Tribal Nations shows that replacing SSIS with a modern, mobile, stable information technology system is a high priority. Local agencies report higher staff turnover among child welfare workers as a direct result of the IT issues, including crashes, slowness and unavailability. Workers end up spending more time on data entry and less time working directly with children and families.

New federal regulations for child welfare data systems, called the Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System, went into effect in 2016. Meeting these requirements will require more investment.

Proposal

The proposal from Governor Walz and Lieutenant Governor Flanagan follows the recommendations of a comprehensive vendor assessment. Implementation will likely include contracting with a software development company to redesign the system, hiring new IT staff and purchasing new application technology.

The requested funding is a down payment, as more funding will be needed to completely replace the existing system. However, this investment continues the critical work of transforming our IT system to better support users as well as the children and families in our child welfare system.

Why It's Important

Investing in Minnesota's child welfare infrastructure helps ensure that children and families have the support they need from county and Tribal child welfare workers. Staff turnover—often the result of SSIS issues and burdens—contributes to high caseloads, workloads and burnout.

These issues result in less time for child welfare workers to spend working with children and families to achieve permanency goals and improve outcomes. Investing in SSIS will allow DHS and local agencies to more efficiently record and track demographic and financial data. This data will help identify disparities within the child welfare system, as well as gaps and inequities in access to funding, services and resources. Tracking these issues in real time will allow the department, counties and Tribal Nations to address concerns more effectively.

For More Information

Governor's budget page: Supporting Child Welfare Infrastructure (PDF)