



---

# Child and Family Services Plan 2025-2029

State of Minnesota

06/30/2024

---

Department of Children, Youth, and Families  
Child Safety and Permanency Administration  
444 Lafayette Rd. N  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
651-539-7700  
[dcyf.mn.gov](http://dcyf.mn.gov)

As requested by Minnesota Statute 3.197: This report cost approximately \$10,000 to prepare, including staff time and community engagement activities.

*Upon request, this material will be made available in an alternative format such as large print, Braille or audio recording. Printed on recycled paper.*

# Contents

- Child and Family Services Plan 2025-2029 ..... 1
- Chapter 1. Vision and collaboration ..... 6
  - Section A. State agency administering programs ..... 6
  - Section B. Vision statement..... 7
  - Section C. Collaboration ..... 8
- Chapter 2. Assessment of current performance ..... 10
  - Section A. Child and family outcomes ..... 10
  - Section B. Systemic factors..... 15
- Chapter 3. Plan for enacting the state’s vision..... 13
  - Overview and rationale ..... 13
  - Goal 1. Prevention and preservation..... 14
    - Goal 1: Make it easier for families to get what they need, so we can prevent entry into the child welfare system and keep families together whenever possible..... 14
    - Goal 2. Workforce investment ..... 16
      - \*Help child welfare staff do better and feel more satisfied with their jobs by providing training, improving technology, and collaborating more across all programs and systems. (Enhance child welfare staff performance and job satisfaction through ongoing capacity-building, improvements to key administrative systems, and increased multidisciplinary collaboration)..... 16*
    - Goal 3. Service array..... 19
      - Enhance equitable access to quality, individualized services statewide through community-based partnerships and coordination with other federal programs..... 19
    - Section D. Staff training, technical assistance, and evaluation ..... 21
- Chapter 4. Services ..... 23
  - Section A. Child and family services continuum ..... 23
  - Section B. Service coordination ..... 26

Section C. Service description.....	27
Section D. Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services Program (IV-B, Subp. 1).....	27
Section E. Promoting safe and stable families (IV-B, Subp. 2).....	31
Section F. Monthly caseworker visits .....	35
Chapter 5. Consultation and coordination between states and Tribes.....	36
Section A. Consultation .....	36
Section B. Ongoing collaboration .....	38
Section C. Service arrangements .....	38
Section D. ICWA compliance .....	38
Section E. Chafee and Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program .....	40
Section F. Plan exchange .....	40
Chapter 6. Chafee Program.....	40
Section A. Agency administering Chafee.....	40
Section B. Program description and serving youth .....	41
Section C. Collaboration .....	45
Section D. Determining eligibility for benefits and services.....	48
Section E. Cooperation in national evaluations.....	50
Section F. Chafee training.....	50
Section G. Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) Program .....	51
Section H. Consultation with Tribes .....	53
Enclosures .....	54

---

# Chapter 1. Vision and collaboration

## Section A. State agency administering programs

The Minnesota Department of Human Services (department) plays a pivotal role in providing essential services to Minnesota's most vulnerable residents. Working with many others, including county and Tribal agencies and nonprofits, the department helps ensure that children and families, seniors, people with disabilities, marginalized populations and others meet their basic needs and have opportunities to reach their full potential.

While most human services in Minnesota are provided by county and Tribal partners, the department (at the direction of the governor and legislature) sets policies and directs payments for many of the services provided. As Minnesota's largest state agency, the department administers about one-third of the state budget.

The department administers, or supervises the administration of, all programs under Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act, Families First Prevention Services Act and the Social Services Block Grant program under Title XX of the Social Security Act, and this plan. The Child Safety and Permanency Division (CSP) is responsible for operation and administration of the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP). Organizational charts are [in development](#) for DCYF.

The state of Minnesota is working on a transition to create a new Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) which will include the Child Safety and Permanency Division of Children and Family Services. This new cabinet-level agency will be established in July 2024 and fully staffed by July 2025. Under the new DCYF (department) structure, the CSP Division will be its own Administration. Updated information is available on the [Minnesota Management and Budget Website](#).

The 2023 legislature included the governor's proposal to establish the new agency and funding for implementation in the Health and Human Services Omnibus bill signed into law. Authorizing language can be found in [2023 Minnesota Session Law, chapter 70](#) and a plain-language explanation of the statute can be found in the [DCYF Statutory Explainer document](#). The statute appropriates funds for an Implementation Office, established on July 1, 2023, and housed at Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB). This office works in partnership with state agencies and through the Governor's Children's Cabinet on planning and transition efforts to coordinate and plan for the creation of the new agency centered on our most precious resources: our children, youth, and families. As required in statute, the Implementation Office submitted a [transition report](#) to the Minnesota legislature on March 1, 2024, detailing engagement and planning efforts.

The law directs some programs currently run by the Minnesota Departments of Human Services, Education and Public Safety to come together to create the new Department of Children, Youth, and Families. Services will continue to be provided through current program structures in each department throughout the transition period. For more information about these services, please visit:

- [Department of Education Division of Early Learning](#)
- [Department of Health Help Me Connect](#)
- [Department of Human Services Children and Family Services](#)
- [Department of Human Services Office of Inspector General](#)
- [Department of Public Safety Office of Justice Programs](#)

Bringing together supports for families, including core programs serving children from infancy to adolescence, the Departments of Human Services, Education, Health, and Public Safety will transfer identified programs to DCYF by July 2025.

- May 24, 2023: Bill was signed into law by Governor Walz.
- July 1, 2023: The Implementation Office was established.
- July 1, 2024: The Department of Children, Youth, and Families will be established with a commissioner appointed by the governor. The following is a planning timeline for program transfer. Program transfers may be delayed or cancelled to prevent service disruption or ensure adequate infrastructure is in place for program success.
  - July 1, 2024: Identified programs from Children and Family Services at the Department of Human Services (DHS), Early Learning Services at the Department of Education (MDE), and some identified central operations functions transfer.
  - January 1, 2025: Help Me Connect from the Department of Health (MDH) transfers.
  - July 1, 2025: Remaining identified programs from the department's Office of Inspector General, the MDE after-school community learning grant, youth justice programs, the Office of Restorative Practices from the Department of Public Safety (DPS) and remaining central operations functions transfer.
- Once the transition period concludes, programs can still be considered for transfer as identified by the administration, legislature, and advocates.

## Section B. Vision statement

Mission and vision statements are in development for the new Department of Children, Youth, and Families.

The mission of the Minnesota Department of Human Services is, in partnership with many others, to help people meet their basic needs, so they can live in dignity and achieve their highest potential. The vision is to create a brighter future for Minnesota. According to the agency's [2023-2027 strategic plan](#), the following guiding principles direct the way the department approaches its work:

- Center and invest in diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and anti-racism.
- Be trustworthy and accountable.
- Listen with humility to grow authentic partnerships.
- Communicate with simplicity and cultural competence.
- Collaborate and innovate with Tribal Nations, counties and providers.
- Amplify community-led approaches.

- Subtract work and processes.
- Protect our planet.

In creating and implementing the new Department of Children, Youth, and Families, the state seeks to embrace opportunities to think differently and improve the effectiveness of services for children and families who need them most.

## **Section C. Collaboration**

### **Subsection 1. External engagement**

The department strives to ensure that the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP/plan) is a unified strategic plan for the entire Child and Safety Permanency (CSP) Administration, bringing together the work of multiple teams and focus areas across the child welfare continuum. To that end, staff collected input from CSP teams, community members, county agencies, Tribal agencies and other community partners.

In preparation for writing the CFSP, staff from the department held community conversations in St. Paul and Bemidji in April, May and June 2024. Staff also worked with the department's standing advisory councils, the Ombudsperson for Foster Youth and other community partners to distribute invitations broadly. Staff asked community members to share their perspectives on the child welfare system and what they would like to see included in the plan. These events included food and childcare as well as compensation for all community participants.

The event in St. Paul was held at the Wilder Foundation Center, a centrally located and community-based location with free parking and comfortable meeting space. Sixty-two adults attended; many brought children, as childcare was provided to reduce barriers to participation. Participants spoke passionately and shared their questions and ideas openly. A majority of those in attendance were part of the African American community.

Bemidji was chosen for the second event due to its close proximity to three American Indian Tribal Nations and its location in Greater Minnesota. Fifty-one adults attended this meeting; many brought children, as childcare was provided to reduce barriers to participation. Participants shared their experiences and suggestions freely. A majority of those in attendance were part of the American Indian community.

Information received at these in-person community engagement events was used to inform the CFSP strategies. Specifically, community members placed an emphasis on supporting families to prevent entry into the system (see Goal 1). They also expressed a need for more services, especially services geared toward specific languages and cultures in both urban and rural areas (see Goal 3). Information obtained through Child and Family Services Reviews case-related interviews with people with lived experience was also incorporated into the CFSP, particularly relating to Goal 3 around service array.

Going forward, the department will continue hosting community conversations in multiple locations across the state both in person and virtually. The department is building relationships with communities with the goal of co-creating initiatives and services alongside the communities most impacted by the child welfare system. Staff are building a web-based platform to collect feedback from community members unable to attend conversations or who prefer not to interact in person. This will allow for ongoing communications and closing feedback loops so that people with lived experience are kept informed and able to lead the work in the future.

The CFSP is a living document that will be amended and adjusted as new information from community is received and as relationships are continually strengthened.

## **Subsection 2. Court collaboration**

The department collaborates with court partners through the federally funded court improvement program, implemented in Minnesota as the Children’s Justice Initiative (CJI). Through effective collaboration, shared goals and activities continue to be developed to increase the safety, permanency and well-being of children and their families in the child welfare system and ensure coordination of services along the social services continuum. This substantial, ongoing and meaningful collaboration includes the following:

- Partnering with CJI on trainings to improve the time to permanency for children in foster care placement, including Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) Parent Attorney Core Skills and Emergency Protective Care Hearing training.
- Partnering with the CJI Advisory Committee, which meets quarterly, co-chaired by the commissioner of DCYF (designee) and the chief justice of the Supreme Court. Advisory committee members include the department’s Child Safety and Permanency Administration leadership. The CJI Advisory Committee sets priorities and directs annual activities.
- Participating in CJI regional trainings, which occur statewide every two years for local CJI teams. These trainings reach more than 1,000 participants and address priority areas in best practices in child welfare and the courts. In addition, every two years a fall conference brings together CJI teams in a central location.
- Partnering in preparing and conducting the Round 4 Child and Family Services Review (CFSR).
- Partnering in court improvement projects to improve outcomes for children and families receiving services from the child welfare system.

CSP and the State Court Administrator Office’s staff meet quarterly to continue collaborating, planning and implementing joint projects as well as planning for Round 4 of the CFSR. In addition, CSP staff collaborate closely with CJI staff on shared projects.



---

## Chapter 2. Assessment of current performance

Round 3 of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) in 2016 found Minnesota to be out of substantial conformity with all seven outcomes and six of the seven systemic factors. In response to the federal review, Minnesota developed a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to address all areas rated not in substantial conformity. Notable performance improvements were made and in August 2021, Minnesota received confirmation of successful completion of the PIP that resulted from the CFSR completed in 2016.

Following completion of the Round 3 PIP (May 2021), the department paused use of the Onsite Review Instrument to complete case reviews and engaged in efforts to increase the capacity of Minnesota's redesigned Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process. During this pause in the completion of CFSRs, the department used a variety of quantitative data measures (state, federal, Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) indicators and relative rate index) as well as qualitative data collected through a variety of processes including Systems Learning Reviews (SLR), Systems Learning Mapping (SLM), Systemic Critical Incident Reviews (SCIRs) and Screening Reviews to complete assessment of the state's performance. Additionally, department staff have completed a CFSR crosswalk, which aligns CFSR items with CQI indicators, relative rate index data points, and state and federal measures.

In preparation for Round 4 CFSRs, the department is completing Child and Family Service Reviews using the federal Onsite Review Instrument and data available through the Online Monitoring System. In November and December 2022, the department coordinated with Hennepin County to review 11 cases, including in-home and out-of-home care cases. The findings of those case reviews have been provided to Hennepin County's Continuous Quality Improvement team, which presented the findings to their governance team; they will then use the preliminary data to explore barriers and facilitators to achieving strengths ratings and improving overall outcomes. In April 2023, the department began completing Child and Family Service Reviews on a statewide level. The department uses a statewide random sample of 65 cases (40 out-of-home placements and 25 in-home). It will review 65 cases over six months, beginning in April and October each year. The department is currently engaged in planning and coordinating all areas related to the Round 4 CFSRs, which includes case reviews. The state is well-positioned to conduct a State-Led Review Process for Round 4 and future rounds.

### Section A. Child and family outcomes

#### Subsection 1. Safety outcomes 1-2

##### **Safety outcome 1. Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.**

Timeliness: Timeliness to first face-to-face contact with a child and their family following a child maltreatment report is an important safety measure. The state tracks this timeliness measure using administrative data. For the period under review, the state has seen a small decline in the percentage of

cases meeting statutory timeframes for timeliness to first face-to-face contact. In 2019, the state met these timeframes for 88.1% of cases. In 2022, 85.0% of cases met timeframes. In 2023, the state saw 86.2% of these cases met timeframes. Generally, performance has been stable since 2018 following a period of notable increase (up from 74.7% in 2013). Timeliness is calculated as a function of the severity of the allegations being responded to. The state shows the lowest performance on the 24-hour timeframes, which were at 82.5% in 2023. The state's performance, which includes requirements to see around 30,000+ unique instances of child reports, is heavily influenced by Hennepin County, the largest county in the state. This agency has made notable improvements since 2013 and has maintained steady performance in the last 5 years, largely in line with state performance.

Minnesota's performance was 100% for Item 1 (Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment) for cases reviewed in 2021 (period under review beginning in January and April 2020). Performance for cases reviewed in April 2023 through March 2024 (period under review beginning April 2022) averaged 82%, which is consistent with performance observed through administrative data. Delays noted in cases reviewed included presumed safety when children were removed from an alleged offender and inability to locate children within statutorily required timelines.

### **Safety outcome 2. Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.**

Reentry into foster care: Reentry of a child into foster care follows a child once they have discharged from foster care for 12 months to see if they return to care. The state tracks this using administrative data, and the information is based on local calculations based on the Round 3 CFSR criteria. For the period under review, the state has seen notable improvement (i.e., a decrease) in reentry rates. Minnesota's local calculations of this measure showed 15.5% of eligible cases returned to care in 2019 and improved to 11.9% of cases in 2023. This measure has fluctuated substantially, particularly in the year following the COVID pandemic's onset (2021). Following a decline in the number of reports received (most notably due to school reporters not making as many reports), the state's placement rates also fell. Performance dipped to 12.8% in 2021, rebounded to 14.9% in 2022 and then continued to decline in the most recent full performance year. Reentry is impacted by the kinds of cases included in Minnesota's child welfare system; older children, more often involved in mental health-related cases and/or correctional cases, show higher rates of reentry. There are currently several work groups across separate divisions within the state working to disentangle what is happening with state reentry performance, with a goal of reducing reinvolvement.

Minnesota performance for Item 2 (Services to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry into Foster Care) has consistently rated at 100% for cases reviewed in 2021 and continues through cases reviewed in 2024. As indicated above, Minnesota is completing extensive exploration of reentry into foster care due to Minnesota's continued inability to meet the national performance for this federal data indicator even though improvements have been noted.

Minnesota's performance for Item 3 (Risk and Safety Assessment and Management) has steadily declined since completion of case reviews in 2021, reaching as high as 90% strengths in 2021 and averaging 75% strengths since April 2023. Additional efforts were needed to see all children in the home

at a frequency and location that allowed the caseworker an opportunity to complete comprehensive safety and risk assessments. A barrier identified included policy guidance related to practice for children's mental health, juvenile justice, truancy, Parent Support Outreach Program and other non-child protection or placement cases and expectations for seeing all children in the family and/or any of the children in the family depending on services provided.

**Maltreatment recurrence:** Maltreatment recurrence examines instances of determined maltreatment following a prior instance of determined maltreatment within the last 12 months. The state tracks this using administrative data; the information is based on the local calculations based on the Round 3 CFSR criteria. For the period under review, the state has seen a modest decline (i.e., improvement) in overall recurrence of maltreatment, with 6.2% of cases showing recurrence in 2019 compared to 5.6% of cases showing recurrence in 2023. Overall, the state has seen declines in overall maltreatment reporting and a more prominent decline in the actual number of initially determined maltreatment cases (i.e., there were 7,500 determined cases in 2019 and 5,100 in 2023).

**Maltreatment while in foster care:** Maltreatment in foster care examines the rate at which children are the subjects of abuse or neglect while they are removed from their home and under county or Tribal supervision. The state tracks this using administrative data, and the information is based on the local calculations based on the Round 3 CFSR criteria. For the period under review, the state has seen a modest increase (i.e., worsening) on this measure, except for 2020, which is attributed to the COVID pandemic onset. Maltreatment in foster care occurred at a rate of 7.6 instances of maltreatment per 100,000 days spent in care in 2019, and gradually increased to 8.7 in 2023. Of note is the fact that the raw numbers of maltreatment cases occurring while in care has been declining, but so has the overall number of days children are spending in foster care in the state. Decreases in out-of-home care involvement are more substantial and have resulted in worsening performance.

## **Subsection 2. Permanency outcomes 1-2**

### **Permanency outcome 1. Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.**

**Stability in foster care:** This measure examines the rate of foster care placement moves during a continuous period a child spends away from home. The state tracks this using administrative data and the information is based on the local calculations based on the Round 3 CFSR criteria. For the period under review, the state has seen modest improvement in this measure, despite overall declines in the raw number of days children are spending in care. The rate of placement moves was 3.9 moves per 1,000 days in care in 2019 and has declined to 3.5 moves in 2023.

Minnesota's performance for Item 4 (Stability of Foster Care Placement) has decreased since completion of case reviews in 2021, declining from 96% to an average of 83%. Cases rated an area needing improvement because of unplanned placement disruptions and unstable placement settings. High needs of children and the inability of foster parents to provide care for children consistently impact outcomes for this item.

Minnesota's performance for Item 5 (Permanency Goal for Child) has stayed stable since 2021, maintaining about 90% strengths ratings for all cases. Practices that support strengths ratings include engaging parents and families in permanency planning, documenting permanency goals in case plans and updating goals in a timely manner. There does not seem to be patterns emerging when cases rate an area needing improvement but note outliers including goals that did not meet child's needs, delays in identifying goals and not filing a termination of parental rights petition within required timelines.

**Permanency for enterers:** Permanency, an important aspect of case outcomes, is measured by examining how quickly certain cohorts of children achieve one of several permanency outcomes upon discharging from foster care. This measure focuses on new cases (i.e., enterers), and looks to see whether they have achieved a permanency outcome within 12 months of the case beginning. The state tracks this using administrative data and the information is based on the local calculations based on the Round 3 CFSR criteria. For the period under review, the state has seen a slight decline (i.e., worsening) in the percentage of new enterers achieving a permanency outcome within 12 months. Permanency was achieved by 49.8% of children in 2019 and by 47.0% of children in 2023. The decline has been small and gradual, apart from a dip during 2020, which is attributed to the COVID pandemic onset. There has been a notable shift in overall rates of out-of-home care cases moving to adoption and guardianship (transfer of permanent legal and physical custody, or TPLPC) instead of reunification. However, this seems to have had a greater impact on the subsequent permanency measures.

**Permanency for those in care between 12-23 months:** This measure examines cases that are ongoing at the start of the calendar year and specifies the rate at which those cases achieve a permanency outcome by the end of the year. The state tracks this using administrative data, and the information is based on the local calculations based on the Round 3 CFSR criteria. For the period under review, the state has seen general improvement in the measure, with 55.5% of cases achieving a permanency outcome within the time frames in 2019, compared to 58.3% in 2023. Hennepin County again plays a substantial role in determining overall state performance. The agency has increased performance on this measure from 48.9% in 2019 to 64.3% in 2023. Ramsey County, the second biggest county in the state, has also seen notable increases on this measure, moving from 43.8% in 2019 to 52.1% in 2023.

**Permanency for those in care 24 months or longer:** This measure examines cases that are ongoing at the start of the calendar year and specifies the rate at which those cases achieve a permanency outcome by the end of the year. The state tracks this using administrative data and the information is based on the local calculations based on the Round 3 CFSR criteria. For the period under review, the state has seen substantial improvement. The rate of these cases achieving permanency within 12 months increased from 33.4% in 2019 to 40.6% in 2023. As noted above, an observed shift in the overall rates of reunification, adoption and guardianship increased eligible cases to almost 2,300 in performance year 2020, with subsequent declines in 2021-2023 as statewide foster care involvement has fallen.

Minnesota's performance for Item 6 (Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement) was 78% for cases reviewed in 2021 and averaged 67% in 2023/2024. As indicated above, Minnesota consistently performs well in each of the three federal data indicators related to permanency. Further analysis of case review data is needed to better understand which cases are impacting outcomes for this item.

This measure is the percentage of days that children who are placed in family foster care settings are with relatives. The state tracks this using administrative data. For the period under review, the state has seen slight increases in the rates of relative placement, with 60.9% percent of days spent with relatives in 2019 to 62.8% of days in 2023. Performance on this measure has been steady after a sharp increase in prior periods (i.e., rates of relative care were around 35.8% in 2013).

### **Permanency outcome 2. The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.**

Minnesota's performance has remained consistently high for completed case reviews and continues to range from 90%-100% between 2021-2024 for items 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 (Placement with Siblings, Visiting with Parents and Siblings in Foster Care, Preserving Connections, Relative Placement, Relationship of Child in Care with Parents, Relative Placement in Foster Care). This highlights the state's commitment to maintaining family and community connections for children.

### **Subsection 3. Well-being outcomes 1-3**

#### **Well-being 1. Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.**

Minnesota has maintained a high performance for Items 12a-12c (Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents) with 90-100% for cases reviewed in 2021 and 2023, and a drop in 2024 to 74% and 86% on 12b and 12c, respectively. Additional analysis of these items will be completed as part of Minnesota's Round 4 Child and Family Service Review and reported in the Statewide Assessment, to be submitted in August 2024. Minnesota's performance for Item 13 (Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning) has consistently rated between 85%-95% since 2021.

Caseworker visits for children in foster care: This measure focuses on the completion of monthly visits with children who are placed in foster care (using data from the statewide information system (SSIS)). The state tracks this using administrative data. For the period under review, the state has seen modest increases, with the rate of monthly completed visits at 83.4% in 2019 increasing to 87.9% in 2023. A minor dip occurred in 2020, which is attributed to the COVID pandemic onset. Historically, there have not been large disparities by race or age on this measure, and larger and more rural agencies perform worse, likely due to increased travel distance and time.

Minnesota's performance for Items 14 (Caseworker Visits with Child) has declined since case reviews were completed in 2021. Ratings at that time for Item 14 were at 90% and averaged 76% in 2023/2024. Performance for Item 15 (Caseworker Visits with Parents) continues to be inconsistent, ranging from an average of 72% in 2021 to an average of 79% in 2023/2024.

#### **Well-being outcomes 2 and 3. Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs (outcome 2) and adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs (outcome 3).**

Minnesota has maintained high performance for Items 16, 17 and 18 (Educational Needs of the Child, Physical Health of the Child, Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child). Since closing out the Round 3 PIP in

2021, strengths ratings in 2023 and 2024 have ranged from 90%-100% for each of these items.

## **Section B. Systemic factors**

### **Subsection 1. Information system**

The state continues to make significant investment and improvements in its comprehensive child welfare information system, known as the Social Service Information System (SSIS). Data being reviewed as part of the CFSR round four process suggest that there is a very high rate of compliance (over 95%) with the required components of this systemic factor. Over the next five years, the state will work to modernize and simplify SSIS to minimize administrative burden on workers, maximize consistency and enhance data integrity (see CFSP Chapter 3 Section C of this document). Additional detailed information on this systemic factor will be available in the CFSR Statewide Assessment (Systemic Factor 1), which is due August 2024 and will be posted on the [Children's Bureau Round 4 website](#).

### **Subsection 2. Case review system**

Minnesota's Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) court case review system is a vital component of the state's efforts to safeguard the welfare of its most vulnerable children. The CHIPS system is designed to address situations where children are deemed to need protection or services due to various factors such as abuse, neglect or other forms of maltreatment. CHIPS proceedings typically begin when concerns arise about a child's safety or well-being. This can occur through reports made to child protection agencies, law enforcement, educators or healthcare professionals. If these reports allege abuse, neglect or endangerment, the child welfare system may intervene to ensure the child's safety. Once a child is identified as needing protection or services, the case is brought before the juvenile court system. A CHIPS petition is filed, outlining the reasons why the child is believed to need intervention. The court then schedules hearings to review the case and make determinations regarding the child's placement, services and long-term plan.

Minnesota's CHIPS court case review system operates on a multidisciplinary basis, involving various professionals such as social workers, attorneys, judges and representatives from other relevant agencies. Each party plays a distinct role in assessing the child's situation, advocating for their best interests and implementing necessary interventions. Central to the CHIPS court proceedings is the consideration of the child's best interests. The court evaluates factors such as the child's safety, stability and emotional well-being when making decisions about placement, services and permanency planning. Efforts are made to ensure that the child's voice is heard, and their needs are prioritized throughout the

process. Minnesota's CHIPS system emphasizes cultural competence and sensitivity in its approach to serving diverse populations. Efforts are made to respect and honor the cultural backgrounds, values and traditions of the children and families involved, recognizing the importance of maintaining connections to their cultural heritage. CHIPS court proceedings involve ongoing oversight and review to monitor the progress of the case and ensure that the child's needs are being met effectively. Regular hearings are scheduled to assess the status of the case, address any emerging concerns, and adjust the case plan as needed.

In preparation for Round 4 Child and Family Service reviews a comprehensive analysis of systemic items 20-24 was completed. Item 20: Written Case Plan: Minnesota's case review system ensures that each child has a written case plan that is developed jointly with the child and child's parent(s) and include required provisions. Data collected through Child and Family Service Reviews completed in June 2020 – May 2021 and April 2023 - March 2024 shows that 86% - 98% of children, mothers, and fathers are consistently engaged in case planning. Administrative data collected in the Social Service Information System (SSIS) show that approximately 85% of open cases has a written case plan in effect within 60 days of entering care. Item 21: Periodic Reviews: Minnesota's court system can reliably track the number of children who have a periodic review every six months. The data below was retrieved from the Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS) and show from 2021 to 2023 80-87% of children had a periodic review completed at least every six months. Case reviews completed through Child and Family Service Reviews find that most periodic reviews are completed every 90 days as statutorily required. Item 22: Permanency Hearings: Minnesota's admit-deny hearing on the permanency petition is what qualifies a case as having met the permanency hearing requirement as stated above. It should be noted, however, there is disparity between the federal requirement of a "permanency hearing" and Minnesota's "permanency hearing." Minnesota also holds a "permanency progress review hearing," which may more closely resemble the federal expectation; however, Minnesota courts must hold that hearing within six months, far ahead of the federal expectation. The department gathered data regarding how many Permanency Progress Reviews were held by the 12-month mark (the federal expectation) to report on this measure. With respect to yearly subsequent permanency hearings. Item 23: Termination of Parental Rights: a sample of cases reviewed through Child and Family Services Reviews show that on average 88% the agency filed or joined in a termination of parental rights petition or there was an exception to filing a petition noted. Minnesota does not have a reliable way to track all key elements administratively to monitor this item. Children's placements are documented in the department's Social Service Information System and the Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS) but there are inconsistencies in how that data is entered into each system and the state is unable to reconcile those differences. Court actions are manually entered into the Social Service Information System often by the caseworker and in some circumstances by support staff, often case reviewers do not find that data reliable in determining when petitions are filed and rely on the record from MNCIS. Item 24: Notice of Hearings and Reviews to Caregivers: Minnesota believes the actual occurrence of notice to foster parent along with their right to be heard is much higher than numbers indicate, but the current method of entry into our court system database will not capture this adequately. Additionally, information collected from foster parent focus groups completed in May 2024 indicated there are gaps in foster parents receiving notice and inconsistent practice in a foster parents' right to be heard during hearings. Additional detailed information on this systemic factor will be available in the CFSR Statewide Assessment (Systemic Factor 2), which is due August 2024 and will be posted on the [Children's Bureau Round 4 website](#).

### **Subsection 3. Quality assurance system**

The department continues to partner with the Center for States to build and strengthen areas within the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) redesigned process. Staff continues to identify, develop and pilot

processes for each component of the redesigned system.

### 25.3 Minnesota's child welfare Continuous Quality Improvement process:

This image represents the new CQI process. It shows all six phases and how they fit together. There are essential details contained within each phase that are not shown in this graphic, but they will be described in the corresponding manuals.

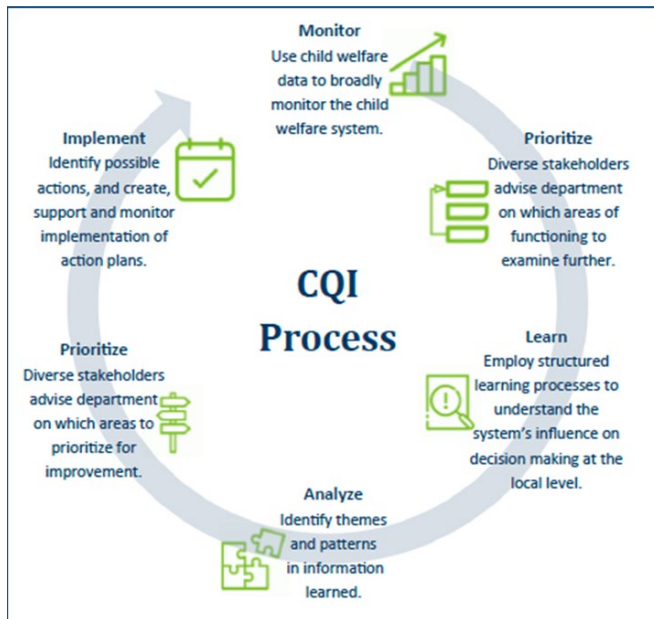


Figure 25.3 MN CQI Process

#### 25.3.1 Monitoring phase

Although the CQI process is cyclical, the monitoring phase can be thought of as the starting point or the kickoff for CQI workflow. Generally, data and information are to be periodically reviewed, analyzed and discussed with Child Safety and Permanency staff and advisory partners to identify areas that may need further investigation. This initial phase includes a set of defined CQI data indicators, as well as other quantitative and qualitative sources of information that may help CQI Section staff continually monitor the status of the child welfare system in Minnesota. This includes administrative data entered by counties and Tribes into the Social Service Information System (SSIS), regular and/or ad hoc surveys (e.g., those sent to foster families or providers), information originating from communication between units or between state employees and local child welfare agencies, as well as inquiries from outside entities, internal leadership, media outlets, etc. The CQI Section considers a wide variety of data and information. The goal is to organize, synthesize and package this information so that it is meaningful for ongoing understanding of the child welfare system.

#### 25.3.2 Learning phase

Minnesota's Quality Improvement System collects quantitative data through several review processes, the following are completed daily:

- **Child mortality reviews:** Department staff conducts Systemic Critical Incident Reviews (SCIRs) of all fatalities and near fatalities due to maltreatment, in addition to those occurring in licensed facilities (e.g., foster care). The review process utilizes Safety Science practices and principles, focusing on



human factors, system influences and accountability. A team comprised of department and local agency supervisory staff completes case reviews. A regionally based mapping team that includes local agency representatives from across the region, and other system stakeholders, map learning points identified in a review.

- **Screening reviews:** Since 2015, the department has had a process through which local agency screening decisions on reports of child maltreatment are reviewed. Decisions to screen in or screen out reports of maltreatment are reviewed by department staff. When decisions do not appear to meet statutory criteria, department staff consults with local agencies regarding a decision. Approximately 6% of each agency's screened-in and screened-out maltreatment reports are reviewed annually.
- **Child and Family Services reviews:** The department completes Child and Family Service Reviews using the federal Onsite Review Instrument and data available through the Online Monitoring System. In April 2023, the department began completing Child and Family Service Reviews in partnership with statewide peer reviewers using a statewide random sample of 65 cases (40 out-of-home placements and 25 in-home). Sixty-five cases are reviewed over six months, beginning in April and October each year. Through this process, department staff collect information through case-related interviews and case file reviews. Children, youth, parents, foster parents, caseworkers and other participants are provided an overview of the CFSR process and what the information they provide will be used for. Following each case review, department staff complete the Onsite Review Instrument. Several levels of Quality Assurance are completed for each case. Finalized instruments are provided to agency leadership and staff during a debriefing. This debriefing is an opportunity to discuss outcomes of each case review with staff and leadership, answer questions about ratings and discuss interventions for areas needing improvement. Five county agencies requested access to the CFSR Online Monitoring System and have been trained on the OSRI. These agencies use the CFSR review process for internal case reviews. Department staff provided the initial training and ongoing technical assistance as needed for these agencies.

Information collected through these review processes is used to identify opportunities for additional learning and provide technical assistance to agencies, monitor progress of program improvement efforts and identify themes and systemic influences affecting achievement goals.

As part of the departments CQI process, qualitative data is collected from numerous sources to uncover human factors and systemic influences on decision-making. Narrative data is collected from several sources, processed and uploaded to a qualitative coding software where it is coded, categorized and synthesized into themes. Those results are processed into considerations and weighed with other information for greater interpretation and use further into the CQI cycle.

### **25.3.3 Implementation phase**

The final phase of Minnesota's CQI redesign is development of meaningful, equity-driven systems change to improve child welfare outcomes in Minnesota by collaborating with diverse partners to develop, implement and monitor strengths-based, data-informed strategies. This phase synthesizes and adapts equity-driven, evidence-informed approaches to organizational change, person-centered change and process improvement, as depicted below and referenced throughout this manual. By drawing from a diverse, multidisciplinary set of theoretical frameworks, tools and professional networks, the implementation phase facilitates change in an innovative, strategic and sustainable way.

## 25.4 Additional CQI administration-wide teams

- **CQI Champions:**
  - CQI Champions Team is comprised of professionals who represent each unit within the Child Safety and Permanency (CSP) Administration. The team originated early in the development of Minnesota's CQI process to assist in learning about the continuous quality improvement and make adaptations to the design of the department's CQI process. The team has transformed as CSP needs have evolved over time. Currently this team supports CQI efforts across the CSP Administration and does so with the intention to increase collaboration across CSP units by having a designee representing each CSP unit on this team. There is a shared enthusiasm for CQI efforts that inspires this team, and through knowledge and information sharing (updates and examples of work being done by all units in CSP) at CQI Champion meetings, representatives bring information learned back to their respective teams to deepen enthusiasm within their own work areas about CQI and make connections around shared work, as well as opportunities for increased efficiency and effectiveness through partnering in the work.
  - This team seeks to establish consistent language as an administration around change and learning to improve efforts by deepening their understanding of the CQI process. This team uses information sharing, collaborative planning, administrative alignment, innovation, increased efficiency and fidelity to support each other's work, decrease redundancies and promote CQI efforts in each unit.
  - Individual program areas provide service delivery support to counties and Tribes. This team is motivated to produce better outcomes for children and families, as well as county/Tribal partners.
- **CQI Equity Team:** The CQI Equity Team is comprised of eight staff from across the Child Safety and Permanency Administration. Its role is to improve equitable outcomes for the children and families served by promoting the equity components embedded in the CQI framework. It also conducts reviews as needed to ensure the framework is working as intended. This team is committed to advancing equity by eliminating disparities based on race, ethnicity, age, abilities, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and intersecting identities.

## 25.5 Current CQI projects

- The sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE) project explores disparities for LGBTQ+ children in foster care and how to complete data entry for these children to consistently track outcomes.
- The Parent Support Outreach Program (PSOP) project will evaluate outcomes for families receiving the service.
- The Educational Training Vouchers (ETV) project aims to better understand the barriers to youth using the funds.
- The Court Improvement Project (CIP) is completing problem exploration related to reentry of African American youth into out-of-home placement.
- The Social Service Information System (SSIS) is asking for feedback from local agencies using the system

to identify pain points within the system to improve efficiencies for front-line staff.

- Implementation, evaluation and fidelity monitoring is underway for two prevention services related to the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), including Parents as Teachers and Motivational Interviewing.
- The Whole Family Systems project began in 2019. The Minnesota Department of Human Services issued Whole Family Systems Grants, totaling \$17.2 million over five years, to eight organizations throughout the state and to the Future Services Institute to uncover and address the systemic influences related to racial, geographic and economic inequities, and to support coordination across the programs and systems that serve children and families. CQI staff support the work by providing expertise in development of theories of change, logic models, development of implementation plans, and evaluation of the work completed.

## **25.6 Community engagement**

The CQI team is engaged in community outreach efforts to include voices of people with lived experiences into all areas of the CQI process. In preparation for the Child and Family Services Plan (five-year plan) and the Child and Family Services Review Statewide Assessment, the CQI team hosted two community engagement events (one in the metro area and one in greater Minnesota) to harvest ideas related to development of the department's five-year plan and statewide assessment. These engagement events provided families the opportunity to share their experiences with the child welfare system as well as hopes for changes that would improve their lives and lives within their community.

Focus groups completed in May 2024 provided additional insight into Minnesota's Quality Assurance System. Caseworkers mostly felt that data were more useful for supervisors and directors than for their positions. Foster parents indicated that they generally do not look at systemic data. County and tribal directors said they use systemic data for many things including identifying trends and determining staffing levels. They did note that it is harder to get data now than it used to be – that SSIS used to be more user-friendly, and the data was more useful before some changes were made in 2018 or 2019.

## **25.7 CQI values**

Shift from a culture of individual blame to one of system accountability.

Seek to understand, without judgment and regardless of outcome.

Consider the context in which decisions are made at the local level, recognizing that people make decisions that make sense to them at the time.

Consider the systemic contribution to decisions.

Acknowledge compliance as a starting point for further learning.

Incorporate diverse perspectives and experiences in learning about the system.

Utilize the skills and knowledge of diverse points of view and experiences, including from front line child welfare workers, local leaders, child welfare partners, communities, families, and youth.

Use information learned about the system to proactively make improvements and resist pressure to make quick fixes.

Build and maintain trusting relationships with partners and stakeholders.

Be transparent about what is learned regarding the system, how it was learned and what is being done to make improvements.

### **25.8 Department oversight**

In addition to the CQI team, there is staff assigned to quality assurance efforts throughout each of the business areas including: African American Well-being Unit, American Indian Child Wellbeing Unit, Foster Care, Permanency, Adoption, Safety and Prevention. Staff from those teams complete both quantitative and qualitative review of data including development and monitoring of administrative data using Tableau dashboards and case review processes. Staff provide consultation, technical assistance, policy guidance and updates to best practices guides to local agencies and community partners as needed.

One example is the American Indian Well-being Unit's well-established process for ensuring compliance to the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)/Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA) standards across the state. The 2017 Minnesota Legislature authorized additional out-of-home placement aid funding to local social service agencies and Tribes (Minnesota Statutes 477A.0126) to offset the cost of foster care for Indian children. This aid is based on performance with the implementation of both the federal and state requirements impacting American Indian children. In consultation with counties, Tribes and Children's Justice Initiative staff, the department developed a system to review county agency compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA).

Each year from February to June, department staff conducts case file reviews involving American Indian children under county jurisdiction in foster care based on data entered the Social Service Information System (SSIS) by county agencies. Randomly selected cases are pulled based on the following criteria: Child is under age 18, is an Indian child and foster care payments were made in the previous calendar year of a review. The federal and state requirements reviewed are documentation of:

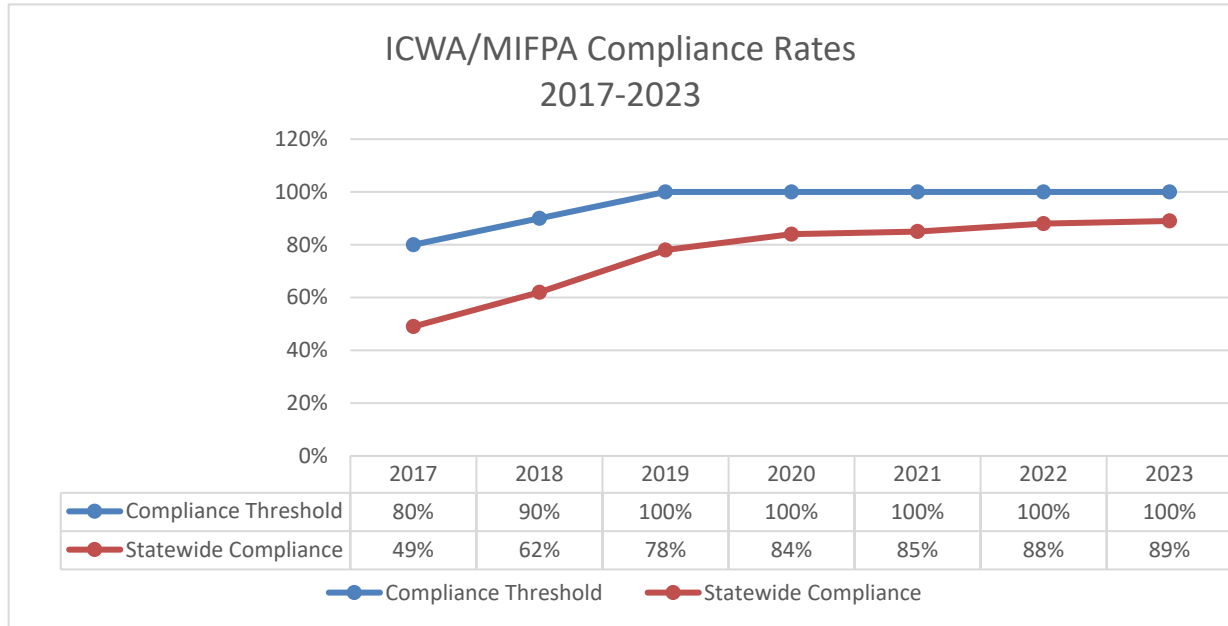
1. Inquiry of Tribal affiliation/heritage
2. MIFPA notification
3. ICWA notification
4. Active efforts
5. Due diligence in following placement preferences, and
6. Due diligence in finding a qualified expert witness.

By July 1, department staff certify to the Department of Revenue counties that are compliant and non-compliant. Counties out of compliance for two consecutive years are subject to a reduction of 50% in the proportionate share of aid that would have been provided to counties.

Aid amounts are paid directly to individual counties and Tribes. The total amount of aid available is \$5 million. For Tribes, the aid is 5% of the reimbursement amount received from the federal government for out-of-home placement costs or \$200,000, whichever is greater. For counties, the aid is a proportional share of the remaining aid based on county out-of-home placement costs. Counties that are part of a multi-county agency are responsible for allocating the appropriate funds to the agency once the funds are received. The aid is paid to eligible Tribes and counties the year following certification. The first half

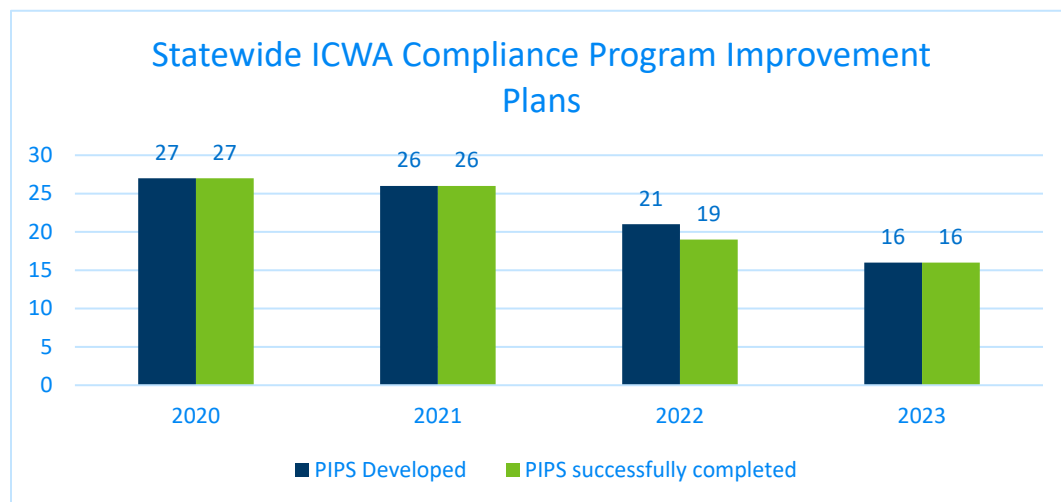
payment is made on July 20 and the second half payment is made on Dec. 26.

Review outcomes show an increase in compliance with ICWA and MIFPA. Since completion of the 2018 base line case review, Minnesota had a statewide increase in compliance as illustrated below (source: Tableau Server – ICWA/MIFPA compliance reviews 2017-2023).



**Figure 25.8a ICWA/MIFPA Compliance Rates**

Communication is provided to county agencies about their specific outcomes through a data dashboard; department staff also reach out to county agencies to collaborate on Program Improvement Plans (PIPs) to support how to address specific provisions found out of compliance. Department staff strongly encourage county agencies to invite Tribal representatives, as they work closely in the development of PIPs with the department and are offered ICWA/MIFPA compliance training. The image below shows the rate of successfully completed Program Improvement Plans (PIPs) throughout the state since 2020.



**Figure 25.8b Statewide ICWA Compliance PIP**

## 25.9 Additional continuous quality improvement efforts

Continuous quality improvement efforts around Minnesota’s case management system, including children’s mental health targeted case management services, have been underway statewide as far back as 1991, when the first legislative report on such efforts was submitted by the department ([Case Management Redesign Background Document](#)). Extensive community engagement and equity analyses have occurred and will continue to take place ([Case Management Redesign Overview](#)). Ongoing redesign initiatives include a focus on the development of a statewide system to standardize case management provider standards, such as training. This work is ongoing.

Minnesota’s human services delivery system provides programs and services to meet the basic health, welfare and safety needs of all Minnesotans, particularly people with low incomes, children, people with disabilities and the elderly. Counties, Tribal governments and lead agencies deliver these services in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Human Services. In 2013, the state Legislature authorized the department’s commissioner to implement a Human Services Performance Management System for [essential human services](#), which includes performance measures and thresholds. Three of the performance measures and thresholds used by the Human Services Performance Management System are child welfare data indicators including:

Of all children who were victims of a substantiated maltreatment report during a 12-month reporting period, the percent who were not victims of another substantiated maltreatment report within 12 months of their initial report.

Of all children who enter foster care in a 12-month period, the percent who are discharged to permanency within 12 months of entering foster care. (Includes discharges from foster care to reunification with the child’s parents or primary caregivers, living with a relative, guardianship or adoption.)

Of all days those children spent in family foster care settings during a 12-month reporting period, the percentage of days spent with a relative.

The department partners with the Human Services Performance Management System<sup>1</sup> in relation to the three child welfare indicators by providing data, program expertise, development and review of Program Improvement Plans, and support to agencies in implementing strategies to improve outcomes. Annual reports providing detailed information on the work of the Human Services Performance Management System can be found [here](#).

In January 2022, the department and the [Governor’s Children’s Cabinet](#) co-hosted a four-day summit on children’s mental health and sought public engagement around continuous quality improvement of children’s mental health services and programs. Summary reports and progress reports are available on the [department’s website](#). Resulting reform efforts are ongoing. Plans are underway to build a campaign to elicit buy-in for a framework that helps Minnesota deliver more individualized, culturally responsive behavioral health services for youth.

Minnesota’s Quality Assurance System strengths are related to learning processes, data analytics and systemic analysis. The use of Tableau Server has increased the department’s ability to disaggregate data in multiple ways providing the ability to better understand trends and patterns occurring across the state. CQI coding using NVivo<sup>2</sup> provides the CQI team the ability to analyze data from interviews, surveys, case

---

<sup>1</sup> [Human Services Performance Management System](#)

<sup>2</sup> NVivo is software developed for qualitative data analysis. NVivo allows qualitative researchers to organize, analyze and visualize their data, finding the patterns it contains.

notes, web pages and journal articles.

Areas identified for improvement include increased engagement efforts with community partners. The department is in the early stages of building relationships; additional strategies needed to enhance this area include increased evaluation of CQI processes, engagement and feedback mechanisms. A centralized system for storing information learned through each of the department's QA/CQI processes will allow for increased understanding of what systemic influences are having the largest impact on outcomes.

The CQI team continues to pilot projects and provide support to other business areas within the Administration. Active projects include:

- Sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE) to explore disparities for LGBTQ+ children in foster care and how to complete data entry for these children to consistently track outcomes
- Parent Support Outreach Program (PSOP) project to evaluate outcomes for families receiving the service
- Educational and Training Vouchers (ETV) project to better understand the barriers to youth using the funds
- Court Improvement Project (CIP) is completing problem exploration related to re-entry of African American youth into out of home placement
- Social Service Information System (SSIS) is asking for feedback from local agencies using the system to identify pain points within the system to improve efficiencies for front line staff.

The CQI team is engaged in community outreach efforts to include voices of people with lived experience into all areas of the CQI process. In preparation for this plan and for the CFSR statewide assessment, the CQI team hosted two community engagement events; one in the metro area and one in greater Minnesota. These engagement events provided families the opportunity to share their experiences with the child welfare system and hopes for changes that would improve their lives and those within their community. The CQI team plans to host ongoing community engagement events and activities to continually inform and improve the Administration's work and priorities.

#### **Subsection 4. Staff training**

This systemic factor is addressed extensively in the CFSP Targeted Plan for Staff Training (attachment accompanying the CFSP). Minnesota has a robust statewide training system for onboarding new child protection workers in accordance with statutory requirements. Data indicate a high level of compliance (average 93% for 2021-2023) and high ratings of satisfaction (median 4 stars out of 5 for 2021-2023) with the initial staff training for child protection workers. Compliance and satisfaction data are similar for ongoing training of child protection workers as they are of initial training for child protection workers. However, for other child welfare staff, as defined above (e.g., children's mental health workers and juvenile correctional workers), Minnesota does not have a statewide training system that provides and tracks initial or ongoing training. This is an area for ongoing development. Additional information on this systemic factor will be available in the CFSR Statewide Assessment (Systemic Factor 4), which is due August 2024 and will be posted on the [Children's Bureau Round 4 website](#). The state will be focusing on workforce investment, including staff training, over the next five years (see CFSP Chapter 3 Section B of this document). Depending on federal rating of state performance, additional activities around initial staff training, ongoing staff training, and/or foster/adoptive parent training may be included in the CSFR PIP, which is due August 2025.

## **Subsection 5. Service array**

Minnesota continues to improve the availability and accessibility statewide of services that assess, address and support families and children. The state continues to address challenges in geographic, cultural and linguistic accessibility to services, especially in greater Minnesota. The state will be focusing on enhancing service array over the next five years (see CFSP Chapter 3 Section C of this document). Additional detailed information on this systemic factor will be available in the CFSR Statewide Assessment (Systemic Factor 5), which is due August 2024 and will be posted on the [Children's Bureau Round 4 website](#). Depending on federal rating of state performance, additional activities around service array and individualization may be included in the CSFR PIP, which is due August 2025.

## **Subsection 6. Agency responsiveness to community**

This systemic factor is addressed throughout the CFSP, particularly in *Chapters 1, 4, and 5* of this document. The state will continue hosting ongoing community engagement activities, cultivating trust-based relationship with community and using feedback to improve processes, policies and programs. Additional detailed information on this systemic factor will be available in the CFSR Statewide Assessment (Systemic Factor 6), which is due August 2024 and will be posted on the [Children's Bureau Round 4 website](#). Depending on federal rating of state performance, additional activities around state engagement and consultation with stakeholders, in addition to coordination across federally funded services, may be included in the CSFR PIP, which is due August 2025.

## **Subsection 7. Foster/adoptive parent licensing, recruitment and retention**

Minnesota has a robust system and high standards for licensing family child foster care homes and child-caring institutions. The state monitors compliance through regular review of public (county) licensing agencies, private licensing agencies and residential license holders (146 reviews completed 2021-2023), and enforces compliance through licensing sanctions (297 sanctions issued 2021-2023). A majority (85%) of foster parents completed the licensing process within 12 months of applying and nearly all (95%) foster parents stated they understood the health and safety requirements for licensure. In December 2023, the department published a 209-page [Child and Foster Care Licensing Guidelines](#) to guide, clarify, and support consistency and quality of child foster care licensing practice statewide. Please see the CFSP Targeted Plan for Recruitment (attachment accompanying the CFSP) for extensive information around recruitment and retention. Additional detailed information on this systemic factor will be available in the CFSR Statewide Assessment (Systemic Factor 7), which is due August 2024 and will be posted on the [Children's Bureau Round 4 website](#).

Depending on federal rating of state performance, additional activities may be included in the CSFR PIP, which is due August 2025. As noted in CFSP Chapter 1 of this document, the transition from the Department of Human Services to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families will impact multiple service areas, including state staff who oversee licensing functions. Child foster care licensing staff are scheduled to transition from the Department of Human Services to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families in July 2025. However, state staff who oversee the CFSP Targeted Plan for Recruitment will transfer to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families in July 2024. Over the next five years, ongoing coordination efforts at the state level will be crucial to ensure continued excellence in statewide oversight, support and execution of licensing functions, including applying licensing standards



equally, complying with criminal background check requirements, engaging in diligent recruitment efforts, and utilizing resources for cross-jurisdictional placements.

---

## Chapter 3. Plan for enacting the state's vision

### Overview and rationale

The goals, objectives, strategies, and measures of Minnesota's 2025-2029 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP/plan) are the result of extensive internal and external engagement, thoughtful discussions, and in-depth analyses of qualitative and quantitative data from multiple sources. The department is committed to improving equitable outcomes for all children, youth, and families served and seeks to center community voices in our work. We acknowledge that the CFSP is a living document and will undergo ongoing review and improvement as we continue to engage the community, staff, and a diverse array of partners across the child welfare continuum.

Some grounding principles that informed the development of the CFSP included the Children's Bureau's four priority areas identified in [ACYF-CB-PI-24-02](#) and the Minnesota governor's [One Minnesota Plan](#). As seen in the overarching goals below, the CFSP focuses on primary prevention and workforce investment. The CFSP also includes strategies to support foster youths' successful transition to adulthood. Interwoven throughout the plan is a shared commitment to equity, collaboration, and community. Department leadership thought it was important that equity and collaboration be embedded throughout the plan, rather than isolated as a standalone goal, objective, or strategy. Pursuing equitable outcomes and collaborating within and across systems are responsibilities shared by all staff.

The department engaged multiple external partners and communities in the development of the CFSP, as previously noted (see Chapter 1, Section C). Through ongoing relationship-building, we are striving to cultivate meaningful, authentic, trust-based relationships with our partners and those with lived experience. The department has engaged and will continue to engage partners, including families with lived experience (many of whom are part of the African American and American Indian communities), Youth Leadership Councils, the ombudsperson for foster youth, foster parents, kinship caregivers, court partners, Tribal Nations partners, case workers, county agency leaders, and Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy staff. In addition to in-person community engagement events, as described earlier in this document, department staff also conducted one-on-one case-related interviews with families, case workers, foster parents, court partners, etc. Feedback from these interviews, conducted as part of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) process, also informed the CFSP.

The department also conducted extensive internal engagement for the development of the CFSP to elicit feedback from staff and subject matter experts. Over 100 staff from across the CSP Administration participated in learning sessions to orient them to what the CFSP is and then attended an administration-wide presentation, where staff provided ideas for the CFSP in breakout rooms. A work group of staff from across the administration, called CQI Champions, then categorized all the input

provided. Administration leadership and CQI staff met weekly to discuss progress on CFSP development and to promote CFSP visibility and relevance for staff. Leadership will continue to meet regularly over the next five years to monitor, evaluate, and support CFSP implementation efforts.

In addition to the qualitative information gathered from staff, community, and partners, the CFSP was also informed by analyses of quantitative information, which dovetailed work currently in progress on the CFSR statewide assessment (due August 2024). Information included administrative data from Minnesota's comprehensive child welfare information system, known as the Social Services Information System (SSIS), administrative data from the Minnesota Judicial Branch, statewide data indicators, licensing systems information, workforce survey data, training systems data, and CFSR case review data. See Chapter 2 introduction and Sections A and B for further details.

While the department is proud of the progress made in engagement efforts around the CFSP, we acknowledge the process and product are imperfect, and that continuous improvements will be made as the department continuously engages internal and external partners. State leadership is committed to leveraging the CFSP and Annual Progress and Services Reports as opportunities for regular self-assessment, accountability and transparency, and ongoing engagement to center our administration's work across the child welfare continuum.

## Goal 1. Prevention and preservation

**Goal 1: Make it easier for families to get what they need, so we can prevent entry into the child welfare system and keep families together whenever possible.**

### Objective 1.1

**1.1 <sup>\*3</sup>*Provide more resources and programs for parents, families, and kin caregivers so they can meet the needs of their children through community support systems. (Build capacity of parents, families, and kin caregivers so they can meet the needs of their children through community support systems).***

***Strategy 1.1.1: \*Develop and maintain a network of Community Resource Centers that work together with kinship navigator programs throughout the state. (Develop and maintain a network of Community Resource Centers that are integrated with kinship navigator programs throughout the state).***

Interim benchmarks may include:

- Finalize sites and contracts
- Hold communities of practice meetings to support network providers
- Begin delivering services to families.

Five-year outcomes may include:

---

<sup>3</sup> All goals, objectives and strategies were reviewed and adjusted to plain language to support community engagement efforts, these are marked with an \* and italicized.

- Increased protective factors for families utilizing the Protective Factors Survey tool
- Connect kin families to resources and supports as demonstrated by the Kinship Navigator Resource Locator tool.

**Strategy 1.1.2: Explore and make connections between Parent Support Outreach Programs (PSOP) and community-based organizations, community resource centers, and kinship navigation programs.**

Interim benchmarks may include:

- Make changes to needs assessment process in order to refocus on identifying parent needs over child protection-focused compliance measures during intake.

Five-year outcomes may include:

- Increased number of PSOP programs located within community-based agencies
- Increased number of PSOP programs coordinating with community-based programming.

## Objective 1.2

**1.2. \*Increase support for all kinship caregivers so they can navigate to resources and supports to meet their individualized family needs, strengthen wellbeing, maintain connections to community and culture, and build and maintain stability. (Build capacity of all kinship caregivers so they can navigate resources and supports to meet their individualized family needs, strengthen well-being, maintain connections to community and culture, and build and maintain stability).**

**Strategy 1.2.1: \*Build and organize a network of resources and supports for kin care families that are culturally, tribally, and linguistically relevant and are accessible for all abilities (Develop a statewide coordinated network of resources and supports designed specifically for all kin care families that are culturally, Tribally, and linguistically relevant and are accessible for all abilities).**

Interim benchmarks may include:

- Map all services available to kin caregivers in the state
- Identify gaps and challenges
- Understand funding
- Develop a plan for improved coordination.

*Note: Mapping and plan development will involve a multipartner process, including but not limited to: Tribes, urban Indian service providers, community-based organizations, counties, and kin caregivers.*

Five-year outcomes may include:

- Improved coordination of services and resources kin caregivers access as reflected through survey, grant outcomes, and community feedback.
- CFSR Item 32.

## Objective 1.3

**1.3. \*Help professionals shift from a focus on reporting families to focusing on identifying family strengths and providing supports as needed. (Shift professional practice from primary focus on mandated reporting to a strengths-based community support approach).**

**Strategy 1.3.1: \*Partner with and train all types of mandated reporters within state government and in all communities statewide. (Engage, communicate, and educate multidisciplinary reporters within the state government enterprise and external professional communities).**

Interim benchmarks may include:

- Develop a plan to communicate and disseminate community support framework
- Screening threshold analysis (Screening Threshold Analysis dashboard is used to measure decisional outcomes of child maltreatment screening decisions). This includes the following analysis of screening decisions: **True Positive** - An intake that is screened in and has one or more of the following indicators: - Maltreatment Determined, Child Protection Services Needed, Out of Home Care Placement that lasted over 7 days, SDM Safety Assessment “Unsafe”, SDM Risk Assessment “High Risk”. **False Positive** - A report that is screened in and does not have one of the true positive indicators, and also does NOT have a future screened in intake for the same victim within the follow-up period with one of the true positive indicators. **True Negative** - A report that is screened out and does NOT have a future screened in intake within the follow-up period with one of the true positive indicators. **False Negative** - A report that is screened out and does have a future screened in intake within the follow-up period with one of the true positive indicators.

*Note: Plan materials will encompass an equity framework, elements related to poverty and neglect, and use of data to inform priority areas.*

Five-year outcomes may include:

- CFSR statewide data indicators
- Decreased number of maltreatment reports of neglect (internal dashboard).

## Goal 2. Workforce investment

**\*Help child welfare staff <sup>4</sup>do better and feel more satisfied with their jobs by providing training, improving technology, and collaborating more across all programs and systems. (Enhance child welfare staff performance and job satisfaction through ongoing capacity-building, improvements to key administrative systems, and increased multidisciplinary collaboration).**

---

<sup>4</sup> *Note: definition of staff for these reports = all staff who have case management responsibilities in the areas of child protection services, family preservation and support services, foster care services, adoption services, and independent living services as stated in the state’s 5-year plan.*

## Objective 2.1

**2.1 *\*Provide ongoing coaching and training to workers and supervisors to support following guidelines, respectfully working with families, and worker health. (Provide ongoing mentorship and multidisciplinary training to the child welfare workforce to support best practice, respectful engagement with families, and worker well-being).***

**Strategy 2.1.1: *\*Set up support for new workers by pairing them with mentors who provide guidance, support, and encouragement as workers navigate the complexities of child welfare work. (Establish a system of support for new workers by pairing them with mentors (peers with experience and supervisors) who provide guidance, support, and encouragement as workers navigate the complexities of the continuum of child welfare work).***

Interim benchmarks may include:

- Establish and administer annual survey on mentorship program for workers.

Five-year outcomes may include:

- CFSR Items 26-27.

**Strategy 2.1.2: *\*Design training curriculum that addresses critical skills and topics relevant to all types of workers, including trauma-informed care, cultural competence, legal and ethical considerations, and collaborative decision-making. (Design a flexible and comprehensive curriculum that addresses core competencies, critical skills, and cross-cutting topics relevant to all participating disciplines, such as trauma-informed care, cultural competence, legal and ethical considerations, and collaborative decision-making).***

Interim benchmarks may include:

- Engage key vested community partners from each discipline, including representatives from child welfare agencies, law enforcement, juvenile justice systems, and children's mental health organizations, to gather input on training needs, priorities, and desired outcomes.

Five-year outcomes may include:

- CFSR Items 26-27.

## Objective 2.2

**2.2. *\*Promote statewide recruitment of diverse workers and supervisors and support them in staying in the field long term. (Promote statewide recruitment and retention of a diverse child welfare workforce).***

**Strategy 2.2.1: *\*Develop a workplan for identifying and addressing what contributes to recruiting and keeping diverse workers and supervisors. (Develop a work plan for identifying and addressing contributing factors driving diverse recruitment and retention of the child welfare workforce).***

Interim benchmarks may include:

- Teaming, research, engagement, work plan creation.

Five-year outcomes may include:

- Annual workforce survey.

### Objective 2.3

**2.3.\*Update and simplify software and technology tools to reduce staff time spent on paperwork, increase consistency in documentation, and make data more accurate and clearer. (Modernize and simplify administrative systems to minimize burden on staff, maximize consistency, and enhance data integrity).**

**Strategy 2.3.1 (SSIS): Provide modern technology that meets reporting requirements, provides tools to enhance social work practice, enables supervision and administrative oversight, is easily adapted to changing policy, and is designed in consultation with end users.**

Interim benchmarks may include:

- An application modernization roadmap is in place based on the findings of an external consultant review
- Product teams are created and staffed
- A budget for modernization is in place.

Five-year outcomes may include:

- Data exchanges are in place with the Minnesota Courts and the Minnesota Department of Education.
- Minnesota’s application is certified as CCWIS compliant by the federal Administration for Children and Families, is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and provides mobile capabilities.
- End users indicate overall satisfaction with the application.

**Strategy 2.3.2 (Contracts): \*Improve internal processes for grants and contracts to make it easier for our partners and to increase transparency and accountability to communities. (Improve internal operational excellence related to grants and contracts, improve the contract lifecycle experience for our partners, and increase transparency and accountability to communities on contracts).**

Interim benchmarks may include:

- Full utilization of internal contract integration system (CIS) within CSP for contract management compliance and respond to data requests
- Ensure all CSP staff who access CIS are trained as functionality of the system expands.

Five-year outcomes may include:

- Implement a grant life cycle system across CSP to create a consistent and easy-to-use

experience for responders when applying for competitive RFPs.

- Aggregate data captured through the life cycle system to better identify trends and address disparities in grant applicants, as well as funded projects, and communicate to the public the outcomes achieved because of funded grant projects.

## Goal 3. Service array

### Enhance equitable access to quality, individualized services statewide through community-based partnerships and coordination with other federal programs.

#### Objective 3.1

- 3.1. *\*Increase access to services that are designed to meet the needs of people from different cultural backgrounds and experiences. (Expand access to culturally responsive services).*

***Strategy 3.1.1: Increase funding for early intervention and services for Tribal agencies and American Indian urban agencies and partner with American Indian communities to determine the best ways to use the increased funds. (Through increased targeted community engagement efforts, expand American Indian early intervention funding and services to Tribal agencies and American Indian urban agencies).***

Interim benchmarks may include:

- Funding is secured and a process for allocation is established and ready to be distributed to Tribal Nations.
- Development of a one-year report on those learnings to identify goals collectively to support programs and AI/AN children.

Five-year outcomes may include:

- Improvements in ensuring services are individualized to meet the needs of children and families measured through CFSR Items 12a and 12b and information collected from families engaged in the child welfare system.

***Strategy 3.1.2: \*Increase funding and services for community-based providers serving African American and African heritage communities and partner with African American and African heritage communities to determine the best ways to use the increased funds and which services to establish or expand. (Through increased targeted community engagement efforts, expand funding and services for community-based providers serving African American and African heritage communities).***

Interim benchmarks may include:

- Increased engagement efforts for African American and African heritage communities through developed strategies and appropriate staff resources to improve the sharing of information, access to resources, community feedback, partnership and collaboration,

and shared decision-making

- Funding is secured for ongoing grants to African American and African heritage communities through the awarding of grant funding to community-based agencies serving said communities and providing culturally responsive, informed, and affirming services centering prevention, family preservation, and well-being needs to support safety, well-being, and permanency for children, youth, and families.

Five-year outcomes may include:

- Improvements in ensuring services are individualized to meet the needs of children and families measured through CFSR Items 12a and 12b and information collected from families engaged in the child welfare system.

## Objective 3.2

### 3.2. Expand access to services in Greater Minnesota, as well as in areas with existing service gaps and in communities with the highest disparate outcomes.

**Strategy 3.2.1: *\*Use data to map out existing services and service gaps and determine where to target new services or increased investment in existing services. (Using a data-informed approach, map out and target service investment and innovation).***

Interim benchmarks may include:

- Create service map
- Develop investment strategy
- Pilot targeted investment.

Five-year outcomes may include improvement in service array and resource development (item 29).

- Services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs.
- Services that address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment.
- Services that enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable; and services that help children in foster care or adoptive placements achieve permanency.

### 3.3. Support foster youths' successful transitions to adulthood.

**Strategy 3.3.1: *\*Partner with youth with lived expertise to increase youth participation in the STAY in the Community program—a program that provides independent living skills for former foster youth ages 18-23 to support them in transitioning to adulthood. (In partnership with youth with lived expertise, increase participation in the [Successful Transition to Adulthood for Youth Program](#)).***

Baseline will be determined during quarters one and two of FY 2025 and annual interim benchmarks may include:



- Increase of 5% participation per year.

Five-year outcomes may include:

- Overall increase of 60% participation.

**Strategy 3.3.2: In partnership with youth with lived expertise, increase (a) the percentage of students who use their ETV award (Electronic Training Vouchers - a program that provides \$5,000 per year for costs related to post-secondary education for some former foster youth) and (b) the percentage of students with ETV awards who stay in school.**

Baseline will be determined during quarters one and two of FY 2025 and annual interim benchmarks may include:

- (a) Increase of 5% utilization rate per year
- (b) Increase of 5% participation rate in school per year.

Five-year outcomes may include:

- Overall increase of 60% participation.

## Objective 3.4

**3.4 \*For children who experience foster care, reduce the number of places they live while in care, reduce the number of children who come back into foster care after reunification with their families and after adoption or transfer of custody. (Improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children who experience foster care by improving placement stability, reducing reentry after reunification, and reducing reentry after adoption or transfer of custody).**

**Strategy 3.4.1: \*Create a workplan to identify trends and factors that contribute to unplanned placement disruptions and placement instability (youth being moved from one placement to another), and a plan to address the contributing factors. (Develop a work plan for identifying trends and addressing contributing factors of unplanned placement disruptions and placement instability).**

*Note: Includes children who have a placement disrupted and must move, and those who experienced a trial home visit end or reentered care after a previous placement episode, including children who reenter care after adoption or transfer of custody.*

Interim benchmarks will be developed following analysis of trends and contributing factors to unplanned placement disruptions and placement instability.

Five-year benchmarks may include:

- Improvements in cases rating a strength for Items 2, 4 and 6.

## Section D. Staff training, technical assistance, and evaluation

Department staff and the Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy provide training that is a critical component of CFSP strategic implementation. See the CFSP Targeted Plan for Staff Training for a detailed description. Some non-exhaustive examples of the linkages include:

- New Worker Training – Worker Well-being and Coaching (aligns with CFSP Strategy 2.1.1)
- New Supervisor Training (aligns with CFSP Strategy 2.1.1)
- Multidisciplinary Training (aligns with CFSP Strategy 2.2.1)
- Resource Family Training (supports statewide functioning of Systemic Factors 4 and 7).

The state will continue to provide extensive technical assistance to local agency partners who operate services and programs pursuant to the CFSP. Each team across the Child Safety and Permanency Administration contributes valuable expertise and specialized support to agency partners. Some non-exhaustive examples of how these activities impact the achievement of CFSP objectives include:

- Workforce Development and Training Teams: Train local agency workers on best practices in support of Objective 2.1.
- Permanency Teams: Conduct case consultations with local agencies on disruption cases in support of Objective 3.4.
- Case Review Team: Consult with local agencies on screening decisions in support of Objective 1.3.
- Promotion Team: Engage local agencies on their administration of Parent Support Outreach Programs in support of Objective 1.1.

The department will continue to benefit from capacity-building support from a variety of partners, including:

- Capacity Building Center for States
- Casey Family Programs
- Children’s Bureau peer learning opportunities
- Collaborative Safety LLC
- Center for Healthcare Strategies
- BUILD Initiative
- University of Minnesota
- North American Council on Adoptable Children
- National Center on Diligent Recruitment.

The state will continue to engage in evaluation activities to support implementation and monitoring of CFSP goals, objectives, and strategies. One example is that the CSP Administration’s Research and Evaluation Unit has convened to review and analyze findings from Child and Family Services Review cases reviewed and quantitative performance data. The team will identify themes and patterns across the cases reviewed. Based on identified themes and patterns, the team will select one or two areas for statewide focus. The team will also consult with Child Safety and Permanency Administration leadership and staff to identify statewide improvement strategies. Another example is the administration’s ongoing evaluation of the Whole Family Systems Grant, in partnership with the BUILD Initiative and the Department’s Economic Assistance Employment Supports Division and Child Care Services Division. The team will seek to understand barriers and successes achieved through the co-creation and

implementation of cross-system coordination at the local and state levels.

---

## Chapter 4. Services

### Section A. Child and family services continuum

#### Subsection 1. Prevention, preservation and support

The department's publicly funded child and family services continuum consists of family preservation services that are available and provided statewide. The services identified under family preservation include child welfare assessment, court-related services, family-based crisis and counseling services, life management skills, services for Family Assessment Response, Family Group Decision Making, Parent Support Outreach Program, respite care, general case management, children's mental health, family and community support services, child general case management, children's mental health case management, family-based services, and therapeutic support for children in foster care.

The services identified under family support services are also available and provided statewide. These services consist of information and referral, community education and prevention, health-related, housing, social and recreational, home-based support, homemaking, individual counseling, respite care, group counseling, Family Group Decision Making, adolescent life skills training and specialized case management.

An addition to family preservation services includes the Minnesota Child Safety Practice Framework. The Minnesota Child Safety Practice Framework aims to define safety practice and promote caseworker consistency across the state. The Child Safety Practice Framework is a part of Minnesota's larger [Child Welfare Practice Framework](#). The Minnesota Child Safety Practice Framework outlines a set of shared policies, principles, guidelines and practice tools designed to support child welfare professionals. Included in the framework are the Safety Practice Profiles. The Safety Practice Profiles define the "what" of child welfare practice, meaning it describes practice at the level of "saying and doing" when working with a youth or family. It includes the core components of the Minnesota Child Safety Practice Framework and further describes the key skills and behaviors that are associated with each core component. It breaks down large concepts such as "engagement" into concrete skills and behaviors that can be taught, learned and observed.

The Minnesota Child Safety Practice Framework includes policies such as the implementation of Motivational Interviewing (MI) and Parents as Teachers (PAT) as part of Minnesota's Title IV-E prevention services plan under the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). State, county and Tribal partners, along with community agencies and individuals with lived experience, chose Motivational Interviewing as a prevention service and tool that will help shift child welfare practice in a standardized way. Implementation of MI statewide will primarily be by child welfare caseworkers in family interactions to improve engagement.

The second service selected to keep Minnesota children safe and at home with their family is Parents as Teachers (PAT). PAT is an evidence-based, trauma-informed home-visiting program in which a home visitor serves caregivers and children from before birth until kindergarten. The PAT implementation team met from January 2023 to November 2023. This team identified areas of implementation that will be necessary to meet FFPSA requirements and began mapping out documentation, claiming and billing processes. The department continues to lead prevention services teams in the implementation of PAT and MI as part of Minnesota’s prevention plan.

The services under family preservation and family support as identified above are available statewide and delivered through the county or a county-contracted provider through the state-supervised, county-administered system. In addition to these identified services to support intervention, treatment services and family preservation, the state has updated the Structured Decision-Making safety tool. The tool will be available to support the workforce to more accurately identify, support and ensure the safety of children remaining in the home of their parents. Additionally, the state, through collaboration with numerous partners, completed pilot phases for the statewide roll out of Safety Practice Profiles within the Minnesota Child Safety Practice Framework.

The child protection In-Home Family Support Plan was updated in January 2024 to reflect requirements for prevention services as part of the FFPSA. If a family receives prevention services (currently Motivational Interviewing and Parents as Teachers) as part of FFPSA, the services must be selected in the set-up screen and reflected within the goals and services section of the In-Home Family Support Service Plan.

The MI implementation team met from January to November 2023 and has concluded. The team developed recommendations for how MI will be implemented, including:

- Training and certification requirements
- Three pathways for agency certification, and
- The fidelity monitoring tool that will be utilized: Lyssn.

Additionally, the Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy (MNCWTA) has developed and launched all MI course components and pathways to certification. Child welfare professionals from agencies across the state are participating in all components of the MNCWTA-led Motivational Interviewing (MI) certification pathway pilot course, intended for child welfare professionals, also known as certification pathway 1. The first cohort of fully trained learners began completing the skills demonstration for initial certification in late February 2023. Child welfare case workers who have been, or are in the process of, successfully completing the Motivational Interviewing (MI) training course will be able to qualify for prevention services Title IV-E claiming when that becomes available.

From March 2024 – April 2024, a request for proposal (RFP) was developed to support the expansion of Parents as Teachers (PAT); establish or strengthen partnerships between PAT providers and child welfare agencies; and implement the FFPSA requirements for a limited number of PAT sites and local child welfare agencies throughout the state.

Minnesota is supporting a service called Parent Mentor Program (PMP): Recovery Mentors, which serves families who are at the intersection of substance use disorder risk and an open in-home child welfare case. This PMP service is part of a larger project called “R3,” which is short for “Expanding Evidence on

Replicable Recovery and Reunification Interventions for Families.” R3 is a multistate federal evidence-building project sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families. Department staff have coordinated with four Minnesota counties to adopt the new service and participate in an evaluation through Abt Associates. The department is contracting with a local agency, Minnesota One Stop for Communities, to provide this needed in-home service for families with an evaluation by Abt Associates. The study and service has begun within one of the four counties within Minnesota; the other three counties are close to service provision. This is yet another way the department can gather and possibly implement this evidence-based service that could potentially be included as a future Minnesota FFPSA Prevention service.

Working with the FRIENDS network, Minnesota is exploring two areas of work. First, Minnesota will explore the use of the Protective Factors Survey tool (or similar) to measure pre- and post-participation how families are or are not increasing concrete supports, and whether families are feeling supported through CRC, kinship navigator and PSOP programs. Second, Minnesota will explore an agreement with the National Parent Leadership Institute (NPLI) to bring that curriculum to Minnesota to support parent and family leadership across the state and within the CRC local parent councils. NPLI currently has a memorandum of understanding with Indigenous Visioning, an American Indian policy and advocacy organization, to Indigenize the NPLI parent curriculum to great success.

## **Subsection 2. Reunification and permanency services**

Reunification and permanency services provided for in Minnesota Statutes 256N.261 and Minnesota Statutes 256.01 that the department will continue to provide and improve are:

- The Public Private Permanency Collaboration (PPPC, formerly the Public Private Adoption Initiative or PPAI) program provides reimbursement to agencies who provide adoption services to families hoping to adopt a child under guardianship in Minnesota, ensuring fees are not a barrier to being an adoptive resource. Other fully-funded services include:
  - Child specific recruitment services available statewide
  - Placement Support Services for adoptive placements for the period from placement to finalization
  - Post Adoption Services, no matter how long the adoption was finalized
  - Relative outreach, engagement and placement services for children under guardianship of the commissioner
  - Two extensive outreach efforts to build community partnerships for targeted recruitment of families who can meet the needs of African American youth and youth who have experienced sexual abuse and/or who exhibit sexualized behaviors.
- The Permanency Support Services (PSS) program support 21 contracts providing a range of supports across the continuum to kinship, foster and adoptive families. Some examples of PSS services include:
  - Extensive supports for relative search, engagement and support
  - Support groups (peer to peer support) and helpline
  - Retreats
  - Camps for families who adopted transracially
  - Leadership and engagement opportunities for youth experiencing foster care and permanency

- Pre-service and ongoing training for parents available live, hybrid and on-demand at no cost
- State adoption exchange, including matching functions and a responsive team to support inquiring prospective parents
- Cultural activities for American Indian children and their caregivers through Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center (MIWRC).
- Tribal Customary Adoption Grants for Initiative Tribes (services comparable to PPC for children under jurisdiction of Tribal court):
  - Child specific recruitment equalizing services available statewide
  - Placement Support Services for adoptive placements for the period from placement to finalization
  - Post-adoption Services, no matter how long ago the adoption was finalized
  - Relative outreach, engagement and placement services for children under guardianship of the commissioner.
- Phoenix Learning Exchange (PLX)
  - Training available to professionals and kin, foster and adoptive parents on understanding adolescent development with an emphasis on engaging youth in the decisions being made about their lives.
- Kinship Grants (under PSS program)
  - State grant funding to four Minnesota counties and Tribal agencies to support the following services:
    - Relative search, engagement and support
    - Funds to alleviate concrete expenses and barriers to licensing for relatives and kin
    - Respite care for kinship families (Tribal program).
  - Monthly Mobile Community Closets (clothes, diapers, car seats and other household items) for kinship families at different locations across the state.

## Section B. Service coordination

The department is planning to improve and implement a variety of efforts to support families at greatest risk of maltreatment and prevent involvement in the child protection system. The department is establishing a network of Community Resource Centers, coupling them with kinship navigator programs, to increase access to programs, services and economic and concrete supports for families. Agencies that support families experiencing inequities due to race, wealth, geography, gender, etc. will be prioritized in funding decisions to support families and communities furthest from opportunity. To help ensure that Community Resource Centers and kinship navigator programs will meet the individualized needs of families experiencing inequities, the department works in partnership with a statewide advisory council and a core team made up of other state agency partners. Community Resource Centers will also be required to implement local parent advisory councils to help ensure that local services are effectively supporting and engaging families.

Community Resource Centers and kinship navigator programs will utilize five specific tools in their work with families to assist with navigation, eligibility and applications. [Help Me Connect](#) is an online navigation tool for providers and families to find programs and services available in their geographic area. [Bridge to Benefits](#) is an online tool developed through the Children’s Defense Fund Minnesota that

helps determine eligibility for cash assistance, child tax credits and child care programs. [MN Benefits](#) is a singular application for nine different cash assistance programs in Minnesota including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), housing, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and child care scholarships, among others. As part of the kinship navigator program, Minnesota is developing a resource locator tool specific to kinship supports for kin families with both formal and informal arrangements. Finally, the [Permanency Hub](#) is an online resource that describes multiple permanency and kinship options for families. These tools help connect navigators, providers and families to multiple programs and services that help increase protective factors and increase health and well-being.

## **Subsection 2. Children’s Bureau grant programs**

**Children’s Justice Act (CJA):** The Children’s Justice Act task force invested in the development of infrastructural improvements. The department and task force will continue to implement operating procedures, open appointment procedures, open appointment seats on the Minnesota Secretary of State’s Boards & Commission website and task force webpage. The task force will move forward with its plan developed with an expanded representation in membership. The task force has created pathways for more community engagement by increasing the public’s accessibility to meetings. It improved coordination of mutual goals and strategic plans by scheduling more consistent meetings between the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) staff. Discussion and graphic charts were developed to map the interconnection. The department has continued to develop infrastructure between CJA and CQI staff that will embed evaluation through shared accountability. Community engagement data is encouraged to be shared in relation to mutual goal objectives.

**Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP):** CBCAP funding requires a plan for parent and family leadership. Minnesota is working toward a regional parent and family leadership infrastructure in which families may participate in networking and training in civic participation; advocacy for themselves, their children, and their communities; and family development. The planning for this infrastructure has involved parent and family engagement and participation in a workgroup. The department is also working with parents and family members who have received supports from the Parent Support Outreach Program (PSOP) to go through a continuous quality improvement process. This engagement will lead to policy and practice changes to the program. Finally, Community Resource Center grantees are all required to have a local parent and family advisory council to advise the work of the grantee and create feedback loops between the community, the grantee and the department.

## **Section C. Service description**

See section on Service Array.

## **Section D. Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services Program (IV-B, Subp. 1)**

### **Subsection 1. Children adopted internationally**

Families of children adopted from other countries, and the children themselves, will continue to be able to access most services offered through the Permanency Support Services (PSS) program (Minnesota

Statutes 256N.261). The PSS program was created with the goal of reducing the need for placement changes or out-of-home placements for youth in foster care, pre-adoptive placements, adoptive families and permanent physical and legal custody kinship (kinship) families, and to improve the functioning and stability of these families.

The department issued a request for proposal (RFP) in January 2023 to support the continuum of kinship care, foster care and adoption. Contracts from that RFP include services to assist with the recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive families. The program is also intended to support kin caregivers, both formal and informal. The Permanency Supports Kinship Services (PSKS) program referenced in the 2023 update continued in 2023 with seven grantees. The department is extending this program; services will include, but are not limited to:

- Services for adults who have experienced foster care and adoption
- Assessments (clinical, trauma, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders)
- BIPOC-specific supports
- Consultation services for parents and caregivers
- Family events
- Post-adoption services
- Support groups for parents, caregivers and families
- Therapeutic supports
- Training for kinship, foster and adoption communities
- Youth support services.

Additionally, during May 2023, the Permanency Programs Unit completed a solicitation for a vendor to review adoption dissolutions and disruptions in Minnesota. The goal is to identify themes related to the disruption or dissolution and better understand why these occur. This information will assist the Minnesota Permanency Programs and Operations Units to identify adjustments to current practice and, ideally, to prevent future occurrences for any adoptive placement. Dissolutions include a high number of intercountry adoptions; the department aims to use this vital information to create successful prevention and intervention programs for families at risk of an adoptive placement disruption or dissolution. If programs are not available to meet these identified needs, the department will explore options via grant and contract programming.

## **Subsection 2. Children under 5**

The department will continue to implement the Parent Support Outreach Program, a voluntary short-term prevention and early intervention program. The goals of the Parent Support Outreach Program are to enhance the well-being of children and families, ensure and maintain children's safety, and support families to meet their children's needs by themselves and through support systems. The Parent Support Outreach Program engages families with at least one child under age 10 experiencing stress factors associated with child maltreatment by offering case management services, connections to resources that promote family well-being and flexible funding to support families' immediate needs. The program supports family strengths and helps to prevent maltreatment and involvement in the child protection system. Approximately half of the children served by the program are age 5 and under, which included roughly 4,500 children 5 and under in 2023. In 2024, a continuous quality improvement project was initiated to gather the experiences and perspectives of families served by the Parent Support Outreach Program, as well as providers, to better understand and improve the program. The department plans to



implement actions to address the recommendations to better engage and support families at greatest risk for involvement in the child protection system.

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is one of two services on Minnesota's IV-E Prevention Plan. PAT is a home-visiting program targeting families with children ages 5 and under with special needs, at-risk for child abuse, teen or first-time parents, or struggling with mental health or substance abuse issues. Enrollment can occur from prenatal to kindergarten.

After prevention plan approval in January 2023, Minnesota has been working on PAT implementation related to the plan. Claiming and full implementation is expected late 2024 into 2025. As part of implementation, Minnesota is supporting expansion and development of new PAT sites across the state. In spring 2024, Minnesota released an RFP and will begin contracting in June 2024.

### **Subsection 3. Maltreatment deaths**

Data submitted to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) includes data from the Social Service Information System (SSIS) on child deaths, along with data collected by the department's child mortality review staff on child maltreatment deaths.

Local social service agencies notify the department of child maltreatment deaths, often within 24 hours. Additional child maltreatment deaths are identified through review of death certificates obtained from the Minnesota Department of Health's Office of Vital Statistics. Data collected regarding child deaths includes review of law enforcement, autopsy and medical examiner's investigation reports as well as death and birth certificates (only for infant deaths). Department child mortality review staff reviews death certificates to ensure that all child deaths that meet program criteria follow the review process.

As a state-supervised, county-administered child welfare system, the responsibility for investigating child maltreatment deaths lies with local county and American Indian Child Welfare Initiative (AICWI) Tribal social service agencies. The department has processes in place to review cases in which maltreatment-related fatalities and near fatalities occur. It has incorporated safety science into the child fatality/near fatality review process through the use of the Collaborative Safety Model. This model allows department staff to get first-hand accounts from frontline staff as well as accounts from relevant public and private partners, such as law enforcement, public health, physicians/child abuse prevention specialists and local attorneys' offices. These partners are invited to attend and participate in safety systems mapping, which identifies systemic influences and barriers that inhibit the ability to provide optimal services to children and families. These voices are invaluable, as all partners are intricately woven in service procurement and delivery to families. Because of these mappings, themes are identified, and recommendations are made annually to improve services to prevent fatalities statewide.

The most recent data analysis consisted of a review of 85 cases between mid-2019 and fall 2021. Through coding and scoring, themes arose that appeared to impact outcomes within this data set. The considerations that were developed in the last half of 2021 aligned with several considerations in 2019 that were more challenging to address, including administrative burdens that overloaded workers as well as improving coordination with law enforcement and county attorney offices. Many projects are in process to address these issues, including but not limited to:

- Safety Framework Project and the department's work with county attorneys
- The Paperwork Reduction Act that was put forth for a second time this year by Minnesota

Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACSSA) to reduce administrative burdens and redundancy in the SSIS system

- The Office of the Legislative Auditor issued a report and made various recommendations, one of which involves working with law enforcement
- The department is leading a workgroup tasked with providing information and training to law enforcement on child protection removals and information sharing on techniques for child maltreatment assessments and investigations.

An outline of the fatality/near fatality review process is as follows:

- Once a case is determined eligible for department review (i.e., the fatality or near fatality was determined to be the result of maltreatment and/or occurred in a licensed foster care setting), the fatality/near fatality team begins a review.
- A member of the review team completes an examination of all information in the Social Service Information System (SSIS). A trained peer reviewer also independently reviews cases; per statute, all peer reviewers are local agency social service supervisors, managers or directors. Each reviewer independently identifies practices or issues that stand out to them during a case review (e.g., practice outside of that prescribed by statute, rule or guidance). Following their independent review, department staff and peer reviewer discuss their findings and identify learning points.
- Reviewers conduct voluntary debriefings with local agency staff involved in decision-making regarding learning points. The debriefing provides opportunities to understand decisions made in a case by accessing local rationality (a person's individual goals, understanding, and focus), knowledge factors (sources of information) and strategic factors (competing goals) from those directly involved.
- Case and debriefing information is presented for safety systems mapping. Each state region has an established mapping team that includes core members, generally social services staff (front-line, supervisory and director levels), law enforcement, county attorneys, public and mental health providers. Ad hoc members are invited to participate in mapping, depending on learning points discussed. At the mapping, members identify influences of the learning point at all levels of the system (e.g., local, regional, state, external and federal).
- Department staff creates a contextual narrative describing influences identified during mapping and provides narrative to the mapping team for review and approval.
- Learning points are scored using the Systems Analysis tool. The tool allows for tracking and quantifying influencing factors, and the frequency at which individual factors are identified in cases reviewed.
- Using information from the Systems Analysis tool, scoring and coding, the fatality/near fatality review team compiles themes and considerations for recommendations. Information is presented annually to administration leadership for consideration of action to improve services to children and families served through the child welfare system.

The department convenes the state child mortality review panel, comprised of a multidisciplinary team of professionals who meet regularly to review child maltreatment deaths in Minnesota. The panel makes recommendations to department staff and county agencies for improving the child protection system, including modifications in statute, rule, policy and procedures.

## Section E. Promoting safe and stable families (IV-B, Subp. 2)

### Subsection 1. Service descriptions

#### Family preservation and support

The department's publicly funded child and family services continuum consists of family preservation services that are available and provided statewide. The services identified under family preservation include child welfare assessment; court-related services; family-based crisis and counseling services, and life management skills; services for Family Assessment Response; Family Group Decision Making; Parent Support Outreach Program; respite care; general case management; children's mental health; family and community support services; child general case management; children's mental health case management; family-based services and therapeutic support of foster care.

The services identified under family support services are also available and provided statewide. These services include information and referral, community education and prevention, health-related services, housing, social and recreational services, home-based support, homemaking, individual counseling, respite care, group counseling, Family Group Decision Making, adolescent life skills training and specialized case management.

An addition to family preservation services includes the Minnesota Child Welfare Safety Framework. The Minnesota Child Safety Practice Framework aims to define safety practice and promote caseworker consistency across the state. The Child Safety Practice Framework is a part of Minnesota's larger [Child Welfare Practice Framework](#). The Minnesota Child Safety Practice Framework outlines a set of shared policies, principles, guidelines and practice tools designed to support child welfare professionals. Included in the framework are the Safety Practice Profiles. The Safety Practice Profiles define the "what" of child welfare practice, and describe practice at the level of "saying and doing" when working with a youth or family. It includes the core components of the Minnesota Child Safety Practice Framework and further describes the key skills and behaviors that are associated with each core component. It breaks down large concepts such as "engagement" into concrete skills and behaviors that can be taught, learned and observed.

The Minnesota Child Safety Practice Framework includes policies such as the implementation of Motivational Interviewing (MI) and Parents as Teachers (PAT) as part of Minnesota's Title IV-E prevention services plan under the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). State, county and Tribal partners, as well as community agencies and individuals with lived experience, chose Motivational Interviewing as a prevention service and tool that will help shift child welfare practice in a standardized way. Implementation of MI statewide in Minnesota will primarily be used by child welfare caseworkers in family interactions to improve engagement.

The second service selected to keep Minnesota children safe and at home with their family is Parents as Teachers (PAT). PAT is an evidence-based, trauma-informed home-visiting program in which a home visitor serves caregivers and children from prenatal until kindergarten. The PAT implementation team met from January 2023 to November 2023. This team identified areas of implementation that will be necessary to meet FFPSA requirements and began mapping out documentation, claiming and billing

processes. The department continues to lead prevention services teams in the implementation of PAT and MI as part of Minnesota’s prevention plan.

### **Family reunification**

When a child has been removed from their home, placed in foster care and returned home, the available services for families and children include individual, group and family counseling; inpatient, residential and outpatient substance use disorder treatment; mental health services; assistance to address domestic violence; temporary child care, including crisis nurseries; mentoring and support groups; services to facilitate visitation of children by parents and siblings; and transportation.

### **Adoption promotion and support services**

The Minnesota Department of Human Services contracts with six private child-placing agencies to provide adoption and adoption-related services to children under state guardianship or Tribal jurisdiction, called the Public Private Adoption Initiative (PPAI). PPAI agencies provide adoption services for families hoping to be a permanency resource for children or youth waiting in out-of-home care; these services are reimbursed through the PPAI contract rather than paid for by a prospective adoptive family. The primary goal of this program is to increase the number of permanent families available to children and youth in out-of-home care who do not have a relative or kinship resource. The agencies and their contact information can be found in the [Adoption Support: Working together to help families](#) fact sheet. The 2023-2026 PPAI contract includes child-specific recruitment services, which are services specific to a child or youth to identify a permanency resource, including relative engagement services. Innovative services are also part of the 2023- 2026 PPAI contract, including relative search and targeted recruitment services as outlined below:

- Innovative Family Finding Services:
  - Ampersand Families provides innovative intensive relative search and engagement efforts for a 45-day period that helps counties keep up statutory requirements for relative search. This search service can be combined with the PPAI child-specific recruitment services as well.
  - [Children’s Home Society \(CHLSS\)](#) provides innovative relative search services to assist counties with children in need of a permanent placement by identifying relative and kinship connections. The CHLSS services includes of a report of all relatives and previous caregivers of youth as well as current and previous known addressed. The results will be provided to the permanency team for the youth.
- Innovative Targeted Recruitment Services:
  - [Ampersand Families](#) provides targeted recruitment services to establish community partnerships to meet the needs of African American youth under the guardianship of the commissioner or Tribal guardianship. Ampersand Families also provides targeted recruitment services to establish community partnerships to meet the needs of youth who have experienced sexual abuse and/or exhibited sexualized behaviors.
  - Targeted recruitment services include outreach efforts, education, community support and links to resources.

- Ampersand Families hosts listening sessions as part of the targeted services and identified two organizations in greater Minnesota.

As part of the Public Private Adoption Initiative (PPAI), each agency is required to engage in efforts to recruit resource families. Agencies provide the Minnesota Department of Human Services with a quarterly update outlining all services to recruit resource families and educate the community about foster care and adoption. Contracted agencies have engaged in many efforts including, but not limited to, community events, radio and television ads, participation at local conferences and connecting with local Tribes. These efforts include strategies to ensure they are reaching many communities and socio-economic variations.

### **Subsection 2. Service decision-making process**

Services for families and children include information and referral, community education and prevention, health-related services, housing, social and recreational services, home-based support, homemaking, individual counseling, respite care, group counseling, Family Group Decision Making, adolescent life skills training and specialized case management.

### **Subsection 3. Populations at greatest risk of maltreatment**

There are significant racial and ethnic disparities in who is reported and involved in Minnesota's child protection system. Black, Indigenous and children and families of color are more likely to be reported, screened into and further involved in the child protection system. For example:

- Preliminary estimates from 2023 indicate that American Indian and Alaska Native children and children of two or more races were four times more likely to be reported to the child protection system compared to white children. African American, Black, Hispanic and Latino children of any race were two times more likely to be reported to the child protection system compared to white children.
- Preliminary estimates from 2023 indicate that American Indian and Alaska Native children were five to six times more likely to be screened into the child protection system compared to white children. Children of two or more races were five times more likely to be screened into the child protection system compared to white children. African American, Black, Hispanic and Latinx children of any race were two times more likely to be screened into the child protection system compared to white children.

[Ample research compiled by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago](#) demonstrates that economic insecurity is a risk factor for child maltreatment, and that families experiencing economic insecurity are more likely to be involved the child protection system. In Minnesota, Black, Indigenous and individuals of color are [more likely to live in poverty](#) and [less likely to experience higher levels of child opportunity](#). Internal analyses conducted by the Child Safety and Permanency Research and Evaluation Unit determined that there are relationships between child poverty, child opportunity and child protection reporting in Minnesota.

On average, census tracts with higher percentages of children living in poverty had higher percentages of children reported to child protection, and in particular, reports of neglect. Additionally, census tracts with lower [Child Opportunity Index 2.0 levels](#) (29 social, economic, health, environmental and

educational indicators) had higher percentages of children reported to child protection, and in particular, reports of neglect.

When these pieces of data are examined together, the department finds that geographic areas in Minnesota with very low levels of child opportunity, child neglect reporting rates above the state median (3.3%) and child poverty rates above the state average (12.2%) often intersect with communities that have higher concentrations of Black, Indigenous and individuals of color within the population. There is also often a high rate of Black, Indigenous and children of color identified in neglect reports in these areas, which illuminates the intersections between poverty and economic insecurity, opportunity, racial inequities and disparities in child neglect reporting in Minnesota. The department plans to utilize these analyses to target services and efforts in communities experiencing these concerns most acutely.

The department is planning to improve and implement a variety of efforts to support families at greatest risk of maltreatment and prevent involvement in the child protection system. The department is establishing a network of Community Resource Centers, coupling them with kinship navigator programs, to increase access to programs, services and economic and concrete supports for families. Agencies that support families experiencing inequities due to race, wealth, geography, gender, etc. will be prioritized in funding decisions to support families and communities furthest from opportunity. To help ensure that Community Resource Centers and kinship navigator programs will meet the needs of families experiencing inequities, the department works in partnership with a statewide advisory council. Community Resource Centers will also be required to implement local parent advisory councils to help ensure that local services are effectively supporting and engaging families.

The department will also continue to implement the Parent Support Outreach Program to serve families experiencing stress factors associated with child maltreatment and child protection system involvement. A continuous quality improvement project was initiated in 2023 to gather the experiences and perspectives of families served by the Parent Support Outreach Program and providers to better understand and improve the program. The department plans to implement actions to address the recommendations to better engage and support families at greatest risk for involvement in the child protection system.

The department is planning to implement several practice improvement efforts to better engage and support families at greatest risk for child maltreatment and involvement in the child protection system. The department is planning to promote the utilization of training and resources to improve mandated reporter practice. Mandated reporters make the majority of child maltreatment reports in Minnesota; however, over half of all reports are screened out, meaning these families may not be connected to resources or supports. The department, in partnership with the Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy, updated Minnesota's mandated reporter training in 2022 with information to address bias in reporting, the intersection between poverty and maltreatment and how to engage and support families with access to community resources. Additionally, the department issues guidance for mandated reporters to support best practice. Promoting the utilization of these materials will work to improve practice, build positive relationships between mandated reporters and families, and support families in getting connected to resources early to support their well-being and prevent maltreatment and system involvement.

The department also plans to invest in workforce supports to improve culturally responsive service delivery, address bias and facilitate local collaboration within prevention. These include hosting

communities of practice with community resource center navigators, Parent Support Outreach Program workers and mandated reporters regarding mandated reporting best practice and resource availability as well as providing trauma-informed mental health consultation to the prevention workforce. These efforts will improve practice, build more positive relationships between mandated reporters and families and support families in getting connected to resources early to promote their well-being and prevent maltreatment and system involvement.

## Section F. Monthly caseworker visits

Monthly caseworker visit funding (grants) will continue to supplement the Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy for caseworker and supervisor training. Grant funding also supports CQI staff efforts to evaluate county and Tribal agency performance on frequency and quality of caseworker visits through CFSR reviews and assist agencies in developing plans to improve performance. Minnesota has not met performance standards for monthly caseworker visits with children in out- of-home placement, but consistently meets the performance standard regarding the majority of visits occurring in children's residences. Minnesota's performance on monthly caseworker visits with children in placement was 87.9% in CY2023 and has continued an upward trend since 2020 when performance was at 80.8%. This data point was included in the department's CFSR Round 3 PIP and met the goals set successfully. Efforts that were successful in improving performance will continue in the next five years include:

- Provision of child-level lists to local social service agencies of performance via a Tableau dashboard
- Reinforcing use of a practice guide developed by department staff by distributing it to caseworkers interviewed as part of a Minnesota CFSR (MnCFSR) case review, referencing the guide during case consultations that occur with local agency staff via the administration's Rapid Consultation line and implementing guidance reflected in trainings offered through the Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy. As Round 4 of the CFSR progresses, CQI staff will collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data around caseworker visits. The department will be able to use any themes that emerge to help better understand missed monthly visits and ways to address barriers.

Minnesota standards for the content and frequency of caseworker visits with children in foster care are in Minnesota Statutes 260C.212, subd. 4a.: "Monthly caseworker visits. (a) Every child in foster care or on a trial home visit shall be visited by the child's caseworker or another person who has responsibility for visitation of the child on a monthly basis, with the majority of visits occurring in the child's residence. The responsible social services agency may designate another person responsible for monthly case visits. For the purposes of this section, the following definitions apply:

- (1) "visit" is defined as a face-to-face contact between a child and the child's caseworker;
- (2) "visited on a monthly basis" is defined as at least one visit per calendar month.
- (3) "the child's caseworker" is defined as the person who has responsibility for managing the child's foster care placement case as assigned by the responsible social services agency.

(4) "another person" means the professional staff whom the responsible social services agency has assigned in the out-of-home placement plan or case plan. Another person must be professionally trained to assess the child's safety, permanency, well-being, and case progress. The agency may not designate the guardian ad litem, the child foster care provider, residential facility staff, or a qualified individual as defined in section 260C.007, subdivision 26b, as another person; and

(5) "the child's residence" is defined as the home where the child is residing, and can include the foster home, child care institution, or the home from which the child was removed if the child is on a trial home visit.

(b) Caseworker visits shall be of sufficient substance and duration to address issues pertinent to case planning and service delivery to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child, including whether the child is enrolled and attending school as required by law.

(c) Every effort shall be made by the responsible social services agency and professional staff to have the monthly visit with the child outside the presence of the child's parents, foster parents, or facility staff. There may be situations related to the child's needs when a caseworker visit cannot occur with the child alone. The reason the caseworker visit occurred in the presence of others must be documented in the case record and may include:

(1) that the child exhibits intense emotion or behavior indicating that visiting without the presence of the parent, foster parent, or facility staff would be traumatic for the child;

(2) that despite a caseworker's efforts, the child declines to visit with the caseworker outside the presence of the parent, foster parent, or facility staff; and

(3) that the child has a specific developmental delay, physical limitation, incapacity, medical device, or significant medical need, such that the parent, foster parent, or facility staff is required to be present with the child during the visit."

---

## Chapter 5. Consultation and coordination between states and Tribes

### Section A. Consultation

Staff will continue to meet quarterly with the Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council (council) established through [Minnesota Statutes 260.835](#) to discuss policies and practice impacting American Indian/Alaska Native children and families living in Minnesota. The council is represented by the 11 Tribal Nations and six urban representatives from Duluth, St. Paul and Minneapolis areas. Names of Tribes and their representatives include:



**Tribes:**

1. Laurie York, director, White Earth Indian Child Welfare
  - a. (co-chair of advisory council)
  - b. Second: Laretta Blakely
2. Lisa Tittle, executive director, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
  - a. (co-chair of advisory council)
3. Angela Wright, supervisor, Bois Forte Indian Child Welfare
4. Janelle Barney, social services department assistant coordinator, Fond du Lac Human Services
  - a. Second: Nathan Sandman
5. Leslie Olsen, Grand Portage social worker
  - a. Second: Jacki Kozlowski
6. William Brunelle, director, Leech Lake Child Welfare Department
7. Mariah Wabasha, social worker, Lower Sioux Behavioral Health director
  - a. Second: Adam Coulson
8. Rachel Shaugobay, director, Mille Lacs Family Services
9. Vacant, Prairie Island Children and Family Services
  - a. Second: Anne Turnbull, director
10. Cheri Goodwin, director, Red Lake Family and Children Services director
  - a. Second: Andera Goodwin
11. Jamie Preuss, director, Upper Sioux Community Social Services

**Urban:**

1. Andrea Sanders, Minneapolis urban representative, Indian Child Welfare Act Law Center
2. Ann Haines, Minneapolis urban representative, Indian Child Welfare Act Law Center
3. Lynn Braveheart, St. Paul urban representative, ICWA guardian ad litem manager
4. Megan Eastman, Minneapolis urban representative, Mino-Bimaadiziwin Wellness Clinic
5. Tara Bruening, St. Paul urban representative, American Indian Family Center
6. Donna Newgren-Isaacson, Duluth representative, White Earth Nation social worker

The Tribal/State Agreement (TSA) requires parties to meet annually to discuss how the department and Tribes can work together to improve outcomes and provide services for Indian children and families. Minnesota's Annual Progress and Services Report FY2024, p. 202 of 244 Tribal/State Agreement (TSA) was amended in 2007; however, workgroups have started to amend the agreement to update and reflect current federal/state requirements as well as current practice. This workgroup continues to meet and discuss ongoing efforts to update the TSA.

Additionally, AIW staff provide regularly written updates to the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC), which is made up of the 11 Tribal leaders who meet quarterly to discuss statewide topics and provide input to state agencies throughout Minnesota impacting Tribal Nations and American Indian families.

## Section B. Ongoing collaboration

Department staff will continuously meet with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) advisory council quarterly to engage in policy/practices, reporting, present and support further grant opportunities and updates quarterly to MIAC. To garner feedback, staff intend to meet individually with each Tribal social services program to support expansion of culturally appropriate services, specifically around early intervention and culturally appropriate prevention services, as well as address other items identified by the Tribe. Internal department staff will collaborate and coordinate on identifying multiple projects in which to better involve Tribal participation; given staff capacity, the number of projects can be overwhelming to fully participate in all work groups. As staff transition to the newly instituted Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), the American Indian Wellbeing Unit will be working to engage Tribes to ensure work and other supports provided through current department staff are not disrupted.

## Section C. Service arrangements

Through a Tribal workgroup that staff attended, the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA) was amended to ensure federal ICWA provisions were codified in state law. This was part of a 10-year plan developed in 2018 by Tribal leadership in partnership with the department to strengthen and improve child welfare practice with American Indian children and families. The following list reflects ICWA provisions that were added to, or clarified within, MIFPA:

- Applicability
- Policy on Tribal-state relations
- Replacement of "local social services agency" with "child-placing agency"
- Requirements for emergency removal
- Tribal access to files and other documents
- Placement preferences
- Qualified expert witness testimony required for transfer of permanent legal and physical custody (TPLPC) proceedings.

Due to these changes, department staff will be working to update and implement the newly instituted components within tools, resources and other guidance provided in implementing federal and state requirements.

## Section D. ICWA compliance

The American Indian Wellbeing (formally ICWA) Unit currently has two compliance processes: The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA) case review and complaints response.

**Case review:** Passed in 2017, [Minnesota Statutes 477A.0126](#) provides a partial non-federal reimbursement to counties for costs of out-of-home placements of Indian children when those counties substantially comply with the requirements of the federal ICWA and the state MIFPA. Department staff met with counties who were non-compliant to collaboratively develop or update program improvement plans; they also discussed areas of consideration when provisions have not been met. Staff will consult with Tribes and county agencies to assess the current process for the review. The intent is to pull the workgroup back together to reassess the steps to ensure compliance and to address ongoing non-compliant provisions with meeting the federal and state requirements.

**Complaints:** Through the Tribal State Agreement, staff respond to public complaints of non-compliance. Department staff review complaints, and if found non-compliant, county agencies are required to complete a corrective action plan. On average, the unit receives 19-30 complaints a year. Due to the high volume of complaints received, 2023 Minnesota legislation authorized and funded the addition of three permanent staff to solely respond and investigate non-compliance. These additional positions are vital to the public and have increased the unit's capacity to quickly respond. The goal of the unit within the next four years is to have all complaints received and completed in a timely manner and further develop a process of "mapping" using the Collaborative Safety Model to identify and hone in, with Tribal and county agencies, barriers to compliance and why a specific provision continues to be an issue. The intent in this exercise is to strategize addressing and developing further resources or supports for compliance. Current complaint team members will receive training to learn and institute the Collaborative Safety model for mapping sessions.

Major provisions of ICWA/MIFPA reviewed:

- Inquiry
- MIFPA Notice
- ICWA Notice
- Active efforts
- Due diligence in finding and following order to obtain qualified expert witnesses (QEWs)
- Due diligence in following placement preference order.

Department staff monitors statewide aggregate and qualitative data on the [Child Welfare Data Dashboard](#). In response to both compliance processes, AIW team members will be working to develop further training tools for supporting best practices with implementing ICWA/MIFPA requirements. 2023 and 2024 Minnesota legislation have or may change MIFPA statutes; the AIW team will be updating brochures, resources and tools to accurately reflect statutes within each current resource.

### **Resources and tools to support compliance**

Sources of data used to assess ongoing compliance with ICWA and MIFPA include:

- [ICWA/MIFPA Tools and Resources](#)
- [ICWA/MIFPA Manual-2022 \(state.mn.us\)](#)

- [Bulletin 21-68-12 Indian Child Welfare Act and Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act Compliance Case Reviews \(state.mn.us\)](#)
- Data from the Social Service Information System (SSIS)
- Data from the Minnesota Government Access (MGA) system
- Consultation with the ICWA advisory council
- Consultation with each of the 11 Tribal social service programs
- Consultation with the Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators
- ICWA court monitoring program in Ramsey and Hennepin Counties
- ICWA non-compliance complaint process established through Tribal/State Agreement.

## **Section E. Chafee and Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program**

See Chapter 6, Section H. Annual reports and updates are provided to the ICWA council.

## **Section F. Plan exchange**

Department staff from the AIW Unit will provide the ICWA council with strategic planning elements to further discuss, expand and plan accordingly. Further development will be needed once Child Safety and Permanency staff in the AIW Unit become a part of the DCYF and as Tribal/department staff acclimate to the new agency. Liaison work will build upon current avenues for engagement and input around policies and procedures, including the state agency plan and other areas for improvement.

---

# **Chapter 6. Chafee Program**

## **Section A. Agency administering Chafee**

The Minnesota Department of Human Services, through its Child Safety and Permanency Division, Adolescent Services Unit, disburses federal and state funds to county and Tribal agencies in an application process. Non-government, community-based agencies apply for funds via a request for proposals (RFP) process. The state of Minnesota is working on a transition to create a new Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) which will include the Child Safety and Permanency Division of Children and Family Services. This new cabinet-level agency will be established in July 2024 and fully staffed by July 2025.

## Section B. Program description and serving youth

The Department of Human Services, through its Child Safety and Permanency Division, Adolescent Services Unit, disbursed federal and state funds to county and Tribal agencies in an application process. Non-government, community-based agencies apply for funds via a request for proposals (RFP) process. During FFY 2019, department staff negotiated contracts with 12 agencies statewide for a total of 18 contracts regarding independent living skills services and leadership councils. During FFY 2022, a new RFP was published for independent living and youth leadership services in an attempt to provide statewide regionalized services for the first time. Starting July 2022, regions were created across the state, with every county and Tribe having access to a service provider, including two culturally specific service providers in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area (one for African American youth and one for Native American youth). During FFYs 2020-2024, four Tribal agencies requested funding and negotiated contracts to provide these services. All 87 counties were funded for these five years as well. Department staff monitors disbursement of funds and services provided through quarterly narrative progress reports and annual final reports filed by community-based, county and Tribal agencies as well as invoices submitted by Tribal and community agencies. County and Initiative Tribal agencies are also monitored through SSIS.

The application for county and Tribal agencies targets goals youth must accomplish before discharge from placement. Minnesota Statutes 260C.212, subd. 1 requires annual court reviews of independent living plans of youth ages 14 and older in placement. As written in statute, plans should include the following objectives:

- (i) Educational, vocational, or employment planning
- (ii) Health care planning and medical coverage
- (iii) Transportation including, where appropriate, assisting the child in obtaining a driver's license
- (iv) Money management, including responsibility of an agency to ensure that youth annually receives, at no cost to them, a consumer credit report and assistance in interpreting and resolving any inaccuracies in a report
- (v) Planning for housing
- (vi) Social and recreational skills
- (vii) Establishing and maintaining connections with the child's family and community
- (viii) Regular opportunities to engage in age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate activities typical for a child's age group, taking into consideration the capacities of an individual child.

The court is required to review independent living plans and provision of services related to foster youths' well-being as they prepare to leave foster care at age 18 or older. Reviews shall include the actual goals related to each item in the plan necessary for future safety and well-being when no longer in foster care. The court shall also review progress toward or accomplishment of the following goals:

1. Obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent

2. Completed a driver's education course, or has demonstrated the ability to use public transportation in the community
3. Is employed or enrolled in post-secondary education
4. Applied for and obtained post-secondary education financial aid for which they are eligible
5. Has health care coverage and health care providers to meet their physical and mental health needs
6. Applied for and obtained disability income assistance for which they are eligible
7. Obtained affordable housing with necessary supports, which does not include a homeless shelter
8. Saved sufficient funds to pay for the first month's rent and a damage deposit
9. Has an alternative housing plan, which does not include a homeless shelter, if the original housing plan is unworkable
10. If male, has registered for Selective Service
11. Has a permanent connection to a caring adult.

The court shall ensure that the responsible agency, in conjunction with the placement provider, assists in obtaining the following documents prior to leaving foster care at age 18 or older:

- A Social Security card
- Youth's birth certificate
- A state identification card or driver's license
- Tribal enrollment identification card
- Green card or student visa
- Youth's school, medical and dental records
- A contact list of a youth's medical, dental and mental health providers
- Contact information for a youth's siblings, if the siblings are in foster care.

For a youth discharged from foster care at age 18 or older, the responsible social services agency is required to develop a personalized transition plan as directed by youth. Transition plans must be developed during the 180-day period immediately prior to the expected date of discharge. The plan must provide a child with the option to execute a health care directive. The Minnesota state legislature passed legislation during the 2021 session to increase the transition planning period from 90 to 180 days, due to members of the Youth Leadership Council voicing the need for longer transition time.

Agencies shall ensure that youth receives, at no cost, a copy of their consumer credit report and assistance interpreting and resolving inaccuracies in the report. The department has agreements with the three credit reporting agencies to run the credit reports of all youth in care between the ages of 14-17. At 18 and older, agency workers are required to help youth request their own credit report and review it with them.

[STAY](#) (Successful Transition to Adulthood for Youth) is Minnesota's Chafee independent living program within county and Tribal agencies for current and former foster youth ages 14 to 23. Minnesota is vast in geographic area, including urban, suburban and rural regions. In CY2020, in addition to the purchase and provision of services to achieve independent living goals, STAY added the "Big Idea" program (BIP). This

new optional feature is intended to support county and Tribal agencies to pursue creative ways that may better serve youth in their area while increasing positive connections to adults and ultimately creating more successful transitions to adulthood. In FFY2021, a Tribal social service agency opted into “Big Idea” programming. The “Big Idea” program entered its second round of programming in CY2022 and another Tribal social service agency opted in. Programming was then switched to a state fiscal year in 2023. The “Big Idea” program is now in its third cycle.

Data on Minnesota youth from the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) suggests youth having a relationship with an adult that they trust in their lives had positive outcomes related to:

- Fewer experiences of homelessness
- Decreased rates of incarceration
- Decreased rates of birthing or fathering children
- Increased use of treatment services for substance use.

A “Big Idea” is likely to include:

- Collaboration with other county or Tribal agencies or community service providers to combine resources with the goal of increasing service provision for youth
- An emphasis on creating connections to trusted adults within a youth’s life
- A budget for existing Chafee programming (direct services) as well as additional programming to respond to a “Big Idea.”

In FFYs 2020-2022, a portion of Chafee funds were combined with state funds for the Healthy Transitions to Adulthood (HTA) program. This program granted funds to nonprofit agencies to operate community-based programs designed to optimize transition outcomes for youth in out-of-home placement and to prevent homelessness for youth who have experienced out-of-home placement. Twenty-four community-based agencies applied for funding through RFPs. The combined Chafee and state funds were awarded to 11 grantees. These agencies provided services statewide for youth ages 14 and older who were in out-of-home placement and referred by county social workers or youth 14-21 who left placement and were no longer receiving county social services. Grantee agency staff teach youth the life skills they need to make a healthy transition to adulthood by working with them one-to-one or in groups. They collaborate with the county, foster parents and other community providers and resources to ensure that the goals listed above were met for each youth served.

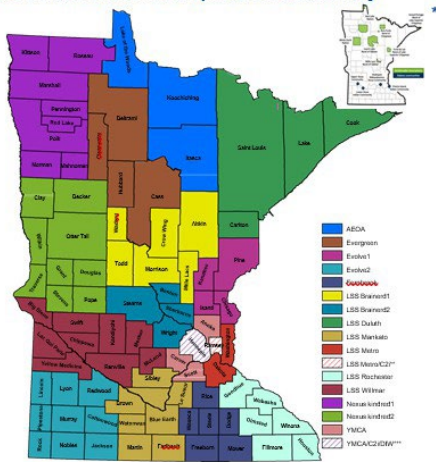
The RFP also linked the use of funds to achievement on the four outcomes specified in the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) preliminary intervention model: Stable housing, permanent connections, education/employment and social/emotional well-being. These outcomes will be targeted by using individual-level services that implement:

- Screening and assessment tools
- Culturally appropriate and effective intervention strategies that target assessed needs and strengths of youth, based on risk and protective factors
- Trauma-informed care and positive youth development frameworks

- Practices that impact positive changes in risk and protective factors to improve core outcome areas over time that help youth make positive transitions
- Monitoring of progress and program evaluation during and after implementation of interventions to provide important data for adjusting and improving strategies over time.

A Youth Leadership Council (YLC) gives youth a voice for improving the foster care system locally, statewide and nationally by strengthening services for youth aging out of care, providing leadership opportunities and representing the interests of youth in policymaking and training. In FFY 2020, Minnesota had eight independent local Youth Leadership Councils, seven through community-based agencies and one through a county agency (through their “Big Idea” programming). One of the community-based councils is specific to Native American youth. In FFY 2022, another county agency started a council through their “Big Idea” programming, for a total of nine YLCs. Representatives of these councils meet at least monthly with the Chafee coordinator and provide the department with input on policies affecting older adolescents in foster care and service delivery.

**STAY (Successful Transition to Adulthood for Youth) in the Community**



\* DFW provides services to all 11 tribes- Grand Portage, Ojibwa, Red Lake, White Earth, Leech Lake, Fond du Lac, Mille Lacs, Shakopee, Upper Sioux, Lower Sioux, and Prairie Island  
 \*\* LSS Mower and all other culturally diverse service options for Ramsey County  
 \*\*\* YMCA, CD, and DFW provide culturally diverse service options for Hennepin County

In FFY2023, a complementary program to STAY programming provided by county and some Tribal agencies was implemented. [STAY in the Community](#) is Minnesota’s independent living program through community-based agencies. While eligibility is the same for both STAY and STAY in the Community programs, youth are not able to access case management services from both programs at the same time. The intent is to reduce duplication of services; increase collaboration among counties, Tribes and community agencies; and ultimately ensure more youth are served. Eighteen proposals were received through the RFP process. Fourteen agencies were awarded contracts to provide services across the entire state, including to all 11 federally recognized Tribes. This was the first time the entire state had access to these services. STAY in the Community agencies provide independent living skills groups, transition services for youth

aging out of care, individual independent living skills for youth over 18 who are no longer receiving services from a county or Tribal agency and Youth Leadership Councils. STAY in the Community providers also provide services to youth who moved to Minnesota from other states, as long as they meet Minnesota’s eligibility criteria. Minnesota now has 18 independent local [Youth Leadership Councils](#), 16 through community agencies (one of which is specific to Native American Youth) and two through county agencies. This was also the first time that the entire state had access to youth leadership councils. STAY in the Community programming received one-time funding from the Minnesota legislature in the 2023 session. Increased funding for both STAY and STAY in the Community programming will continue to be requested.

To customize federal National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) regulations to Minnesota’s efforts, the department has adopted the acronym MNYTD to reflect the [Minnesota Youth in Transition Database \(MNYTD\)](#). MNYTD represents Minnesota’s procedures and processes to comply with federal policy.



MNYTD requires that any independent living services provided to transitional youth be entered in SSIS. Surveys, along with contact sheets, are completed by county workers with all youth in placement on or within 45 days after their 17th birthday every three years. The department has monthly contact with all counties and Tribes to ensure timely entry of survey data. Youth who were in the baseline population of 17-year-olds in care and who completed the MNYTD survey are asked to respond to the survey again at ages 19 and 21, regardless of whether they are still in care. The department contracts with a vendor (The Improve Group) to locate, communicate with, survey and administer incentives to these youth until they reach age 21.

A Chafee Advisory Committee is comprised of county workers, community-based agency staff and youth. This committee meets quarterly to discuss the STAY and ETV programs and address concerns. National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) and other pertinent data are shared during these meetings. This information is also shared with stakeholders, Tribes and courts through bulletins and a quarterly adolescent services newsletter titled “Empowering Youth Update.” Data has also been shared during trainings and meetings regarding adolescent services, specifically that the NYTD data shows better outcomes for youth that have remained in foster care through the extended foster care program. The NYTD review is not yet scheduled. Stakeholders and others have been informed that a review is coming and will be informed in these same ways once it has been scheduled.

## **Section C. Collaboration**

Foster youth provide personal testimony on their experiences in the foster care system through focus groups, presentations and panels. Youth have presented at foster parent appreciation events, conferences and department meetings. Youth have been requested to be members on committees and subcommittees for the department.

Adolescent Services staff presented at conferences, trainings and meetings regarding transition planning for foster care youth. These were held at county, Tribal and community-based agencies, as well as other community sites. Adolescent Services staff discussed the services available for youth in or aging out of foster care, transitioning from foster care to adulthood, extended foster care and other requirements of federal and state laws and policies.

Gov. Tim Walz designated April as Financial Capability Month in Minnesota and assigned the commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Commerce to organize the interagency group that sponsored events across Minnesota. To promote fiscal literacy across the state, resources were sent to all county and Tribal social service agencies, child care providers and community youth-serving agencies.

The Safe Harbor Act (Minnesota Statutes 260C.007, subd. 31, and Minnesota Statutes 145.4716, 145.4717 and 145.4718) offers protection and comprehensive services to Minnesota youth who have been sexually exploited. This is a collaboration between the Minnesota Department of Health and the department (Office of Economic Opportunity, Licensing and Child Safety and Permanency Divisions). Because of the Safe Harbor Act, youth under age 18 are treated as victims of sex trafficking rather than delinquent. Under Minnesota Statutes 626.558, county social service agencies shall develop a

multidisciplinary child protection team to assist in developing outreach services for sexually exploited youth, including homeless, runaway and truant youth who are at risk of sexual exploitation. This team may provide case consultation and a case review process in which recommendations are made concerning services to be provided to identified children and families. The team must include a representative of a youth intervention program or one representative of a nonprofit agency serving youth in crisis. In addition, agency staff should collaborate with the Safe Harbor regional navigator to identify and provide comprehensive services.

In Minnesota, the Safe Harbor law meets Title IV-E requirements for identifying, reporting and determining services for victims of sex trafficking. Grant funds go to community agencies to provide shelter and services for youth, funded in collaboration with the Office of Economic Opportunity. The Minnesota Department of Health provides regional navigators, and training is provided by the department. Enhancements to SSIS provide protocols to collect data to meet Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) requirements.

Adolescent Services staff has been working with counties since October 2019 to support and facilitate the coordination of child welfare agencies and public housing authorities to utilize Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) vouchers. A letter was sent to all counties, supporting them in applying for the vouchers. The department has participated in webinars involving the public housing authorities and Continuum of Care providers to support the use of these vouchers. The department has assisted counties, public housing authorities and service providers to educate, collaborate and assist in creating these partnerships. Barriers to this work include finding service providers that can commit to five years as youth normally age out of the age range they work with. Another barrier has been finding available housing once the youth receives the voucher. There are currently 16 known public housing authorities with signed agreements to provide the vouchers.

The department has proposed legislation to provide additional funding and services to youth leaving extended foster care in the 2023 legislative session. Although this proposal was not funded, the department has begun working on a more robust proposal for next session to help secure additional resources and funding for youth that leave foster care.

The Child Safety and Permanency Division is working with the Health Care Division regarding the requirements to offer Medicaid to eligible young adults formerly in foster care who move to a new state after Jan. 1, 2023. Resources will be provided on the department's website and through other materials received by counties and Tribes. Training will be provided to ensure young adults leaving foster care are aware of this resource through the transition plan as well.

The 2023 Minnesota legislative session approved funding to provide Medicaid to former foster youth who exited care prior to Jan. 1, 2023, and moved to Minnesota. The Health Care Division is still in the process of updating their application system to accommodate this change. They continue to keep the Child Safety and Permanency Division apprised of progress, barriers and current workarounds. The Health Care Division has received funding from the Minnesota legislature for a full-time position that operates as a policy liaison for Medicaid and child welfare policy. The Child Safety and Permanency Division is working closely with this new position to orient them to related child welfare procedures and

policies. The Child Safety and Permanency Division has continued to work on publications for workers and youth. The information guides for youth provide a basic overview of health insurance and Medicaid, different ways they may be eligible for Medicaid now and in the future, and who to contact with questions. The information guide for workers includes a brief overview of all state policies and procedures related to Medicaid for former foster care youth, where to find more in-depth information, which agencies or departments to contact with policy or procedure questions and guidance for a variety of common scenarios workers may encounter (including youth moving to other states). The guides have been reviewed by the Health Care Division, youth at a Youth Leadership Council event, Minnesota's new Ombudsperson for Foster Youth, child welfare workers from a neighboring state and several community agencies that work with aged-out foster youth.

The Child Safety and Permanency Division implemented collaboration efforts with the Behavioral Health and Disability Services Divisions to coordinate efforts across the department's administrations to ensure all eligible youth have access to services to which they are entitled. Some meetings occur quarterly and others occur monthly. These meetings develop relationships so that collaboration can occur between meetings as well.

The department has published the document [“Working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning/queer youth.”](#) The department has also worked with the Human Rights Campaign and successfully reached the training platform for the Child Safety and Permanency Division for the All Families work. The department has also issued the following resources to the counties and Tribes throughout the state: [All Children-All Families: LGBTQ+ Resources for Child Welfare Professionals](#) and [LGBTQ Youth in Foster Care](#).

All Chafee-funded county, Tribal and community-based agencies identify and use other public and private programs and resources to maximize services to youth. A benefit of this approach is that it builds future connections and resources for youth in their community. Examples of additional resources include:

- Job opportunities through Work Force Centers
- Driver's education instruction through local schools
- Public and private financial aid resources for youth attending post-secondary school
- Personal safety, health care and nutrition education provided by public health staff, county extension services and women's resource centers
- Group training events provided by volunteer community experts
- Meeting room space donated by churches, community centers, colleges and other organizations
- Volunteer mentors, co-facilitators and chaperones for retreats
- Federal, state and locally funded/subsidized transitional housing options
- Local sobriety groups and sponsors
- Vocational rehabilitation programs, waiver services and Supplemental Security Income for youth with disabilities
- Area learning centers and Adult Basic Education programs

- Partnerships with local churches to provide volunteers, emergency housing and donations of household goods for youth moving into dorms or apartments.

Foster parent training is highly recommended as a means of skills training when caring for teens in out-of-home placement. The Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy offers free training for county foster parents and relative/kinship care providers on how to prepare youth for adulthood. They also offer access to Foster Parent College which provides innovative, research-based and interactive courses to give foster, adoptive, and kinship parents the knowledge and tools they need. Foster Adopt Minnesota (formerly MN ADOPT) supports the adoption and foster care community by providing educational opportunities to caregivers and professionals.

There has been more collaboration at a national level. There have been independent living/education training voucher program peer-to-peer calls as well as regional calls. There have also been calls specific to Division X of the Consolidated Appropriations Act. The Minnesota Chafee coordinator has collaborated extensively with the Wisconsin Chafee coordinator, specifically on how to regionalize independent living services through community agencies. The department will cooperate in any federal national evaluations of the effects of the programs in achieving the purposes of Chafee.

The Adolescent Services Unit meets regularly with a foster coalition, which is a group of community agencies including foster youth and culturally specific service providers, to discuss issues regarding transition age youth and their service provisions.

## Section D. Determining eligibility for benefits and services

Minnesota STAY program eligibility is defined in [Minnesota Statutes 260C.452](#) and by department policy as:

Minimum age	14
Maximum age	23rd birthday
Eligibility for youth in foster care	Youth ages 14–20 on a county or Tribal social services caseload and in out-of-home placement for at least 30 consecutive days after age 14. These youth may be served until they are discharged from placement (up to their 21st birthday). This includes all child welfare/protection, children’s mental health and developmental disabilities work groups in SSIS.
Eligibility for youth who aged out of foster care at age 18 or older	Youth aging out of foster care at ages 18, 19 or 20 may be served up until their 23rd birthday.

Eligibility for youth who exited foster care to adoption or transfer of permanent legal and physical custody to a relative	Youth who exited foster care to either adoption or transfer of permanent legal and physical custody to a relative (TPLPC) after age 16* may be served until their 23rd birthday. *If adoption or TPLPC occurs at age 14 or 15, the youth lose eligibility.
Eligibility for youth who exited foster care for reasons other than adoption, transfer of permanent legal and physical custody to a relative, or aging out of foster care (e.g., reunification)	Youth who exited foster care for reasons other than adoption, transfer of permanent legal and physical custody to a relative, or aging out of foster care (e.g., youth who were reunified) may be served if they are on a county or Tribal social services caseload and experienced out-of-home placement for at least 30 consecutive days after age 14. These youth may be served until their 23rd birthday.

- Ages 14 and older who are under state guardianship or in permanent custody of an agency and expected to remain in placement until age 18 or older should be the highest priority.
- All county placements must be entered into the Social Services Information System for the department to verify eligibility.

Eligibility is explained in bulletins and request for proposals, as well as executed award letters and contracts, so that county, Tribal and community-based agencies receiving Chafee funds clearly understand which youth can be served with these funds.

The following tables show demographics of Chafee eligible youth in Minnesota.

### Stay Eligibility - Summary

There are 8,320 youth / adults eligible for STAY as of 04/07/2024  
Data shown by age today and Race (alone)

Breakdown	14 through 17 yrs	18 through 20 yrs	21 through 22 yrs	Grand Total
African-American / Black	336	472	499	1,307
American Indian	373	447	359	1,179
Asian / Pacific Islander	58	54	45	157
Two or more races	571	598	416	1,585
Unknown / declined	39	22	13	74
White	1,225	1,617	1,341	4,183
Total	2,559	3,137	2,624	8,320

The figure above shows the number of eligible youth by age and by race.

### Stay Eligibility - Summary

There are 8,320 youth / adults eligible for STAY as of 04/07/2024  
Data shown by age today and Ethnicity

Breakdown	14 through 17 yrs	18 through 20 yrs	21 through 22 yrs	Grand Total
Hispanic (any race)	284	381	309	974
Not Hispanic	2,294	2,769	2,334	7,397
Total	2,559	3,137	2,624	8,320

The figure above shows the number of eligible youth by age and by ethnicity.

### Stay Eligibility - Summary

There are 8,320 youth / adults eligible for STAY as of 04/07/2024  
Data shown by age today and ICWA status

Breakdown	14 through 17 yrs	18 through 20 yrs	21 through 22 yrs	Grand Total
ICWA indicated	470	536	419	1,425
Not ICWA indicated	2,117	2,635	2,237	6,989
Total	2,559	3,137	2,624	8,320

The figure above shows the number of eligible youth by age and by ICWA status.

## Section E. Cooperation in national evaluations

The state agency will cooperate in any national evaluations of the effects of the programs in achieving the purposes of Chafee. (See Chapter 6, Section B for additional information about MNYTD.)

## Section F. Chafee training

Planned Chafee training:

- Monthly virtual case or program-specific trauma consultations will be provided to county, Tribal and community-based agencies funded with Chafee and/or state funds.
- Chafee Advisory Committee quarterly meetings will take place with county, Tribal, and community agencies to discuss Chafee and ETV programs, as well as other adolescent services.
- Monthly technical assistance meetings will take place with Youth Leadership Council supportive adults to discuss recruitment, retention and other membership issues.
- Youth Leadership Councils will be convened for an annual summer retreat on networking, team building and work plans.
- A three-day Tomorrow's Leaders Today conference will be held for approximately 125 Chafee-eligible youth and their chaperones.

- County, Tribal and community agencies will be convened for an annual fall retreat on group independent living skills facilitation and youth engagement.
- Youth Leadership Councils convened for an annual winter retreat on base-building and advocacy prior to facilitating their Foster Child and Youth Day on the Hill.
- Community agencies will be convened for an annual spring training.
- Training and technical assistance regarding Chafee and NYTD will be provided to county, Tribal and community agency staff and other stakeholders as needed or requested.
- An Independent Living Plan and Youth Engagement webinar recording is available for county and Tribal workers as well as foster care providers.
- “Responsive Child Welfare Practice with LGBTQ Youth” will introduce best practices when working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning youth. LGBTQ youth are overrepresented in child welfare systems and have been subjected to historical discrimination and oppression contributing to vulnerability and challenges. This training is intended to increase the awareness, knowledge, skills and abilities of social workers and supervisors to work effectively with this unique population through self-reflection, data, resource sharing and interactive activities.
- “Sexually Exploited Youth Overview” will provide an overview of human trafficking and sexual exploitation of children in Minnesota, including identifying risk factors, red flags and best practices for working with sexually exploited youth.
- “Sexually Exploited Youth Human Trafficking Child Welfare Response” will give the department’s guidance on responding to sexually exploited youth within Minnesota’s child welfare system in the context of legislative efforts including Public Law 114-22, Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, and Minnesota’s Safe Harbor Law and No Wrong Door Model.
- “Human Trafficking and Sexually Exploited Youth” will provide staff with the knowledge and skills to identify trafficking, exploitation, youth at-risk of trafficking or exploitation; assess and respond to potential trafficking and exploitation of youth; coordinate with partners in meeting the needs of youth and families and demonstrate culturally responsive practice.

## **Section G. Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) Program**

Over the next five years, the department will adopt a productive and agile approach to operate the ETV program efficiently. This approach is people-centered and focused on the value received by ETV students. Changes made to the ETV program over the next five years will be those identified through ETV student feedback as increasing value to students. The department will use a productive and agile approach to achieve four goals:

1. Advance equity in voucher program.
2. Provide effective, holistic support to students to enroll and stay in post-secondary education.
3. Increase number of students who use their entire voucher.
4. Increase awareness of the voucher program among eligible current and former foster care youth.

**Goal 1:** Advance equity in the ETV program.

The department will advance equity within the ETV program in four areas:

- Ensure representation and equity in access to post-secondary education for ETV students who identify as American Indian, African American, two or more races or Hispanic.
- Address inequities faced by ETV students because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.
- Ensure ETV students with disabilities have the support they need to succeed.
- Address inequities faced by ETV because of cultural, geographic or economic differences.

The department will regularly assess voucher usage by ETV students against available demographic benchmarks to identify any disparities and take corrective actions as needed. The department will track the ratio of credits earned to credits attempted for each ETV student by college to gauge the success of ETV students college, university and educational programs.

**Goal 2:** Provide effective, holistic support to students to enroll and stay in post-secondary education.

The department will survey ETV students to assess student experience when accessing resources on campus and within the community. Survey data will identify trends, challenges and areas of improvement. Through this feedback loop, the department will gauge ETV student success in coursework and overall satisfaction with ETV program's responsiveness to student needs. The department will develop targeted interventions and adjustments to the ETV program's support services.

**Goal 3:** Increase number of ETV students who use their entire voucher.

The department will track the month in both fall and spring semesters when ETV students fully exhaust their vouchers to gain insights into the efficiency of budget allocation and the ability of students to manage their expenses throughout the academic year. The department will develop personalized plans with ETV students who are not using their vouchers, which may include targeted outreach, additional guidance on eligible expenses and proactive assistance in navigating the process.

**Goal 4:** Increase awareness of the voucher program among eligible current and former foster care youth.

The department will collaborate with school social workers, counselors and transitional-age youth service providers to ensure eligible students receive targeted support and guidance. Communication



strategies will be designed in collaboration with youth with lived experience to support outreach efforts targeting ETV-eligible young people.

The ETV program obtains the student's cost of attendance in one of three ways:

- From the student's school through a data sharing agreement with the Minnesota Office of Higher Education
- From the student who provides the financial aid award letter the student received from the school, or
- Through the College Navigator on the National Center for Education Statistics website.

The ETV amount is determined by subtracting financial aid, including federal, state and private grants, Tribal and other scholarships, other institutional aid and waivers and expected family contribution from each student's cost of attendance. This ensures ETV and other federal assistance does not exceed the total cost of attendance.

For ETV students in extended foster care, if their housing expenses exceed the portion of their extended foster care maintenance amount for housing, food and incidental expenses, the student can use ETV funds on these expenses. If their housing expenses do not exceed the portion of their extended foster care maintenance amount for housing, food and incidental expenses, they cannot use their ETV funds for housing expenses.

The process for making ETV awards change significantly began with the 2022-2023 school year. At that time, the Minnesota Office of Higher Education began to administer the Fostering Independence Grant program. The ETV program entered into a data-sharing agreement with the Minnesota Office of Higher Education to determine student eligibility for the Fostering Independence Grant program. The Minnesota Office of Higher Education generates a list of students who identify on their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) they have been in foster care at age 13 or older. The ETV program uses the Minnesota State and Tribal Information System to verify foster care experience of students on the list. At the same time, the ETV program identifies students whose foster care experience makes them eligible for the ETV program. The ETV program identified 1,156 unduplicated ETV-eligible students who submitted the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years. ETV funds supplement, not supplant, state funds available for the Fostering Independence Grant program.

## **Section H. Consultation with Tribes**

Department staff consulted with Minnesota's Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council on April 18, 2024, regarding Chafee and ETV, and annually the past four years. All 11 Tribes in Minnesota and several large urban agencies are represented on the advisory council. Staff from Child Safety and Permanency Division attend each meeting. The 11 Tribes are provided the same information and receive the same training and technical assistance as county agencies. An annual bulletin is issued with instructions on

how to request Chafee funds. In 2020, four Tribes submitted proposals and they continue to receive Chafee funds through contracts. When Tribes request funding, they describe their programs and how they will utilize the funding. No Tribe has requested to administer its own Chafee program. Chafee funds also support an urban Native American community-based agency that provides independent living skills training to Chafee-eligible Native American youth in the metro area as well as provides support to all the Tribes in Minnesota.

Tribal agencies are invited to all training offered by the department. There are also trainings for county workers regarding ICWA and MIFPA requirements.

The University of Minnesota offers a life skills curriculum for Native American youth called “Expanding the Circle: Transition Resources for American Indian Youth” that is designed from a culturally relevant perspective that recognizes students' cultural backgrounds, interests and lived experiences, and promotes a successful transition from high school.

Live It! is a teen pregnancy prevention and sexuality education curriculum. Designed for American Indians by American Indians, it is a culturally specific program for youth and the adults in their lives. The curriculum details the basic physiological and emotional development we each go through before, during and after adolescence, along with cultural, artistic and self-reflective exercises.

The Casey Life Skills Assessment tool has a culturally specific version for Native American youth. The American Indian Assessment is designed to address the unique cultural needs of American Indians in maintaining their cultural identity while navigating two worlds. It was built in collaboration with Tribal elders, community leaders, parent and youth from Tribes across the United States. This assessment may help American Indian youth as they struggle to retain their Tribal values when living in large, urban settings and navigate difficulties they may experience when they return to their Tribal community.

---

## Enclosures

Targeted plans:

- Diligent recruitment plan
- Health care oversight and coordination plan
- Disaster plan
- Training plan.

Assurances and certifications:

- Title IV-B, subparts 1 and 2
- Chafee and ETV.

CFS-101 forms