
Final Report on 2020-2024 CFSP

State of Minnesota

06/30/2024



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Overview

This final report is the fifth and last update on the progress and services outlined in the 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) for the State of Minnesota Department of Human Services (department). The final report provides a framework for Minnesota to convene partners to assess progress made over the past five years and to see where communities can come together to implement boarder systemic change, consistent with the state’s vision for child welfare services.

This report is on the [department’s website](#).

Chapter 1. Collaboration

The department’s Child Safety and Permanency (CSP) Division staff collaborate with diverse representation of internal and external collaborators and contributors across the spectrum of the statewide child and family service delivery system. Through ongoing and meaningful partnerships, CSP identifies and modifies goals and strategies to improve equitable outcomes for children and families in the child welfare system; monitor progress and barriers; and report out and celebrate shared achievements.

A sample of department collaborators include, but are not limited to:

Administration for Children and Families	Foster care survivors	Parent leaders for Child Safety and Permanency
Center for States	Indian Child Welfare Act Advisory Council	Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota
Center for Health Equity	Juvenile corrections	Regional supervisor groups
Child development services	Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy	Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators
Child Mortality Review Panel	Minnesota courts	State ombudspersons for families
Children’s Justice Act Task Force	Minnesota Department of Education	Trafficking survivors
Children’s Justice Initiative	Minnesota Department of Health	Tribal representatives
Children’s Trust Fund	Minnesota Information Technology	University of Minnesota
Citizen Review Panels	Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System	Youth leadership councils
Community service providers	Parent leaders	
Community-based organizations		
County agency staff and administration		

A sample of substantial, ongoing, and meaningful collaboration the department engaged in over the past year include, but is not limited to:

- The CSP division director co-chairs the Children’s Justice Initiative (CJI) Advisory Committee with the Chief Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court. CJI membership includes a CSP deputy director and the department’s Children

and Family Services (CFS) Administration deputy assistant commissioner. CJI, including its Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Subcommittee, sets priorities and directs activities that inform CSP's work.

- The department regularly engages with the Minnesota Children's Justice Act (CJA) Task Force, which serves as a multidisciplinary advisory board regarding front-end child welfare system responses and recommends statewide policy and practice improvement. The department collaborates with Task Force leadership to support these recommendations.
- CSP and State Court Administrator's staff meet monthly to continue collaborating, planning, and implementing joint projects, and planning for round four of the CFSR. In addition, CSP staff collaborate closely with Court Improvement Plan (CIP) staff on shared projects.
- Department staff attends all Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Advisory Council meetings to provide updates on department work and to engage in consultation on policies affecting American Indian children and families.
- The department funds county agencies and American Indian Child Welfare Initiative (AICWI) Tribes to provide Parent Support Outreach Programming (PSOP). Together, these agencies make decisions regarding services or community resources that will promote successful outcomes.
- CSP supports a growing number of Youth Leadership Councils. These councils give youth a voice in improving the foster care system, both locally and statewide. Council members work to strengthen services for youth aging out of care, provide leadership opportunities, and represent the interests of youth in policymaking and training. Youth provide the department with input on policies affecting older adolescents in foster care and service delivery.
- CSP regularly meet with local agency staff, such as consulting through Rapid Consultations, Safety Practice Profiles community of practice, and monthly phone calls.
- The department meets monthly with the Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACSSA) to ensure ongoing engagement with and feedback from local agency leadership.
- CSP regularly convenes external partners across the child welfare continuum, including county and Tribal agencies, courts, providers, and communities, in the various stages of implementing the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA).
- The department participates in the Senior Leadership Team of the Children's Cabinet and multiple work groups focused on improving healthy births, children's mental health, early learning, and housing supports.
- The department participates in the Interagency Leadership Team, which brings together directors across the Minnesota Departments of Health, Human Services and Education, focused on improving the system of care for young children and their families.
- CSP continues collaborating with Child Development Services and Economic Assistance and Employment Supports divisions and Future Services Institute (University of Minnesota) to fund 12 communities experiencing geographic, economic, or racial inequities across the state to co-create whole family solutions to issues identified as critical by those communities.
- The department continues to support Preschool Development Grant (PDG) grantees across the state. Another round of partner engagement featured how families served experienced PDG-funded programs.
- In FY2024, the department conducted community engagement activities with all stakeholders using a variety of strategies. We worked with Children's Bureau, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Casey Family Programs, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Prevent Child Abuse America in partnership with parents, youth, and community organizations to develop a Thriving Families, Safer Children work group. The work group defined and advanced policy and practice changes to help reduce unnecessary involvement of Black, Indigenous, and children and families of color in the child protection system. Instead, the work group aimed to equitably connect families to services and supports that will more appropriately promote child and family well-being. Their findings are outlined in this [report](#).

- The department also conducted Tribal consultations, surveys and focus groups regarding foster care licensing and training as well as supported 18 youth leadership councils and a Foster Child and Youth Day on the Hill for members to share their policy ideas. The Child Welfare Training Academy also conducted focus groups related to reforming the current training system. Casey Family Programs also assisted with engaging counties in discussions about their support needs.
- In addition, the department began conducting community conversations to collect input for the CFSP and feedback about what communities want to see in our child welfare system. So far, conversations have been held in St. Paul, where most attendees were from the African American community; and Bemidji, where most attendees were from American Indian Tribal Nations. Feedback from these meetings will be incorporated into the CFSP and we intend to continue hosting these meetings across the state and with various cultural groups and types of families (i.e., birth, foster, adoptive).

Common themes heard from all groups included the need for community-based supports that are culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate for all families that can be accessed without fear of surveillance or penalties. These include economic supports, especially during crises, and mental health services and supports. Our community partners also asked for help for families with navigating systems, increased and improved training for all people involved in the system, better interagency cooperation and communication, and increased workforce allowing for lower caseloads. Finally, all community groups indicated a need for increased and more flexible funding for economic supports for families, programs and services, workforce recruitment and retention, and improved data systems.

Partnering with collaborators and contributors continues to be key to ensuring the direction of program efforts stays focused on relevant goals and objectives, based on data, and considerate of agencies' strengths and areas needing improvement. Since Minnesota is a state-supervised, county-administered system, this ongoing collaboration is fundamental to achieving shared outcomes.

Chapter 2. Update on assessment of performance

Section 1. Assessment of performance

Round 3 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 has 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 CFRS 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 complete 11 cases, including in-home and out-of-home care cases. The findings of those cases have been provided to Hennepin County's Continuous Quality Improvement team, which presented the findings to their governance team; next, they will 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.

Subsection A. Child safety, permanency, and Well-being outcomes

Safety outcomes

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.

Please refer to Goals 5 to review performance of this item in measuring performance throughout the implementation of the 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan

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 reinvolverment.

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.

Please refer to Goal 5 to review performance of this item in measuring performance throughout the implementation of the 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan

Permanency outcomes

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).

Please refer to Goals 1, 2, and 5 to review performance of these items in measuring performance throughout the implementation of the 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan.

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.

Well-being outcomes

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. 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. 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.

Please refer to Goals 1, 2, and 5 to review performance of these items in measuring performance throughout the implementation of the 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan.

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.

Subsection B. Systemic factors

Statewide information system

Minnesota has made significant investment and improvements in its comprehensive child welfare information system, known as the Social Service Information System (SSIS). The CFSR Round 3 resulted in a PIP goal around the state’s CCWIS. Minnesota can readily identify, at an average rate of 98%, each of the following for every child who is currently in foster care or who was in foster care the preceding 12 months:

- Status: whether the child is in foster care or no longer in care
- Demographic characteristics: date of birth, sex, race, ethnicity
- Location: child's physical location
- Placement goal: reunification, adoption, guardianship, another planned permanent living arrangement, or not yet determined.

The following table shows the rate of completion for each of these factors for children in care at the time the report was run (May 2024) and all children in care at least one day of the preceding 12 months (May 2023-May 2024).

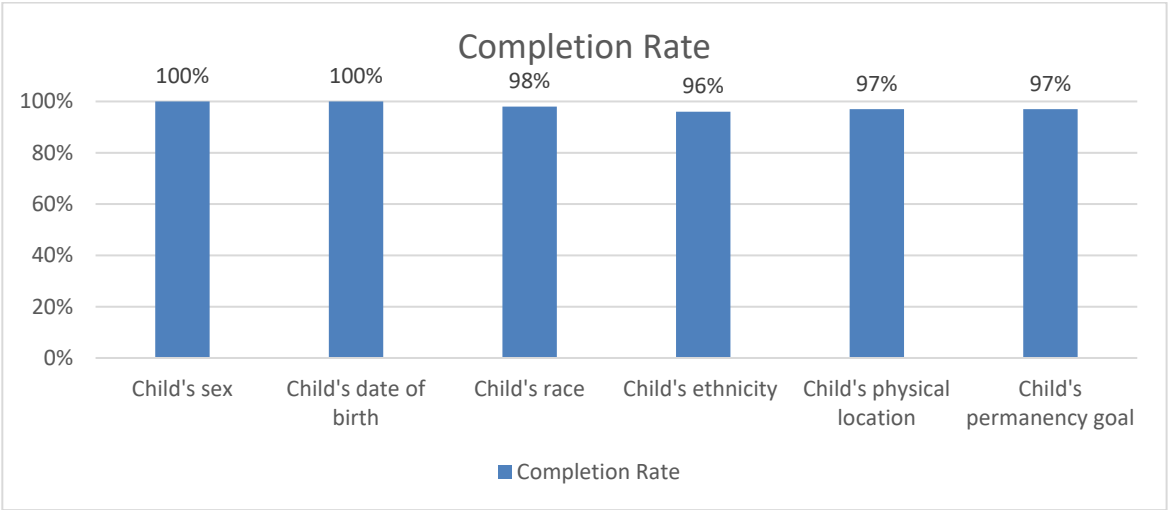


Figure 19.2 Completion Rate¹

SSIS utilizes a variety of data integrity features to ensure that required information is timely, accurate and consistent, including, but not limited to:

- **Client Clearing Log:** Clearing is a process in SSIS used to ensure accuracy of existing and new client demographic data. When new information is entered or if existing information is changed, the system automatically sends the information to the Client Clearing Log to validate and ensure no duplication. If there is a conflict, the client case will appear as “Uncleared Client” in the Clearing Log until the caseworker corrects the record.
- **Entry date:** The date and time of when placement data are entered into SSIS is automatically populated in the system to track timeliness of data entry. This information is reflected in the AFCARS Tardy Transaction Compliance Errors. Per Minnesota’s final resubmission on the 23B AFCARS report, data is being entered into SSIS in a very timely manner: 94% compliant for element 154 (exit transaction date) and 97% compliant for element 70 (removal transaction date).

Reminders and alerts: The system generates reminders and alerts to help caseworkers complete tasks in a timely manner. Users may also set their own reminders. An example of an event that triggers a reminder includes assignment of a new case (workgroup). An example of an event that triggers an alert includes statutory deadlines for the conclusion of a child protection assessment or investigation.

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](#).

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.

¹ Source: SSIS, accessed May 8, 2024, includes all children in care at least one day since May 8, 2023.

Category	Numerator	Denominator
Sex	9,252	9,252 (number of unique children)
Date of birth	9,252	9,252 (number of unique children)
Race (179 children/youth listed as unknown or declined)	9,073	9,252 (number of unique children)
Ethnicity (371 listed as unknown or declined)	8,881	9,252 (number of unique children)
Physical location (406 had no address listed)	13,796	14,202 (number of placements)
Permanency goal (317 listed as unknown)	8,935	9,252

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](#).

Quality assurance system – see Chapter 3

Staff and provider training

Minnesota has made significant investment in staff training over the past five years and continues to develop and improve curriculum and delivery. Nearly \$10 million has been invested in the effort to better prepare the child welfare workforce for serving children and families (see [Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy implementation report](#)). Since its founding in 2019, the Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy has expanded to five regional learning centers and hired additional trainers to improve the accessibility and availability of training statewide. 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. Training for foster parents and facility staff continues to be largely administered and tracked on a local level, due to statutory requirements. However, the state provides regulatory oversight of all licensed providers to ensure compliance of initial and ongoing training requirements. The state is considering a CFSP 2025-2029 strategy around child welfare workforce training and ongoing support. Please refer to the CFSP statewide assessment, which will be posted on the [Children's Bureau Round 4 website](#), for extensive and detailed information, data, and figures on this systemic factor.

Service array and resource development

Minnesota continues to improve the availability and accessibility statewide of services that assess, address, and support families and children. In reviewing information in preparation for this Final Report and CFSP, the state identified an impressive array of services delivered statewide, including family group decision making, parent support outreach program, whole family systems grants, permanency support services, children's mental health case management, etc. The state continues to address challenges in geographic, cultural, and linguistic accessibility to services, especially in rural areas in Greater Minnesota. For example, the state is establishing a network of community resource centers, coupling them with kinship navigator programs, to increase access to programs, services, and economic 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. The state is considering a CFSP 2025-2029 strategy around improving culturally responsive service array through increased targeted community engagement efforts and expanded funding. Extensive information about individualization of services, as well as multiple initiatives involving Tribes and urban Indian communities and work with African American children and families, is found on pages 50-55 and 77-83, respectively, of this document. Additional detailed information on this systemic factor is available in the CFSP statewide assessment, which is due August 2024 and will be posted on the [Children's Bureau Round 4 website](#). As noted in Chapters 1 and 5 of this document and throughout the CFSP 2025-2029 and CFSP statewide assessment, the department is striving to center lived experience and the voices of communities in driving improvement to service array and individualization.

Agency responsiveness to community

Minnesota has focused on improving authentic engagement with community over the last five years and will continue to prioritize community voice. The state engages with youth with lived expertise, county partners, Tribal partners, parent leaders, trafficking survivors, court partners, community-based providers, foster parents, ombudspersons, etc. There are several standing advisory councils and task forces that provide community input that inform policy development and other department decisions on a regular basis. Detailed information on this systemic factor can be found throughout this document (e.g., Chapters 1 and 5 and Strategy 1.3.3, etc.) and in the CFSP 2025-2029 (e.g., Chapters 1 and 5). Additional

information is also available in the CFSR statewide assessment, 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.

Licensing, recruitment, and retention

Over the last five years, Minnesota has seen a significant increase in the number of family child foster care licenses (up 40% from 3,119 in 2015 to 4,353 in 2023) and relative-only child foster care license holders (up 160% from 545 in 2015 to 1,415 in 2023). Data being reviewed as part of the CFSR process suggest that diligent recruitment efforts are succeeding in that foster parent racial/ethnicity demographics are coming into closer alignment with the racial/ethnic demographics of

children in care. Additional detailed information on this systemic factor will be available in the CFSR statewide assessment, which is due August 2024.

Section 2. Plan for enacting the state’s vision

Subsection A. Goal 1: Improve engagement and collaboration with children, parents, relatives/kin, and resource families.

To address the CFSP goal regarding engagement and collaboration, progress will be assessed using CFSR Permanency Outcome 2, Wellbeing Outcome 1, and the state performance measure on caseworker visits. The measurement targets for this goal are below.

Measurement Targets for Goal 1

Measure type	Measures	Target	Baseline year	Baseline	Year 1 (2017/2018)	Year 2 (2018/2019)	Year 3 (2019/2020)
CFSR	Permanency Outcome 2	88.0%	2017/2018	83.0%	83.8%	90.7%	91.2%
CFSR	Well-being Outcome 1	70.0%	2017/2018	61.0%	65.7%	79.4%	79.2%
Measure type	Measure	Target	Baseline year	Baseline	Year 1 (2019)	Year (2020)	Year (2021)
State	Caseworker visits	87.0%	2018	82.3%	82.8%	83.8%	83.3%

Objective 1.1: Improve knowledge and practice related to developing, engaging, and supporting social support networks (including relatives) for children to remain safely in their home – and when placement is necessary, maintain connections, improve placement options, and support permanency outcomes.

This objective will be achieved through the strategies described below.

Progress on the first objective will be assessed through use of CFSR Items 11 (relative placement), and 12C (Needs and services of foster parents). Surveys will be developed to assess foster parents’ satisfaction with engagement in a child’s case, including relatives and kin providers. The measurement benchmarks for this objective below.

Measurements for Goal 1-Objective 1

Benchmarks	Year 1 (2017-2018)	Year 2 (2018-2019)	Year 3 (2019-2020)	Year 4 (2020-2021)
Item 11 baseline (2017/18): 83%	Target: 85% Observed: 72%	87% 87.2%	89% 89%	91% 90%
Item 12C baseline (2017/18): 86%	Target: 87% Observed: 84%	88% 92.2%	89% 90%	90% 89.34%
Resource family satisfaction with engagement survey	Survey developed, implemented, and baseline and target established	On hold due to pandemic	On hold	Completed*

*In 2022, the Foster Parent or Caregiver Survey was conducted to gather information from relative and non-relative foster parents about their experience with the child foster care licensing process and on-going communication and support they have received as a family foster care home. While the survey provided a picture of the licensing-related issues that are of concern to foster parents, it also helped clarify the amount of information and support foster parents are receiving to safely care for children placed in their homes, and their satisfaction with the communication with case managers. The survey did not establish baseline and target. A 30-page report of the survey can be reviewed here: [Relative and Non-Relative Foster Parent or Caregiver Licensing Survey](#).

Strategy 1.1.1: Develop and implement Safety Practice Profiles that include a core component of involving safety networks. Utilizing social support networks, including relatives and kin, is one of the five core components included in the department's Safety Practice Profiles under development in the PIP. This core component will define and outline key behaviors in development and implementation of social support networks to enhance safety in a child's home environment whenever possible.

2020 Update

Child Safety and Permanency Division staff, in collaboration with the Capacity Building Center for States, and Safety Framework Advisory Committee, developed Safety Practice Profiles. The profiles are a tool for defining safety-related interventions; describing how it works in everyday practice across the life of a case. The goal of the Safety Practice Profiles is to assist caseworkers and supervisors in assessing current skills, and to help guide appropriate goal setting, working to enhance practice skills. One of the four key components is involving safety networks, which promote keeping families together whenever possible, involving kin to support families, and supporting timely reunification with supports.

The Safety Practice Profiles moved into a pilot phase; the first pilot started in April 2020. Department staff is in the process of selecting sites for two additional pilot cohorts, one to begin in September 2020, the second in January 2021. The pilots primarily engage child protection supervisors who will develop additional skills regarding coaching to support use of the tool. At the end of the pilot, it is expected that supervisors will be able to:

- Describe and differentiate between ineffective, foundational, and advanced safety practice behaviors
- Recognize safety practice behaviors of individual workers and identify current level of practice skills
- Apply coaching skills to help workers to deepen safety practice skills across a continuum
- Utilize Safety Practice Profiles to evaluate practice behaviors within a coaching framework
- Evaluate the pilot process and provide feedback to department staff on future efforts.

Each pilot will take place over six months. Agencies will receive both in-person and online support over the six months, including individual coaching and group technical assistance opportunities (Learning Circles).

Pilot recruitment efforts required interested agencies to conduct a readiness assessment tool. The Safety Practice Profile: Readiness Assessment tool, was designed to help child welfare agencies think about readiness for change, and to implement Safety Practice Profiles into supervision and workforce development practices. A candid examination of readiness is useful so resources can be directed appropriately to build motivation and capacity, and prepare agencies for successful implementation. Readiness assessments were submitted to the department and reviewed by the Safety Practice Profile Implementation team that included department, county and/or Tribal social service agency representatives.

2021 Update

For the safety of children involved in the child welfare system, it is imperative that child welfare staff make safety decisions across the life of a case with fidelity to a model (consistent with guidelines and standards of the state). The Safety Practice Profile tool supports that fidelity by establishing a model for practice. In 2020, the Safety Profiles project moved to pilot phase. The first pilot took place between April 2020 and September 2020. The purpose of this pilot was to measure utility of the tool and its implementation to make informed decisions about its improvements.

The initial pilot group included 46 participants consisting of six supervisors and 40 workers from three agencies serving six counties. Each participating agency involved in the initial pilot provides social services to predominantly rural areas, including:

- Minnesota Prairie County Alliance (MNPrairie) is a multi-county agency partnership among Dodge, Steele and Waseca counties located in southern Minnesota
- Pope, Grant, and Traverse County social services agencies, located in west central Minnesota, work in partnership and share a social services supervisor
- Rice County Social Services is in southern Minnesota, approximately 50 miles south of the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area.
- Workforce participants included a variety of professional roles across the child welfare continuum, including screening, assessment/investigation, ongoing case management, and adoption/permanency.

During the first pilot, workers and supervisors were able to use the tool in a variety of ways and situations. Supervisors most often found the Safety Practice Profile (SPP) helpful as a supervisory tool. Workers most often found it helpful as a way to reflect on their own practice, and use one-on-one with their supervisor. Both supervisors and workers found the tool somewhat useful for team discussion of cases and practice. Participation in the pilot and using the SPP tool allowed supervisors and workers to assess current skill levels in different practice areas, and to see where they could identify areas for growth.

The data collected in the first pilot indicated a desire by supervisors and workers in the selected sample to utilize a tool-supported approach to improving safety practice behaviors. Workers and supervisors were positive about the tool's utility

as a supervision and self-reflection tool. In evaluating the tool itself, respondents were most concerned with its length and format.

To move toward a vision of improved safety for children involved in child protection in Minnesota, the department will continue to pilot, evaluate, and revise the tool throughout 2021. To begin the work of integrating Safety Practice Profiles holistically into work at local agencies, relationships and feedback loops will need to be established within department entities.

The second pilot started in April and will continue through August 2021; it includes child protection staff from Olmsted, Clay, Stevens, and Kandiyohi counties. This pilot will evaluate effectiveness of revisions, and gather additional feedback on the tool itself. Pilot three will include a pilot integration with the Supervisor Core curriculum (TBA 2022). During Pilot three efforts will be directed toward evaluating practice change in relationship with the tool.

2022 Update

The goal of Safety Practice Profiles is to assist caseworkers and supervisors in assessing current skills, and guiding appropriate goal setting as they work to enhance practice skills. The second phase of the pilot process took place between April 2021 and October 2021.

In the second pilot, supervisors were similarly asked to implement the Safety Practice Profiles tool to support reflective practice in responding to safety needs of children and families. Implementation included additional training and discussion activities facilitated via web conferencing. Supervisors received monthly implementation support (Learning Circles) and group coaching sessions to assist them with developing supervisory coaching skills to support caseworker integration of new and/or deeper *reflective* practices in daily activities. The second pilot group included 39 participants consisting of 14 supervisors and 25 workers from four agencies serving four counties. In both the first and second pilots, a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collect data from participants. Evaluation methods included surveying participants with Likert scale and open-ended questions documenting facilitator and participant observations and statements, and reflections from written documents and learning materials. Data collected in the second pilot indicates a continued desire by supervisors and caseworkers in the selected sample to utilize Safety Practice Profiles as a reflection and coaching tool, and an approach to improve safety practice behaviors.

Similar themes were identified in both pilots, including implementation process, practical application of Safety Practice Profiles, skill development, and tool feedback.

Discussion and further analysis are underway as to whether to conduct a third pilot, or begin statewide phased rollouts in 2022. During this period, efforts will be directed toward evaluating practice change in relationship to implementing Safety Practice Profiles in supervisor and workforce practice. It will also outline opportunities for deeper partnerships among the department's Safety unit, Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy (MNCWTA), Continuous Quality Improvement unit (CQI), and county and Tribal agencies.

2023 Update

Statewide pre-implementation of Safety Practice Profiles is underway. The department is in the process of contracting with a coaching professional. Additionally, the MNCWTA is finalizing New Supervisor Training curriculum, which will include the introduction to SPP and supervisory coaching.

The department will conduct two virtual Supervisor Forums in both October and November to introduce SPP to the Child Protection Supervisory workforce statewide. Starting in January 2024, the MNCWTA plans to launch the New Supervisor Training, which will be trained four times per year.

The SPP fidelity monitoring pilot participants will be involved in the New Supervisor Training. This fidelity pilot will occur for six months alongside the SPP coaching circles. After the completion of the SPP fidelity monitoring pilot all New Supervisor Training will include a 6 month follow up of coaching circles that will support the implantation of SPP.

The finalization of a variety of tools and processes has occurred or been completed, which includes:

- Establishment of a statewide implementation work group
- Redesign and publication of the SPP tool workbook
- Creation of an SPP introduction video
- Integration of SPP into Child Welfare new supervisor training
- Creation of the fidelity monitoring tool
- Creation of a communication plan and project timeline.

2024 Update

Safety Practice Profiles is in the third and final pilot. This includes the use of the Safety Practice Profile Guidebook. The third pilot is intended to evaluate practice change while implementing the Safety Practice Profiles. Supervisors and their selected staff will be asked to complete “knowledge checks” between group coaching sessions to monitor fidelity and evaluate practice.

Primary Research Question: Did worker behavior change after the SPP were implemented?

What is the fidelity we want to measure?

- Specific core components, skills, and/or behaviors that are outlined in the SPP.
- Measure work behavior before and after SPP is implemented.
- Are workers and supervisors using SPP (job aids, coaching) in supervision?

Pilot three started in January 2024 and was completed in July 2024. Participants in the pilot include seven supervisors representing five county agencies. This included a one-day in-person training in coordination with the Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy and monthly coaching circles offered as support to participating supervisors. Mid-pilot fidelity monitoring includes the case workers that each supervisor will be working with.

Next steps: Statewide rollout of the Safety Practice Profiles in coordination with the training academy). During the statewide rollout, four cohorts of learners per year with 10-15 learners per cohort are planned. The Safety Practice Profiles are being integrated into child welfare foundations training as well as new supervisor training provided by the training academy.

Strategy 1.1.2: Provide guidance and technical assistance to support notification to relatives and kin prior to a child’s placement, at placement, prior to a permanency hearing, and at the time of a child’s placement in a permanency home (adoptive, or relative for transfer of permanent legal and physical custody (TPLPC).

2020 Update

In 2019, CSP Division staff completed a variety of tasks to strengthen information provided to relatives, including:

- Revised the brochure, Paths to Permanency, information provided to relatives regarding various permanency programs
- Developed a permanency notice to be provided to relatives at the time of removal and at permanency
- Increased funding to grantee MNADOPT to provide a post-adoption/post-kinship navigator program
- Began tracking adoption dissolutions to help identify causes, which will help to identify preventative strategies to better support post-adoptive families
- Held quarterly Permanency Roundtables with three counties to discuss relative search practices along the child welfare continuum
- Updated Child foster care notice to relatives ([DHS-3799-ENG](#)) in March 2020 to assist in improving relative search, providing more options for relatives to respond with interest in participating in care and planning for children beyond consideration as potential placement options.

In 2020, a new relative notice specific to permanency will be released, along with a stand-alone guide for relatives to help them understand foster care licensing and adoption home study options, and options for court review if not selected as placement or permanency option.

2021 Update

Throughout the past year, division staff provided guidance and technical assistance to support notification to relatives and kin, including:

- Developed the Child Foster Care Notice to Relatives: Permanency ([DHS-3799B-ENG](#)) to be provided to relatives when children in foster care are not likely to return to their parents' care
- Formed an adoption dissolution work group to review adoption dissolutions, identify themes, and develop strategies to better support post-adoptive families
- Held Permanency Roundtables with three county agencies to discuss relative search practices along the child welfare continuum
- Updated Adoption Placement Agreement to strengthen relative search
- Provided relative search training to county and Tribal agency staff, and other stakeholders
- Developed a pilot program with a metro county for the federal Adoption Call to Action federal initiative that reviewed children in pre-adoptive placements with relatives and identified barriers to finalizing permanency
- Provided technical assistance and case consultation on relative search practices to county agency staff.

2022 Update

- Adoption dissolution work group continued to meet, developing a survey for sending to workers, adoptive families, and youth over age 18 who had dissolved adoptions.
- Continued to track monthly data for the Federal Adoption Call to Action pilot agency. Since the start of this project, the number of children under guardianship 24+ months in a pre-adoptive placement dropped from 69 to 23. Due to its success, department staff wants to expand this work beyond the pilot agency.
- Provided relative search training to county and Tribal agency staff, and other stakeholders.
- Held Permanency Roundtables with three county agencies to discuss relative search practices along the child welfare continuum. Department staff hopes to expand the number of counties in 2022.

- Provided technical assistance and case consultation on relative search practices to county agency staff.
- Updated the Adoption Placement Agreement and Adoption Placement Decision Summary, which are in the Social Service Information System (SSIS). Both cover relative search/notification.
- Worked with the largest county to strengthen Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) practice regarding inquiry and notice.
- Updated eligibility determinations to be more specific regarding relative search and ICWA placement preferences.

2023 Update

- Continued Adoption Dissolution work group. Completed development of survey and an RFP will be issued to contract with an agency to facilitate sending surveys and compiling results.
- Continued to track monthly data for Federal Adoption Call to Action. This project has significantly reduced the time to adoption for children in pre-adoptive placements. In addition to looking at adoptive placements for children under guardianship for more than 24 months, this year the department began tracking results for children under guardianship 18 – 24 months. The department still plans to expand this work to other agencies and added an agency in the fall of 2022.
- Continued to provide relative search training to county agencies across the state and will develop additional relative search resources this upcoming year.
- Continued to provide technical assistance and case consultation on relative search practices to county agency staff.

The 2022 legislative session strengthened requirements for relative search. Our Adoption Placement Decision Summary was updated to include legislative changes and required a detailed summary of relative search efforts, verification that the Foster Care Sibling Bill of Rights was sent to all adult siblings of a child in out-of-home-placement, and a detailed summary of how agencies did or did not consider placement with relatives in the specified order prior to placement with non-relatives. Upon review of the APDS, we have provided relative search technical assistance on a case-by-case basis to workers which has greatly improved practice in this area as evidenced by relative search summaries that follow current statute. Updated child foster care notice to relatives, which clarified definition of relative includes kin (someone with a significant relationship to the child and/or parents). Bulletin guidance was also provided regarding these changes. When our 2022 and 2023 annual out-of-home placement and permanency reports are issued we will see if the rates of children placed with relatives has increased.

- Issued a bulletin on law changes affecting permanency which supported relative placement engagement and consideration, relative notice requirements, and permanency with a relative.
- Collaborated with Foster Care unit to create a relative search section in SSIS, so that agencies can document more relative search efforts.
- Collaborated with American Indian Well-being Unit to incorporate permanency concerns into MIFPA.

2024 Update

- Collaborated with the Foster Care Unit to update the Child Foster Care Notice to Relatives.
- Updated and will soon issue a revised Child Foster Care Notice to Relatives: Permanency that includes a relative's right to be heard in court; a decision to not be a permanency resource at one point in time cannot be the sole basis for the court to rule them out as a future permanency resource.
- Continued Adoption Dissolution work group. Contract with Wilder Research is in place and work has started to refine the questionnaires to send to county workers, former adoptive parents, and adult adoptees who experienced an adoption dissolution. This work will help identify potential themes related to dissolutions and help inform strategies to better support children and families post-adoption.

- Continued to track monthly data for Federal Adoption Call to Action. The department has expanded this work to additional agencies, with special attention to children under guardianship 24-plus months and efforts to place and finalize adoptions with relatives. One area of concern with one agency is the prevalence of consent-to-adopt orders. A percentage of the identified adoptive parents are unable to be licensed; when that occurs, the relative search for permanency starts from scratch. This delays permanency and doesn't allow for consideration of other relatives early on.
- Continued to provide relative search training to county agencies across the state and will continue to provide training throughout the year.
- Continued to provide technical assistance and case consultation on relative search practices to county agency staff. The department continues to be contacted by relatives who feel they were not properly considered when the agency made the permanency placement. In each instance, the department reviews the relative search and have a case consult with the county to identify efforts to notify, engage, and consider relatives. During the year, the department rescinded an Adoption Placement Agreement due to an agency not considering relatives; subsequently, department staff provided testimony at a contested adoption hearing between relatives and a non-relative foster parent who was the identified permanency option.

A legislative proposal was enacted and provides statutory protections for African American and disproportionately represented children to promote family preservation, agency responsibilities to parents, relative placement, and transferring permanent legal and physical custody to a relative. The agency is currently completing a comprehensive review of the requirements of the legislation and hiring additional staff to implement components of the legislation.

Key activities completed under Goal 1, Strategy 1.1.2 during 2020-24:

- Increased collaboration with internal and external partners to identify gaps and measures needed to improve notification to relatives throughout placement and permanency.
- Revised notices to assist in improving relative search and providing more options and opportunities for relatives to be involved in a relative child's life beyond consideration as a placement/permanency option.
- Completed plain-language revision of Paths to Permanency brochures on adoption and transfer of permanent legal and physical custody (TPLPC) for relatives.
- Revised statute to ensure relatives are considered for placement before non-relatives.
- Provided ongoing technical assistance and training to agencies.

Over four years, the department has created and revised a number of processes to better ensure relatives receive notice and are engaged and considered prior to non-relatives. This work is ongoing and will continue through future legislation to ensure equitable processes for relatives.

Strategy 1.1.3: Provide guidance and technical assistance to support quality relative search practices along the child welfare continuum from safety to post-permanency, in particular for paternal kin.

2020 Update

Provided relative search training to county and Tribal agency staff on multiple levels, including regionally, and at individual county/Tribal agencies on request, and state conferences. Permanency quality assurance staff, adoption and kinship policy specialist, and supervisor, provide daily technical assistance to county and Tribal agency staff on relative search through unit emails. Requests are received from family members for additional support beyond what the local agency has provided.

A legislative proposal was introduced to strengthen relative search and engagement processes, including removing the ability for agencies to ask for a waiver of the requirement of notifying relatives at the time of a termination of parental rights, allowing relatives to intervene earlier and improve court processes for relatives. This proposal was not heard in committee but will be presented again with additions, including changes to strengthen father engagement and notification requirements. Work related to updating statutes related to private adoptions is underway to ensure relative search requirements are met, and ensure adoptees' voices are reflected in statute.

2021 Update

Throughout the past year, division staff provided guidance and technical assistance to support quality relative search practices along the child welfare continuum, from safety to post-permanency, in particular for paternal kin, including:

- Issued monthly Permanency Unit Update newsletter, providing information on upcoming trainings and policy and practice related to a number of permanency topics, including relative search. This monthly newsletter is distributed to county and Tribal agencies, private agencies, courts, and other stakeholders.
- Audited adoption files in Minnesota's largest county to determine compliance with federal and state laws, and best practices on a number of requirements, including relative search. Provided technical assistance to county agency to improve practice on notifying and engaging relatives.
- Provided daily technical assistance through the Permanency Quality Assurance team, adoption and kinship policy specialist, and supervisor to local agencies and stakeholders through Permanency unit CRM.
- Provided technical assistance to county agencies regarding compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA).

2022 Update

- Continued to provide relative search guidance in the monthly Permanency unit *Update* electronic newsletter.
- Continued to audit a sample of adoption files in the largest county to determine compliance with federal and state laws, and best practices on a number of requirements, including relative search.
- Continues to provide daily technical assistance through the Permanency Quality Assurance team, adoption/ kinship policy specialist, and supervisor to local agency staff and stakeholders through the Permanency unit's Customer Relationship Management (CRM).
- Provided relative search training to a county's CJ team with plans to collaborate with CJ to provide more relative search training throughout the state.
- Attended bimonthly Relative Search Collaboration meetings providing information and resources; an example is Limited English resources. The meetings started with three county agencies and now quadrupled in size.
- Is creating a formal relative search training with plans to record it by the end of 2022 so a recorded training is publicly available.
- Developed a policy bill that was passed (May 2022) by the Legislature, that included changes regarding how searches are conducted for, identify, notify, and engage relatives, as well as how staff look at placing children with relatives and kin at the time of initial removal, while in foster care, and for permanency. Notification requirements were updated so relatives are aware of adoption/permanency requirements before it gets to that point; deleted ability to waive the permanency notification to relatives when a foster parent is planning to adopt. Court oversight was significantly strengthened regarding relative search/notification; eliminated the (unspoken) ability for courts to waive relative search; removed the ability to forego Adoption Placement Agreement notification for relatives who were ruled out as foster care options; a part of this also included discussion with legislators and advocacy

groups regarding relatives with kin in foster care, as well as county partners, where staff was able to tease out some practice-level issues/concerns and work through them.

- Provided technical assistance to Mitchell-Hamline School of Law regarding its permanency preference bill so it would be implementable and not violate Title IV-E requirements. Once accepting this assistance, department staff was able to support it. This replaces adoption as the preferred permanency option with permanency with a relative, so the focus is no longer on adoption, but rather relative placement, regardless of permanency disposition.
- Provided technical assistance and feedback on the Kinship Navigation tool that the Kinship work group published in April 2022. This tool includes information about relative search/notification.
- Advocated on behalf of a maternal aunt who appealed a district court permanency placement decision that placed her niece in a non-relative home. This case went to the court of appeals twice and both times the Appellate Court overturned the district court's decision.
- Maintained regular collaboration with the Licensing Division on licensing of various relative placement issues. For example, reviewed a case involving criminal vehicular homicide due to substance use, where it was NOT a barrier crime for foster care, but was inadvertently one for adoption. Staff was able to determine it was ok to proceed since background study changes were not going into effect until July. There are other instances of staff working collaboratively to improve relative search/engagement practices by being able to look at various disqualifiers and unique situations in ways that allow county agencies to be able to place children with relatives whenever possible and safe to do so.

2023 Update

- Continued to provide relative search guidance in the monthly Permanency Unit's electronic newsletter update.
- Continued to audit a sample of adoption files in the largest county to determine compliance with federal and state laws and best practices on several requirements, including relative search.
- Continued to provide daily technical assistance through the Permanency Quality Assurance team, adoption/kinship policy specialist, and supervisor to local agency staff and stakeholders through the Permanency unit's Customer Relationship Management.
- Provided relative search training to counties and expanded CJI training to CJI teams across the state. Recorded a relative search webinar along with an FAQ and posted it so there can be continuous access to training.
- Updated sibling placement and placement decisions policy and created an Adoption Placement Agreement process checklist to include information regarding consideration of relatives. Solicited internal and external feedback when updating/creating these documents.
- Created a Social and Medical History work group to update this document and expand on relationships and important connections. The work group includes external partners.
- Proposed legislation to expand state funds to support permanency (TPLPCs) with relatives. The department will continue to work on legislation this upcoming year.
- Provided technical assistance on ICWA inquiry with a focus on paternal relatives.
- Collaborated with the Foster Care unit and CJI on a noncustodial parent engagement guide.
- Updated Adoption Placement Agreement and Adoption Placement Decision Summary with help text to provide better direction on relative search.
- Coordinated efforts with Mitchell-Hamline Law School to pass legislation and provide technical assistance on bills related to relative placement.
- Provided technical assistance to community groups such as kinship work group on policy proposals for relatives and kin.

- Rescinded an Adoption Placement Agreement after a county did not engage and consider relatives.
- Held ongoing meetings with Background Studies division regarding disqualifications, barrier crimes, and changes to align with federal language.
- Continued regular collaboration with the Licensing Division on relative licensing placement issues.

2024 Update

- Clarified relative search requirements to remove confusion as to who must be identified and notified when completing relative searches for children in foster care.
- Collaborated with Foster Care Unit and published a Practice Guide on Relative Search, Notice, Engagement, and Placement Consideration in July 2023. Guidance provided includes due diligence to search for relatives, with a section on engagement with fathers; due diligence to notify, engage, and consider relatives; permanency placement considerations; and ICWA relative search requirements for Indian children.
- Collaborated with American Indian Wellbeing Unit to incorporate permanency concerns into MIFPA legislation proposed in the 2024 legislative session.
- Collaborated with African American Family Well-being Unit and external partners by providing bill analysis and technical assistance for a bill that includes protections for African American and disproportionately represented children to prevent placement and promote family preservation and relative placement. The Layla Jackson Act will protect the best interests of African American and disproportionately represented children at risk of, or involved in, Minnesota's child welfare system. It will also promote stability and security of African American and disproportionately represented children and families by establishing minimum standards to prevent arbitrary and unnecessary removals from their families. The act aims to improve permanency outcomes, including family reunification for African American and disproportionately represented children.
- Continued to provide relative search training to counties and Children's Justice Initiative teams across the state.
- Continued to work on revising our social and medical history by conducting meetings with county workers and youth advisory councils with an eye on expanding relationships and important connections in this document.
- Continued to provide relative search guidance in the monthly Permanency Unit's electronic newsletter.
- Completed a four-year project of auditing a sample of adoption files in our largest county to determine compliance with federal and state laws and best practices including relative search. Audit findings indicated consideration of relatives who lived out of state was not always pursued or revisited.
- Continued to provide daily technical assistance through the Permanency Quality Assurance team, adoption/kinship policy specialists, and supervision to local agency staff and stakeholders through the Permanency Unit's Customer Relationship Management system.
- Continued collaboration with the Licensing Division on relative licensing placement issues. Provided clarification and guidance to agencies that only the commissioner can determine a child's eligibility for Northstar Adoption Assistance and Northstar Kinship Assistance. The department found that some workers are not submitting eligibility determinations based on their interpretation of a relative's background study and incorrectly assuming a child would not meet eligibility requirements. This practice erroneously denied relatives their due process and benefits.

Key activities completed under Goal 1, Strategy 1.1.3 during 2020-24:

- Collaborated with internal and external stakeholders to identify gaps and measures needed to better support relative search and placement practices. For example, collaborating with the Licensing Division regarding issues related to licensing relatives such as background study disqualifiers.
- Published a practice guide on Relative Search, Notice, Engagement, and Placement Consideration.

- Developed policy passed by the Legislature that strengthens relative search practices and court oversight.
- Revised documents required for adoption placement agreement approval that expands required documentation of the relative search.
- Training and technical assistance to workers, CJJ members, and others to inform of changes to statute and documents related to relative search.

Over four years, the department worked on this strategy through a variety of approaches, including collaboration with stakeholders (internal and external partners including counties and tribes), statute changes, increased oversight of relative search for adoption, and publications. The department continues to work on this strategy through current proposed legislation, ongoing technical assistance, and training to ensure children remain with their families, maintain relationships, and increase well-being.

Strategy 1.1.4: Implement Family First kinship support services/Kinship Navigator program.

2020 Update

Minnesota's Family First kinship support services and navigation program is still in the developmental phases. The department's primary focus is on building its infrastructure, kinship caregiver services, community partnerships and outreach programs.

The department has formed community partnerships through awarded mini-grants to county, Tribal and community agencies targeting kinship program development. Each partner has incorporated their own evaluations to assess how their services are meeting objectives of increased child and/or adult well-being, increased child safety and permanency, and improved access to community services.

In the upcoming year, the department plans to continue to assess kinship family needs and to collaborate with county, Tribal and community agencies to develop programming. Collaboration with these partners will need to focus on enhancing services that will meet Clearinghouse evaluation standards. The department has created an FFPSA subgroup, including external stakeholders to facilitate these discussions regularly.

2021 Update

The department used funding appropriated in FFYs 2018-2020 to collaborate with community agencies, county and Tribal agencies through distribution of mini grants. Activities funded focused on increasing engagement with kinship families, providing education and linkage to services, and supporting kin caregivers' immediate needs, to provide for children in their care.

These partnerships throughout 2018-2020 allowed department staff to identify the agencies most equipped to serve the kin community in ways that most closely align with the Kinship Navigator program, as outlined by the Social Security Administration. Department staff is committed to meeting these Kinship Navigator service requirements and is currently finalizing contracts with a longstanding nonprofit agency providing these defined services. In addition, funding will be used to contract with an evaluation partner in preparation for a rigorous assessment of services. Upon completion of this evaluation, department staff hopes to submit findings to the Title IV-E Clearinghouse for review in late 2022/early 2023. The department will utilize FFY 2021 and 2022 Title IV-B grant funding for this project.

Should a rating be received at the level of promising or higher, department staff hopes to replicate services, as needed, in other regions to meet the needs of kinship families statewide. In addition, department staff is tasked with securing the required 50% match, upon receiving Title IV-E approval of the submitted Kinship Navigator program.

2022 Update

Minnesota used the funds appropriated in fiscal FYs 2018-2020 to partner with community agencies, counties, and Tribes through mini grants. The activities funded through these mini grants focused on increasing engagement with Kinship families, providing education and linkage to services, and supporting Kin caregivers immediate needs to best provide for the children in their care. These partnerships throughout 2018-2020 allowed the State to best identify the agencies most equipped to serve the Kin community in ways that most closely align with the Kinship Navigator program as outlined by the SSA.

In FFY 2021, the department entered into a targeted contract with a nonprofit agency, Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota, to provide services most closely aligning with Kinship Navigator required service components. This program partner has used this funding to take necessary steps to prepare its existing program for evaluation of services. The department plans to extend this contract in FFY22. The primary objectives of the contract with this program partner include:

- Provide access for kinship caregivers to kinship family support services
- Answer calls and provide referrals through the Kinship Warmline [Kinship Caregiver Warmline | Lutheran Social Service of MN \(lssmn.org\)](#)
- Provide case management services for kinship caregivers
- Website development: [Kinship Family Support Services | Lutheran Social Service of MN \(lssmn.org\)](#)
- Provide kinship support groups and training for kinship caregivers
- Complete program manual for kinship family support services
- Develop and implement a kinship action coalition
- Increase capacity to support kinship families through the Training Kinship Partner Network

The qualifying definition for this agency's kinship services is kin caregivers regardless of their involvement with child welfare or other systems, such as child protective services. This includes fictive kin. In the past year, LSS served 287 unduplicated kinship families through support groups, case management, and education groups. Of families served, the majority fall into the category of informal Kin families, with little or no involvement with the child welfare system. It also served 111 professionals.

2023 Update

Minnesota used the funds appropriated in FYs 2018-2020 to partner with community agencies, counties and Tribes through mini grants. The activities funded through these mini-grants focused on increasing engagement with kinship families, providing education and linkage to services and supporting kin caregivers' immediate needs to best provide for the children in their care. These partnerships from 2018-2020 allowed the state to best identify the agencies most equipped to serve the kin community in ways that most closely align with the Kinship Navigator program as outlined by the SSA.

In FFY 2021, the department entered into a targeted contract with a nonprofit agency, Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota, to provide services most closely aligning with Kinship Navigator's required service components. This contract was extended into FFY22. This program partner has used this funding to take necessary steps to prepare its existing program for evaluation of services. The primary objectives of the contract with this program partner include:

- Provide access for kinship caregivers to kinship family support services
- Answer calls and provide referrals through the Kinship Warmline [Kinship Caregiver Warmline | Lutheran Social Service of MN \(lssmn.org\)](#)

- Provide case management services for kinship caregivers
- Website development: [Kinship Family Support Services | Lutheran Social Service of MN \(lssmn.org\)](#)
- Provide kinship support groups and training for kinship caregivers
- Complete the program manual for kinship family support services
- Develop and implement a kinship action coalition
- Increase capacity to support kinship families through the Training Kinship Partner Network.

The qualifying definition for this agency's kinship services is kin caregivers regardless of their involvement with child welfare or other systems, such as child protective services. This includes fictive kin.

In 2022, LSS had 364 caregiver contacts to the warmline, and 121 unduplicated caregivers served through support groups, case management and education groups.

As Kinship Navigator models obtained approval through the Title IV-E Clearinghouse in 2021 and 2022, the department reassessed plans to continue developing and evaluating the LSS model. The department convened work groups from January through March of 2023 with county and Tribal agencies, as well as other private agencies and advocates to help guide decision making on the path forward with Kinship Navigator implementation. Participation from Ohio, Arizona, and Colorado state representatives has been integral to these discussions to help determine whether these programs would be a good fit for Minnesota. These partners have provided information on their models to our stakeholders to help us analyze how these services compare to each other and the LSS model.

Currently, the department is reviewing feedback from stakeholders and assessing the approved models to decide whether to start implementing one of the three rated models or continue partnership with LSS.

2024 Update

As Kinship Navigator models began to receive approval through the Title IV-E Clearinghouse in 2021 and 2022, the department reassessed plans to continue developing and evaluating the LSS model. The department convened work groups in January-March 2023 with county and Tribal agencies, as well as other private agencies and advocates, to help guide decision-making on Kinship Navigator implementation. Our stakeholders analyzed how the services under each approved kinship model compared to each other and the LSS model, as well as provided input on the priorities a model should address for kin caregiver supports.

Feedback received led to the selection of the Foster Kinship model for implementation in Minnesota. With the identification of a kinship navigator model, state staff, alongside external partners, began implementation planning, which included securing state funding for this program. The Minnesota state Legislature approved ongoing Kinship Navigator funds under [Minnesota Statutes 256.4794](#). Implementation of the Foster Kinship model will create grant opportunities between the department and three to five external partners to provide navigation services for relative caregivers regardless of child welfare involvement. These grants will be administered through an RFP process in alignment with the implementation of Community Resource Centers. The RFP for these programs was posted on April 12, 2024. Future drawdown of Title IV-E dollars will allow the department to expand on the number of kinship navigator partnerships in the future.

Department staff will continue to identify gaps in services to kin families after implementation of the Foster Kinship model through the CQI process to determine if additional supports are needed. Ongoing review and use of a selection matrix tool will continue as new models are approved by the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse.

In addition to the implementation of an evidence-based kinship navigator program, the department is seeking input from the 11 Tribal Nations on the needs of Tribal kin families. With use of the Title IV-B discretionary dollars, the department will

be engaging in facilitated conversations with Tribes on the possible development of a Tribal-specific kinship navigator model.

Strategy 1.1.5: Supporting engagement and communication between resource families and caseworkers, assessing the needs of these families and children in care, including monitoring effectiveness and use of the Resource Family and Caseworker Visit Discussion tool, developed and disseminated statewide in April 2019.

2020 Update

A Resource family and caseworker visit discussion tool was developed for resource families to complete in preparation for meetings with a child's caseworker, covering topics such as dates of medical, dental and/or mental health appointments; school meetings; parent/child and child/sibling visitation; court hearings; medications; and needs of a family to care for children, etc. It is an optional tool for resource families as well as caseworkers for use to guide visits.

In developing the tool, department staff elicited feedback from local social service agencies (child protection and licensing program staff), resource families, and the metro supervisors and licensors group. The feedback was incorporated into the tool. The tool was discussed and highlighted in a caseworker visits with children webinar in March 2019. The tool was published along with an instruction [bulletin #19-68-10](#) in April 2019. In June 2019, the tool was converted to a fillable form, [DHS-7889-ENG](#). The tool was shared by department Foundation training staff with new child protection trainees. It was also highlighted in the [Caseworker and child visits best practice guide, DHS-7987](#), published in January 2020.

A survey was issued to a random sample of 50% of local agencies (N = 41), with 29 agencies responding. Of the responders, 14 use the department-provided curriculum, Foster Parent College. The rest use a mix of curricula. Of those that did not use Foster Parent College, 10 reported providing information on the number of training requirements in their own pre-service training. This information was shared with the Minnesota Child Welfare Training System and the department's Foster Care Unit to inform future planning and efforts.

The department issued one survey in the second year of the two-year PIP window, and planned to do a second survey in March 2020. Because of the pandemic, staff determined that a survey was not a priority for local agencies at this time. Staff will continue to monitor agencies to ensure training is being offered on an annual basis.

2021 Update

The department provided technical assistance on engagement and communication between resource families and caseworkers through the following:

- Developed and provided "Difficult Conversations" training to county agency workers and other stakeholders to improve communication between agency workers and resource families
- Provided Social Medical History training to agency workers to ensure full disclosure is provided to resource families.

2022 Update

There are no updates to this strategy at this time.

2023 Update

[Caseworker and child visits best practice guide, DHS-7987](#) was updated in 2022. There are no further updates to this strategy at this time.

2024 Update

The objective was to improve caseworker visits with children in foster care. A Resource Family and Caseworker Visit Discussion Tool ([DHS-7889-ENG](#)) was developed for resource families to complete in preparation for meetings with a child's caseworker. The tool covers topics such as dates of medical, dental and/or mental health appointments; school meetings; parent/child and child/sibling visitation; court hearings; medications; needs of a family to care for children, etc. It is an optional tool for resource families as well as caseworkers to use to guide visits. In developing the tool, department staff elicited feedback from local social service agencies (child protection and licensing program staff), resource families, and the metro supervisors and licensors group. The feedback was incorporated into the tool. The tool was discussed and highlighted in a caseworker visit with children webinar in March 2019. The tool was shared by department Foundations training staff with new child protection trainees. It was also highlighted in the Caseworker and Child Visits Best Practice Guide ([DHS-7987](#)), published in January 2020.

A survey regarding what foster care preservice trainings agencies offered to resource families (foster, adoptive, and kinship parents) and child welfare professionals was issued to a random sample of 50% of local agencies (N = 41), with 29 agencies responding. Of the responders, 14 use the department-provided curriculum, Foster Parent College. The rest use a mix of curricula. Of those that did not use Foster Parent College, 10 reported providing information on the number of training requirements in their own preservice training. This information was shared with the Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy and the department's Foster Care Unit to inform future planning and efforts. Guidance on caseworker and child visits was incorporated into Foundations training within the case management-focused classroom.

The department provided technical assistance on engagement and communication between resource families and caseworkers through the following:

- Developing and providing "Difficult Conversations" training to county agency workers and other stakeholders to improve communication between agency workers and resource families.
- Providing "Social Medical Histories" training to agency workers to ensure full disclosure is provided to resource families.

[Caseworker and Child Visits Best Practice Guide](#) was updated in 2022. It identified policy changes and best practices to support improved frequency and quality of caseworker visits with children, including visits being conducted with children alone, and documentation requirement of visits in SSIS.

The department provides data on several key child welfare measures on the Child Welfare Data Dashboard. Caseworker visits with children in out-of-home placement is one of the state's measures included on the dashboard. The caseworker visits performance in 2020 was 80.8% and by 2023, it increased to 87.9%. Although the numbers have improved, Minnesota's performance on caseworker visits with children in out-of-home placement continues to be below the federal expectation of 95%.

Strategy 1.1.6: Collaborate with Aspire Minnesota to develop and implement the Quality Parenting Initiative to support greater utilization of foster parents as a support for children and their birth families.

2020 Update

The department collaborated with Quality Parenting Initiative-Minnesota (QPI-MN) through participation in its Connections Workgroup, providing technical assistance on a bill to require an initial “comfort call” at the time of placement or placement move, and arranging for QPI-MN to participate in a webinar held by MN ADOPT to introduce resources and supports for foster providers in response to the COVID-19 epidemic. The comfort call bill is anticipated to pass during the legislative special session. Department staff worked with QPI-MN to adapt guide created by its work group for statewide distribution. There are ongoing meetings with the Child Welfare Training Academy, QPI-MN, and program staff in the Family Support and Placement Services unit, to discuss integration of QPI-MN’s work in training and policy implementation. The comfort call statute is anticipated to be implemented statewide in November 2020, if passed.

Child foster care notice to relatives, ([DHS-3799-ENG](#)), was updated in March 2020 to include more information for relatives interested in participating in planning for a child and/or being a placement resource.

Department staff created [new stand-alone document](#) for relatives who may not have received a written notice to inform them of the foster care placement and licensing process, opportunities to participate in care and planning, court reviews, permanency planning, services and supports for relative caregivers.

2021 Update

The department continued collaboration with the Quality Parenting Initiative-Minnesota (QPI-MN), primarily regarding “comfort calls.” Legislation was passed in 2020 encouraging local agency staff to coordinate an initial foster care phone call between foster parents or facility staff and child’s parent/s to establish a connection. This encourages ongoing information-sharing between child’s parent/s or legal guardian and foster parent/s or facility staff, providing opportunities to share information regarding a child, their needs, or care that facilitates child’s adjustment to a foster home, promote stability, reduce the risk of trauma, or otherwise improve the quality of child’s care ([Minnesota Statutes 260C.219, subd. 6](#)). Department staff worked with QPI partners to create complementary practice guides for [social service agencies](#) and for [parents, foster parents and facility staff](#) who would participate in calls. Department staff worked closely with QPI to design and implement trainings in October and November 2020, available to the public on the [QPI website](#).

In December 2020, the [Agreement Between Foster Parents and Placement Agency](#) was updated to support ongoing engagement between parents and foster parents. This includes adding agreement to “regularly engage with child’s parents/guardians to facilitate a co-parenting relationship when the goal is reunification, unless such a relationship poses a danger to the mental or physical health of child or foster parent/s.” All foster parents must sign this agreement during the licensing process, which for non-relative homes is prior to accepting placements, setting clear expectations of genuine collaboration from the earliest possible point of time.

In preparation for implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act, new legislation was passed in 2020 regarding requirements for placement in Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTPs). One requirement is engagement of a family and permanency team ([Minnesota Statutes 260C.706](#)), including all appropriate biological family members, child’s parents, legal guardians or custodians, foster care providers, relatives, and professionals who are a resource to a child’s family, such as teachers, medical or mental health providers, or clergy. New screens will be required in the Social Service Information System to document and monitor implementation, including enhanced ability to document relative search and engagement efforts.

2022 Update

In April of 2022, DHS collaborated with the courts as part of the Children's Justice Initiative to provide a webinar on Relative Search based on the request of a county CJI team. This has been requested by another CJI team and will be presented in July 2022.

A policy bill was introduced and passed in the 2022 legislative session which strengthens relative engagement requirements from the point of initial removal from the home through permanency proceedings; it goes into effect on August 1, 2022.

2023 Update

Department staff has continued to participate in QPI work group meetings and training opportunities. In May 2023, the Minnesota Legislature included Quality Parenting Initiative grant funding, with expected grant activities to conduct initial foster care telephone calls, support practices that create birth family to foster family partnerships, and inform child welfare practices by supporting youth leadership and the participation of individuals with experience in the foster care system.

This past year, the implementation of statutory changes strengthening relative engagement was a significant focus. A [webinar](#) was held in October 2022, and new best practice guides regarding emergency relative placement and comprehensive relative search will be published in the summer of 2023.

2024 Update

Department staff have continued to participate in QPI work group meetings, including the statewide Oversight Council. The Minnesota Legislature approved an ongoing grant to support the work of QPI; the contract was fully executed in February 2024.

Objective 1.2: Improve engagement with children and parents, including frequency and quality of caseworker visits. This objective is achieved through the following strategies.

This objective will be achieved through the strategies described below.

Progress on the second objective is assessed through use of CFSR Well-being Outcome 1, Items 14 and 15, which focus on the frequency and quality of caseworker visits with children and parents, respectively. The measurement benchmarks for this objective are below.

Measurements for Goal 1-Objective 2

Benchmarks	Year 1 (2017-2018)	Year 2 (2018-2019)	Year 3 (2019-2020)	Year 4 (2020-2021)	Year 5 (2021-2022)
Item 14 baseline (2017): 68%	Target: 71.2% Observed: 75.7%	74.5% 89.1%	77.7% 91.1%	81.0% TBD	84.2% TBD
Item 15 baseline (2017): 68%	Target: 71.3% Observed: 70.3%	74.6% 78.5%	77.9% 80.9%	81.2% TBD	84.5% TBD

Strategy 1.2.1: Coordinate with other relevant department divisions and state agencies to establish clear policy and practice expectations in cases where a particular child is identified as the service recipient and there are other children in the home, e.g., children’s mental health and juvenile justice cases; disseminate information statewide.

2020 Update

A 90-minute eLearning module designed for children’s mental health and juvenile justice workers was collaboratively developed and posted on the Learning Management System on Apr. 28, 2020. The learning opportunity was announced to social service directors via email, requesting they share it with children’s mental health and juvenile justice staff. Notice of the training was also sent through the Child Welfare Training Academy’s mailing list.

The following topics are covered in the eLearning module:

- Brief description of CFSR process
- Child welfare in Minnesota: State supervised, county administered; 11 American Indian tribes; intake, screening and pathway assignment
- Child protection (Family Assessment, Family Investigation, Facility Investigation)
- Case planning
- Out-of-home placement
- Permanency
- Caseworker visits
- Engagement with children and families
- Disparities and disproportionality
- Development of this eLearning module was a collaborative effort involving representatives from the Minnesota Departments of Corrections, Education and Human Services.

2021 Update

The eLearning module designed for children’s mental health and juvenile justice workers posted in 2020 was accessed 54 times, with 120 participants attending between July 1, 2020, and May 24, 2021.

2022 Update

The eLearning module continues to be offered as a training opportunity. **This strategy is complete.**

Strategy 1.2.2: Develop a partnership between the CSP Division’s Training and Foster Care units to incorporate guidance into Foundations, and develop a combined case planning and caseworker visits training.

2020 Update

Guidance on caseworker and child visits was incorporated in Foundation training within the case management focused classroom. The combined case planning and caseworker visit training is in development by the Training and Foster Care units in CSP.

2021 Update

As previously reported, guidance was incorporated into Foundation training. Case plan training also has incorporated guidance; guidance will be elaborated with development of a case management specialization for workers in 2021. **This strategy is complete.**

Strategy 1.2.3: Continue Innovation Zone work with nine participating agencies to support improvement around engagement strategies, including assessment of risk and safety. This work entails identification of key challenges for each agency, development and implementation of strategies to address challenges, and assessment of whether strategies are working as expected.

2020 Update

The Innovation Zone was developed as part of the Program Improvement Plan resulting from the 2016 federal Child Family and Services Review. The goal of the Innovation Zone was to improve practice regarding assessing risk and safety, and engagement with families and foster parents. It was intended to be complementary to redesigned continuous quality improvement processes in the Child Safety and Permanency Division, and build agency capacity in program improvement. The redesigned Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) system is intended to use “rapid cycle evaluation” work such as this moving forward.

In April 2019, 10 county agencies volunteered to participate in the Innovation Zone. Initial work included focus groups with frontline staff, supervisors, managers, and directors at each participating agency to collect information related to influences that affect assessing risk and safety, and engaging with children, parents and foster parents. That information, along with data from Child and Family Service Reviews and state and federal measures, guided teams through the process of identifying an area they wanted to explore.

Beginning in July 2019, teams developed a goal, created a work plan, and began to implement strategies. Work was completed through rapid evaluations of effectiveness of strategies implemented by each agency and making adjustments, as needed. CSP CQI staff convened quarterly meetings with participating agencies, providing opportunities for agencies to come together, share accomplishments and challenges, supporting each other’s work. CQI unit staff provided guidance and technical assistance to support agencies in developing goals, strategies, measurement plans, and evaluating progress. Teams also engaged in one-on-one meetings with CQI staff throughout the work to provide individualized support. Each team had unique data needs supported through creation of Tableau dashboards specific to data points identified for each goal. Designated staff in every county and Tribal agency in Minnesota have access to Tableau and the numerous dashboards in Tableau. [Click here for a list of participating agencies with their identified goals and strategies.](#)

2021 Update

Work with the 10 agencies involved in the original Innovation Zone is complete. Information regarding the Innovation Zone was shared by CQI staff when providing technical assistance, and planning CFSRs. Department staff prepared a statewide communication to share work that agencies participating in the Innovation Zone completed, including information regarding dashboards created to support work of the Innovation Zone agencies. [Click here for a copy of the statewide communication following completion of the Innovation Zone work.](#)

Following the statewide update regarding the Innovation Zone, Yellow Medicine County reached out to the department, requesting support in addressing disparities in its child welfare system for American Indian children. Representatives from Yellow Medicine County, Upper Sioux Community, and the department have been working together to better understand

systemic influences impacting the rate American Indian children are entering the child welfare system. The team has explored multiple data points and completed a quantitative review of that data, reviewed 80 child protection intakes, and completed qualitative coding of that data, and completed analysis of all data collected. Next steps are to determine if data collected provides areas to explore for potential interventions, or if additional learning is necessary.

2022 Update

The Yellow Medicine County/Upper Sioux Community project was paused for several months due to turnover at both agencies and ultimately it was determined neither agency was in a position to move forward with the project. **This strategy is complete.**

Strategy 1.2.4: Continue development and implementation of an inter-county agreement for placement of children to support caseworker visits across county lines.

2020 Update

Beginning in April 2019, eight county agencies began participating in a six-month pilot of the project. During the pilot fifty requests for assistance were received related to licensing when a child had already been placed across county lines and when an agency was considering placement with a relative outside of its jurisdictional boundaries. Department staff facilitated contact and information sharing between agencies. The pilot ended in April 2020 at which time a bulletin describing the process was published and distributed statewide. Agencies across the state are now utilizing the process.

2021 Update

Agencies across the state continue to utilize the process following publishing of a statewide bulletin. Since April 2020, 290 requests were received regarding licensing when a child was already placed across county lines, and when an agency is considering placement with a relative outside of its jurisdictional boundaries.

2022 Update

Agencies statewide continue to utilize the process following publishing of a department bulletin. Since July 1, 2019, 2,110 requests were received regarding licensing when a child was already placed across county lines, and when an agency is considering placement with a relative outside of its jurisdictional boundaries.

2023 Update

Agencies statewide continue to utilize the process following publishing of a department bulletin. Since July 1, 2019, 2,790 requests were received regarding licensing when a child was already placed across county lines, and when an agency is considering placement with a relative outside of its jurisdictional boundaries.

The department is currently working to analyze data based on the ICPC requests received. The department hopes to have the outcomes over the next year. The results will help the department answer how families are benefiting from this CFSP strategy.

2024 Update

As the department has prepared to report on the final year of the CFSP, it has been determined that there was an error in the number of intrastate placements; the department is attributing the error to an editing mistake and want to ensure the correct number is reported.

In January 2024, the department released a new practice guide on unlicensed emergency relative placement, which included information on the intrastate request process (pages 14-15).

Since the start of the intrastate placement process for intercounty placements, the department has had 905 requests; 746 of these requests followed our emergency relative licensing procedures as described above, 125 requests were for the licensure of an individual who was being considered for placement of a child/ren and 34 requests were either for courtesy supervision or the report of a placement in a county jurisdiction that differs from the legally and financially responsible county.

The intrastate process is voluntary and therefore not all county agencies utilize the process. The department has seen that the process is used more frequently and more consistently in our smaller county jurisdictions and for placements that occur a greater distance from their boundaries. Additionally, there are counties that do not utilize the process regularly but have requested support from the intrastate process if they are finding challenges in getting the licensing process started in another jurisdiction.

The department will continue to offer this process for intra-jurisdictional placements. Additionally, the department has supported using Binti through a grant contract. This web-based application also supports licensing agencies that are making placements outside of their jurisdiction. The department's Office of the Inspector General is currently in the early stages of developing a statewide licensing system that will include foster care licensing through the Salesforce platform; this will be a mandatory system.

Strategy 1.2.5: Provide real time data to county and Tribal agencies with alerts to identify children who did not had visits as of the 20th of each month through Tableau Server.

2020 Update

Access to real-time data was delayed because of delays in the MN.IT centralization process. Centralization was completed in November 2019. Department staff met with MN.IT about getting access to near real-time data in early November 2019. MN.IT indicated that the need to update Oracle-based servers used with SSIS is a security risk that requires attention before it can provide the department with daily updates to the data system. Alternative methods were discussed for access to data for the 15 local agencies with the lowest performance. The department was on target to complete this activity in March 2020, however, due to changes required in practice specific to caseworker visits with children and families because of the COVID-19 pandemic and peacetime emergency, child-specific lists were not provided. Work is underway to ensure queries for pulling data on caseworker visits is consistent with current guidance, e.g., inclusive of video-conferencing contacts with children in out-of-home placement. Distribution of child-specific lists to local agencies began in May 2020, and will continue monthly thereafter.

2021 Update

Monthly child-specific lists continue to be provided to local agencies. Department staff is able to track utilization of the Tableau dashboards by agencies; dashboards were viewed 530 times since inception in May 2020. Seventy-seven county

agencies have interacted with the data since May 2020. During the upcoming year, the department will work to identify barriers for agencies not accessing data, addressing identified barriers and/or provide technical assistance, as needed.

2022 Update

Monthly child-specific lists continue to be provided to local agencies. Department staff is able to track utilization of the Tableau dashboards by agencies; since publishing, reports have been viewed almost 900 times by all available agencies. The department has worked to onboard agencies and familiarize them with Tableau Server. Technical assistance has been provided directly to counties, as well as through the SSIS Help Desk staff members, who often receive initial inquiries about accessing data.

2023 Update

Local agencies continue to access child-specific lists and department staff continue to track the use of Tableau dashboards by agencies. Since publishing, reports have been viewed almost 1,095 times by all available agencies. Technical assistance is provided to agencies as needed, as well as through the SSIS Help Desk. Relatively few calls are received for technical assistance, though additional work is being done to improve tracking mechanisms for such requests.

2024 Update

Local agencies continue to access several reports, dashboards, and case lists available on the agency-facing Tableau Server. Agencies can break down the data to specific cases which gives them the opportunity to determine if there are data entry errors and explore any systemic influences that are impacting outcomes Across dozens of reports, in CY2023 child welfare data dashboards were viewed over 10,600 times by 74 unique local agencies. This is roughly the same as in CY2022; however, views in the prior APSR report were limited to a selected number of dashboards. Technical assistance is regularly provided to agencies, as needed, to view the information contained in the reports.

Objective 1.3: Build collaborative partnerships with community-based agencies to support engagement of children and families.

Progress on the third objective will be assessed through development of partnerships and the level of engagement in joint work. This is determined by the number of community-based agencies participating in partnerships, development of joint goals, engagement strategy, and outcomes related to attendance at meetings; and whether organizations participating in this work report feeling they were heard, priorities are addressed, and trust being built. The measurement benchmarks for this objective are below.

This objective will be achieved through the strategies described below.

Measurements for Goal 1-Objective 3

Benchmarks	Year 1 (2017-2018)	Year 2 (2018-2019)	Year 3 (2019-2020)	Year 4 (2020-2021)	Year 5 (2021-2022)
Number of partnerships with community-based agencies established	Baseline: 11 Goal: 20% increase each year	Target: 13 Observed: 21	Target:15 Observed: 21	Target:18 Observed: 21	Target:21 Observed: 21

Benchmarks	Year 1 (2017-2018)	Year 2 (2018-2019)	Year 3 (2019-2020)	Year 4 (2020-2021)	Year 5 (2021-2022)
Assessing level of engagement	Draft engagement strategy: Partially completed, delayed as a result of the pandemic	Develop engagement analysis tool	Establish baselines for engagement	Statistically significant increase in engagement	
	Maintain an 85% attendance rate in partnership meetings, including the Inter-agency leadership team and Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council meetings				
	100% attendance	62.5% attendance	70%	70%	80%

Strategy 1.3.1: Participate with an inter-agency leadership team consisting of division directors in multiple family serving systems across the Minnesota Departments of Human Services, Health and Education to develop and implement a coordinated engagement strategy that involves partnerships with community-based organizations that have established relationships with Minnesota children and families.

2020 Update

The Interagency Leadership team met nine times and traveled for the BUILD Initiative cross-state collaborative meetings twice, which are three-day meetings focused on supporting cross-agency collaborative early childhood systems building. These efforts broadly focused on development of a coordinated authentic community engagement process. The interagency team sponsored and participated in the Equity Leadership Action Network six-month fellowship, which included site visits with two communities experiencing inequities in Minnesota, gathering and analyzing input provided during those visits, and development of a coordinated response by the systems involved on the interagency team to what was learned during the visits. There were 12 – 16 cross-system equity projects developed during the fellowship that focused on increasing equity, either in state agencies or with communities facing racial inequities.

2021 Update

The Interagency Leadership Team (ILT) continued to meet monthly and participated virtually in two BUILD initiative cross-state collaborative meetings. The pandemic caused some delays in the feedback loop back to communities that had been engaged by the leadership team. However, a final engagement and feedback protocol was developed across multiple agencies that will support agencies' response to community input. Briefly, the protocol is to:

- Present the data
- Identify actions to address opportunities and challenges
- Identify which agencies or departments can take action
- Confirm or share with cross-systems team
- Return to community: Check the analysis.

The ILT is now at step three of piloting the protocol in response to feedback received from multiple communities across the state. Much of that feedback included themes relevant to child welfare, and the need to address housing and

transportation barriers to service access, particularly for families at risk of deeper-end child welfare involvement. Closing the feedback loop and returning to community are critical next steps. The ILT will discuss how to incorporate the protocol across child- and family-serving systems.

2022 Update

The Interagency Leadership Team (ILT) continued to meet monthly and participated virtually in two BUILD initiative cross-state collaborative meetings. A final engagement and feedback protocol was developed across multiple agencies that will support agencies' response to community input. The ILT continues at step three of piloting the protocol in response to feedback received from multiple communities across the state.

2023 Update

The Interagency Leadership Team (ILT) continued to meet monthly and participated in two BUILD initiative cross-state collaborative meetings (in-person) focused on equity in cross-sector systems. The team has been working on a shared story collecting and sensemaking project, StoryPact, a new effort to collect qualitative data within community. Staff have been hired to fully develop the tool with a full cycle of story collection, a sensemaking session, and an action lab planned for the first year. The ILT is also working on developing intentional goals related to addressing disparities within and across systems. To inform goal setting, the ILT is planning to use their third quarter meeting to visit a historically underserved community, similar to visits to an urban American Indian community and Beltrami County in 2019.

2024 Update

The Interagency Leadership Team, convened by the governor's [Children's Cabinet](#), works to foster long-lasting connections among, and leverage the expertise of, leaders from core state agencies serving children and families. The team also works to support the goals of the Children's Cabinet to take a results-oriented approach to coordinating and aligning programs and strategies. The team also promotes action and accountability of Minnesota's efforts to ensure that every Minnesota child is in a family and community of caring adults who promote child well-being and growth and development.

The team ensures that a whole-family approach is uplifted in cross-agency teams and strategies of the Children's Cabinet and provides a network of champions for children and families. Current membership includes the Minnesota Departments of Human Services, Education, Health, Employment and Economic Development, and Minnesota Budget and Management. Whole Family Systems Initiative leaders attend meetings to share the learnings from the initiative with other state agency leaders.

The Whole Family Systems (WFS) Initiative is the second cohort of Minnesota's system change work that began in 2017 and will continue through October 2024 to build on the learnings of the 2Gen Policy Network and the Early Childhood Systems Reform (ESCRP) Project. Three divisions within the department are now partnering within the Minnesota Department of Human Services: Economic Assistance and Employment Supports, Child Care Services and Child Safety and Permanency; they are blending funding to award five-year grants to community sites chosen from across Minnesota to partner with us. The blending of funding allows us to serve families more holistically across programs.

The WFS network seeks to:

- Provide resources for new local program design to address racial disparities in human services and outcomes
- Enter into unique relationships with those sites to identify program, practice, and policy barriers for change
- Enable systems change grounded in local realities.

Whole Family Systems objectives

The Whole Family Systems Initiative is a partnership between the state of Minnesota, the Build Initiative, and local sites across Minnesota. The department is working together on the following goals:

- Improve and stabilize the health and well-being of children and their families, especially in communities that have faced, and still face, significant adversities and disparities.
- Elevate experiences and knowledge of communities and families, and co-create solutions that reduce, and ultimately remove, systemic barriers.
- Put equity into action through implementation and learning from universally targeted, culturally specific approaches and emerging practices that address overrepresentation and disparities for African American and American Indian children, families, communities, and Tribes.
- Develop a community of learning that includes local communities and Tribal governments, state agencies, and other partners. In this community of learning, information flows in all directions and is equally valued. The learnings build on the lessons from various streams of work, starting in 2016.

Human-centered design

The Whole Family Systems Initiative uses the principles of [human-centered design](#), which focuses on the experiences and needs of specific groups. Listening to all feedback and centering family voices, applying creative responses, and iterative learning are practices the department uses to bring people from various parts of the system together in this process.

The nature of this work is emergent, and learning happens together. Some of the changes that will emerge include tangible results (such as policy changes, integrated programs, thoughtful methods of engagement, culturally significant practices, deeper resource investment where it matters), and intangible results (such as better experiences for families and workers, stronger relationships between partners, collective knowledge on doing this important work together).

The Department of Human Services awarded multiyear grants to partnering organizations and had a broad five-year plan for the work.

Year one: Exploring the current space (2020)

The design process began by exploring the current space and the context of who, what, and how. The site teams worked together to identify helpful methods to understand existing context. Engagement included conversations, ecosystem maps, user journey maps, literature reviews, observation, and Indigenous and culturally informed methodologies. Together, teams questioned assumptions made within the system and uncovered assets that pushed ideas forward.

Year two: Generating alternative solutions (2021)

Teams brainstormed potential solutions as part of Generating Alternative Scenarios, where ideas are fleshed out to envision a future scenario. Some insights were turned into tangible ideas that could be tested quickly in the context. Feedback was used to refine ideas for longer-term implementation in subsequent years.

Years three to five: Enacting new practices (2022 – 2024)

In years three to five, with support from the site teams, local sites tested new practices and adapted them as they received feedback from families and core teams. The learnings from each site will be shared with the Whole Family Systems Initiative network and other state agencies. Policy, practice, and programs will be adapted.

The site work is supported by a learning team that will document and share learnings across all sites.

Each site will design their feedback loops and learning plan with the learning team. Therefore, each plan has a different form and format to support what's meaningful in its context. The state site leads will work with to hear and understand where concerns "live" within the state, county, local government, and Tribal Nations. These localized learnings/feedback then go to the learning team and beyond, and/or diving deeper to understand it better. Potential policy and practices changes can emerge as a result, which will be shared with the sites.

The following is a brief description of the work of each site:

- **City of St. Paul:** Through partnerships with financial institutions, community-based agencies, and early childhood providers, the City of St. Paul is expanding and building off its college savings account initiative (CollegeBound) to improve economic stability as well as early childhood health and well-being outcomes for children and their families.
- **Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio (CLUES):** CLUES will address disparities and systemic failures faced by children in Latine families, particularly during ages birth to 5, regarding school readiness. The organization will engage the whole family in services to enhance their well-being. CLUES will also partner with Latine parents and system partners to create community-based solutions and implement recommendations to best meet their multiple needs.
- **Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association (IMAA):** The association, along with Families First of Minnesota, is leading a multidisciplinary team that is partnering with families and other community agencies to explore the social-cultural barriers of success in pre-K to kindergarten-age children whose families are first-generation immigrants and refugees.
- **Minneapolis American Indian Center (MAIC):** MAIC's Bright Beginnings program, along with partners and families, will develop individual and systems-level solutions to barriers faced by American Indian women who have experienced substance use disorder and are at risk of, or have a history of, child welfare involvement, helping them develop a stable, nurturing environment for their children. The project will incorporate cultural teachings and seek out additional cultural resources for its work with families.
- **Northpoint Health and Wellness Center Inc. (NorthPoint):** NorthPoint will support healthy child development during the critical period from conception to age 3 and, along with partners and families, will research the systemic failures that result in an abundance of risk factors and a lack of protective factors for many African American children and their parents/caregivers.
- **Ojibwemotaadidaa Omaa Gidakiiminaang (OOG):** OOG is the Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College's language immersion program; it is partnering with the state, Child Care Aware and Fond du Lac social services to plan and implement "Grandma's House," a language nest where infants and toddlers, with the help of their parents, elders, and language staff will grow up immersed in Ojibwe language and culture in a rich, home-like environment to convey a sense of identity, responsibility, and spiritual relationship to all creation.
- **People Serving People (PSP):** With partners, families, Mill City Kids and the Hennepin County Office to End Homelessness, People Serving People will explore issues related to access to child care and quality early childhood education, and ways to prevent the recurrence of family homelessness. Family homelessness overwhelmingly impacts African American and American Indian communities.

Strategy 1.3.2: Collaborate with the department's director of community relations to expand consultation with the Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council.

2020 Update

No activity to report for this year.

2021 Update

Department staff attended two of monthly Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council. Additionally, department staff attend subcommittee meetings on a regular basis.

2022 Update

Department staff continue to attend the Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council on a monthly basis. This provides an opportunity for the department to collaborate on equity work within systems outside of child welfare, such as housing, education, and employment that directly impact children and families in the child welfare system. The council is charged with reviewing DHS policies for racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic and Tribal disparities and has three functioning work groups including: Topics and Issues, Internal Policies and Operations, and Legislative and External.

2023 Update

Department staff, including Children and Family Services equity director, continue to attend the Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council (CECLC) on a monthly basis. This provides an opportunity for the department to collaborate on equity work within systems outside of child welfare, such as housing, education, and employment that directly impact children and families in the child welfare system. The council is charged with reviewing department policies for racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and Tribal disparities, and has three functioning work groups: Topics and Issues, Internal Policies and Operations, and Legislative and External. In 2023, department staff worked with the director of community relations to participate in an additional interagency set of community dialogues with a broader set of community members, as well as CECLC members to identify area of further equity work.

2024 Update

Over the last five-year reporting period, department staff has improved concerted efforts to improve engagement and collaboration with children, parents, relatives/kin, and resource families. The various work groups included representation from Tribes, urban Indian organizations, representation from the African American community, and former foster youth with diverse lived experience, among others. Legislative proposals developed by the department are required to be vetted by the communities impacted. In 2020, the department created the new African American Child Well-being Unit to further the goal of engagement.

As part of the unit, an oversight council was created to advise the department's commissioner on strategies to reduce overrepresentation and disparate outcomes. Across the department's child welfare continuum, there are external communities of practice aimed at improving policy and practice by incorporating diverse viewpoints into best practice standards. During this reporting period, the department launched the Thriving Children, Safer Families initiative. Through community engagement in the form of focus groups and individual interviews, the goal is to support the department in better understanding the needs of families and their communities as well as identify constructive resources to prevent child protection involvement. The department launched the MN StoryCollective as another means to hear from families regarding resource needs. The department supports the Quality Parenting Initiative, which is designed to support relations

between legal caregivers and foster parents when their children enter foster care. The department has heard from relative and non-relative caregivers that they want to know how to lessen the trauma for children when they must enter foster care, such as facilitating telephone calls with parents (when it is safe to do so). The department developed a coalition of private agencies serving youth transitioning out of foster care and supporting those who wish to return.

Creation of the coalition was in response to the COVID pandemic and the need to work collaboratively to identify a path forward to disseminate federal COVID relief funding to affected youth. This coalition continues to meet and is working on strategies to improve support for this population. The department continues to engage with the American Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council. Minnesota statute has been amended to require government-to-government consultation with Minnesota's Indian Tribes. Engagement continues with the Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council (CECLC), the Ombudsperson for Families Office, Youth Leadership Councils, foster parent support groups, and agencies providing adoption and Tribal customary adoption services. Other strategies designed to incorporate feedback loops from these and other groups is also underway.

Strategy 1.3.3: Expand the statewide Youth Leadership Council by increasing individual councils across the state to incorporate more youth voices.

2020 Update

A request for proposals (RFP) for an agency to support Youth Leadership Councils was executed in spring 2020. No new agencies were identified from this effort. The seven previous agencies were selected to continue. The independent living coordinator, along with the seven agencies, work to increase youth engagement in the Youth Leadership Council, and also actively promote youth members' involvement in child welfare policy and decision-making activities at the local, state and national levels.

2021 Update

The independent living coordinator, along with seven community agencies, continue to work to increase youth engagement in the Youth Leadership Council and actively promote youth members' involvement in child welfare policy and decision-making activities at the local, state and national levels. These agencies will continue in this capacity for another year while issuing another RFP in an attempt to add more councils across the state.

2022 Update

Two county agencies elected to implement Youth Leadership Councils (YLC). While one is up and running with two supportive adults and three youth members, the other is just starting and identified the supportive adult. The independent living coordinator, along with the nine local Youth Leadership Councils, continue to work on increasing youth engagement in Youth Leadership Councils and actively promote youth members' involvement in child welfare policy and decision-making activities at the local, state, and national levels. A request for proposals (RFP) for community agencies to support local Youth Leadership Councils was executed at the beginning of calendar year 2022. This effort identified an additional nine agencies to implement YLCs across the state. This will ensure there are youth voices statewide, and all youth will have an opportunity to join a YLC, if desired.

2023 Update

Sixteen community agencies and two county agencies elected to implement Youth Leadership Councils (YLC), ensuring the opportunity for youth voices across the state. Eleven YLCs are currently up and running, while the other seven are in the recruitment stage. The independent living coordinator and the local YLCs continue to work on increasing youth engagement

in YLCs and actively promote youth members' involvement in child welfare policy and decision-making activities at the local, state, and national levels. The YLCs were able to hold summer and winter retreats as well as their Day on the Hill in person for the first time since the pandemic began in 2020.

2024 Update

Sixteen community agencies and two county agencies facilitate local Youth Leadership Councils (YLCs), ensuring the opportunity for youth voices to be heard across the state. The independent living coordinator, along with the local Youth Leadership Councils, work on increasing youth engagement and actively promoting youth members' involvement in child welfare policy and decision-making activities at the local, state, and national levels. The YLCs meet monthly, either in-person or virtually. The YLCs continue to hold summer and winter retreats as well as their "Day on the Hill." They are also very involved in the planning and implementation of the annual youth leadership conference (Tomorrow's Leaders Today) for current and former foster youth. They also have a national partner in Foster Youth in Action and have YLC representatives attend their Leaders 4 Change conference annually.

Subsection B. Goal 2: Reduce disparities for American Indian children throughout the child welfare system.

To address the CFSP goal regarding reducing disparities, progress will be assessed using federal performance measures on permanency timelines, as well as an internal CSP measure, relative rate index, comparing children by race who are alleged victims in a child protection investigation or assessment and in out-of-home care. Targets were set to reduce the disproportionate involvement of American Indian children as alleged victims in screened in child protection reports and in out-of-home care by half; and reduce the difference in performance on the permanency measures between American Indian and white children by half. The measurement targets for this goal are below.

Measurements for Goal 2 - American Indian Children, Relative to White Children

	Target	Baseline 2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Child protection involvement	2.5x more likely	5.0	4.9	5.3	5.3	5.4	5.6
Out-of-home placement	9.1x more likely	17.8	16.7	15.5*	15.6	15.8	16.4
Permanency 0 -12	Difference <= 7.0%	15.7%	13.2%	10.6%	13.8%	12.7%	16.0%
Permanency 12-23	Difference <= 7.0%	15.7%	19.0%	19.8%	9.9%	16.1%	10.7%
Permanency 24 +	Difference <= 5.9%	11.7%	6.1%	1.3%	7.2%	-0.4%	8.8%

Note: Due to identified administrative data integrity issues, this number was retroactively changed to better reflect historical data. Change was made in the 2024 submission.

Objective 2.1: Identify factors that lead to disparities, including racial bias.

Progress on this objective will be assessed through development and use of the disparities index, published in the first year, updated on a monthly basis.

Strategy 2.1.1: Create and publish a disparities index at the different decision-making points throughout the child welfare system to understand where racism/bias is present. This will be shared for internal department use as well as externally with local child welfare agencies through Tableau Server.

2020 Update

Over the past year, research staff from the Child Safety and Permanency Division had conversations with Ramsey County and Oregon child protection staff; both doing similar work to create a disparities index. Research staff developed a draft dashboard and consulting with the division's Leadership team to complete and publish the dashboard.

2021 Update

CSP research staff shared the draft disparities index dashboard with CQI leadership and staff within the CQI section of the division. Revisions were made, and the dashboard will likely merge with ongoing CQI redesign work. Research staff also met with representatives from the ICWA unit and African American Child Well-being Unit to discuss specific data related to American Indian and African American populations, respectively. Research staff plans to have continuing data conversations with the two units throughout the year. The disparity index dashboard is available on Tableau Server for access by division staff.

2022 Update

The disparities index dashboard has been added to and updated regularly in conjunction with other work. The dashboard now contains over 33 unique data points along the child welfare continuum which can be viewed through the lens of racial disparities. Our section has continued to work most directly with the African American Child Well-being Unit in using the data to drive program planning and stakeholder engagement. The dashboard is currently available on the internal Tableau Server site for use by division staff.

2023 Update

The disparities index dashboard continues to be added to and updated regularly. The dashboard now contains 40 unique data points along the child welfare continuum, which can be viewed through the lens of racial disparities. The Research Unit has continued to work most directly with the American Indian Well-being Unit in using the data to drive program planning and stakeholder engagement. The dashboard is currently available on the internal Tableau Server site for use by division staff.

2024 Update

The disparities index dashboard has been added to and updated regularly in conjunction with other work. The dashboard now contains 40 unique data points along the child welfare continuum which can be viewed through the lens of racial

disparities. Recently, we have begun to reintegrate this data into both the department's ongoing CQI work, the next five-year plan, and other program-specific initiatives in the division.

Strategy 2.1.2: Adapt and implement the Collaborative Safety learning processes to capture systemic factors that specifically lead to disparities, including racial bias.

2020 Update

The department has provided information and informal training to the ICWA Advisory Council on the child fatality/near fatality review process and are planning for additional, formal training for Tribal agency staff over the next year. During this formal training, there will be opportunities for Tribal agency staff to make suggestions on how the process might be adjusted to be more culturally responsive. The department conducted one fatality/near fatality review involving an American Indian child whose Tribal affiliation was outside of Minnesota. Reviews involving American Indian children will expand as training is provided to Tribes, and input into the process is received from them.

This is a collaborative effort between various entities; Tribes and the American Indian community are key to the success of this strategy, as well as continued collaboration between the department and the ICWA Advisory Council, individual Tribes, and between units within the department.

2021 Update

As a part of the CQI redesign, additional CQI staff are being trained in utilizing processes grounded in safety science and designed to lead to identification of systemic factors that influence decision-making. Identifying ways in which these processes may be used to identify factors that specifically lead to disparities continues to be explored.

Additional training has not been provided to Tribal agency staff. Budget constraints, staffing resources, and the COVID-19 pandemic are factors that contributed to delays.

2022 Update

CQI staff continue to develop and utilize processes grounded in safety science, designed to lead to identify systemic factors that influence decision-making. Additionally, CQI staff have created a qualitative coding team that will further analyze systemic factors including factors that lead to disparities, including racial bias.

The fatality and near fatality review process and additional trainings to Tribal agencies continue to be challenging to complete due to budget constraints and staffing resources.

2023 Update

Collaborative Safety LLC continued to train internal department staff to conduct fatality/near-fatality reviews using safety science and the Collaborative Safety model. See Table 29 for updates.

2024 Update

Collaborative Safety continues to evaluate its training curriculum and has embedded information related to equity into their more recent trainings. Specifically, the importance of cultural differences and awareness of antidotes to white supremacy culture characteristics. On Oct. 3, 2023, Collaborative Safety staff provide a full-day training for the CQI staff that focused on Safety Science principles, the Collaborative Safety model, and the Systems Learning Review (SLR).

The department continues to review cases utilizing the Collaborative Safety model, which is rooted in Safety Science principles, and continue to advance the department’s awareness of disparities and racial bias through qualitative case reviews.

Objective 2.2: Improve access to culturally appropriate child welfare services for American Indian children and families.

Progress on this second objective will be assessed through use of an internal CSP ICWA compliance measure, and the relative rate index for American Indian children who are alleged victims of maltreatment, and those experiencing out-of-home care. The measurement benchmarks for this objective are below.

Measurements for Goal 2-Objective 2

Benchmarks	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Compliance rate for Indian Child Welfare Act, baseline (2018): 62%	Target: 66% Observed: 79%	70% 84.1%	74% 85.3%	78% 87.5%	82% TBD
Relative rate index of alleged victims, American Indian to white children, baseline (2018): 5.2 x more likely	Target: 4.7 Observed: 4.9	4.1 5.3	3.6 5.3	3.0 5.4	2.5 5.6
Relative rate index of children in out-of-home care, American Indian to white children, baseline (2018): 18.2 x	Target: 16.4 Observed: 16.7	14.6 15.5*	12.7 15.6	10.9 15.8	9.1 16.4

Note: Due to identified administrative data integrity issues, this number was retroactively changed to better reflect historical data. Change was made in the 2024 submission.

Strategy 2.2.1: Adapt the fatality and near fatality review process to be more culturally responsive when used with Tribal child welfare agencies.

2020 Update

The department provided information and informal training to the ICWA Advisory Council on the child fatality/near fatality review process, and planning for additional formal training for Tribal agency staff over the next year. During formal training, there will be opportunities for Tribal agency staff to make suggestions on how the process might be adjusted to be more culturally responsive. The department conducted one fatality/near fatality review involving an American Indian child whose Tribal affiliation outside of Minnesota. Reviews involving American Indian children will expand as training is provided to Tribes, and input into the process is received.

This is a collaborative effort among various entities. Collaboration with Tribes and the American Indian community is key to the success of this strategy, as well as continued collaboration among the department and the ICWA Advisory Council, Tribes, and divisions and units within the department.

2021 Update

Providing additional training to Tribal agency staff on the fatality and near fatality review process, obtaining feedback from them on ways to make the training more culturally responsive is a key component to this strategy. Additional training has not been provided to Tribal agency staff. Budget constraints, staffing resources, and the COVID-19 pandemic are factors contributing to delays.

2022 Update

Additional training has not been provided to Tribal agency staff. Budget constraints, staffing resources, and the COVID-19 pandemic are factors contributing to delays.

2023 Update

Additional training has not been provided to Tribal agency staff. Budget constraints and staffing resources are contributors to this.

2024 Update

Additional training has not been provided to Tribal agency staff. Staffing resources and budget constraints contribute to this.

Strategy 2.2.2: Expansion of the American Indian Child Welfare Initiative (AICWI). In early 2021, Red Lake Nation will assume child protection responsibilities from local county systems, offering a culturally relevant model of practice. The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe will continue its planning efforts to move toward joining the AICWI.

2020 Update

Red Lake Nation made progress in its work toward assuming child protection responsibilities from local county systems. The department's AICWI team worked to bring the systems and funds previously hosted by neighboring counties to Red Lake Nation. In December 2019, department staff began hosting monthly, and now bi-monthly AICWI Leadership meetings. In partnership with Red Lake Nation and Beltrami County, the Leadership team is joining in discussions in preparation for the Initiative transfer. The process has moved forward to MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) negotiations.

The AICWI team is in communication with the Red Lake Nation, allowing time to listen and directly address concerns and ongoing updates. This year, the department hosted bi-monthly Video Now meetings to provide information directly to Red Lake Nation related to data reporting, funding streams and allocations, systems and training. The AICWI team works closely with department programs and systems within the Gateway Project. This project is designing the actual transfer of Initiative cases from neighboring counties to Red Lake Nation.

As Red Lake is an inherent sovereign nation in which Public Law 280 is not applicable within its jurisdiction, the department is reminded to recognize the nation's unique political status; its work will not look like what has been done by other county agencies and Tribes within Minnesota, but the work will meet or exceed expectations. The Red Lake Nation will be amending its planning contract to extend for an additional six months on July 1, 2020, and will begin the implementation contract on Jan. 1, 2021.

Planning continues with Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe to move toward joining the AICWI. There is no confirmed date as to when this may occur.

2021 Update

On Jan. 1, 2021, the Red Lake Nation assumed child protection responsibility from the local county systems. The Red Lake Nation is offering a culturally relevant model of practice to its community and the children and families residing within its Tribal boundaries. Throughout 2021, the department's AICWI team continued to provide support and assistance to Red Lake Nation as it gained knowledge of critical system use and processes involved with this work. The department's AICWI team continued to host discussions with Red Lake Nation and internal department units to finalize the finer points of the MOU and Title IV-E Agreement.

The mutually agreed on existing child welfare cases eligible for the AICWI were transferred to the Red Lake Nation on Dec. 31, 2020. The corresponding MAXIS cases for these children were transferred to the Red Lake Nation in January 2021. The corresponding PRISM (child support) cases for these children are maintained by the local county agency until the PRISM system is coded to automatically send the case referrals to Red Lake Nation.

The department's AICWI team continues to meet with Red Lake Nation on a weekly basis to hear directly about work taking place, and to learn of concerns that need to be addressed expeditiously. In conversations with Red Lake Nation, department staff has learned how its work has exceeded expectations of its family preservation model by reducing out-of-home placements and open child welfare cases overall. It is anticipated that these weekly conversations will be held on an ongoing basis as a means to stay connected, and to encourage interpersonal relationships with the Nation.

The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe continues its AICWI planning with the goal of expanding to assume child protection responsibilities from local county systems on July 1, 2024. The Mille Lacs Band has staffed an AICWI team and in January 2021, the department's AICWI team began meeting with staff on a weekly basis to assist and support their work to build capacity and infrastructure to support AICWI programming.

The plan is to begin discussions with local county partners to develop a transition plan for the AICWI. A legislative proposal is being developed to continue planning for an additional two years to meet the July 1, 2024, implementation goal.

2022 Update

There is no update at this time.

2023 Update

The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe is in the final planning stages and stands ready to become the fourth Tribal Nation to join the Initiative in January of 2025. Once MLBO joins the Initiative, it will have the authority to deliver child welfare services to American Indian children and families living on the MLBO reservation. This year MLBO has been working on the development of policies and procedures that meet federal requirements, the development of a Title IV-E agreement and IV-E unit, MA agreement, and local county agreements, implementing the Families First Preservation Service Act requirements, and hiring, training, and orienting the staff needed to carry out the requirements of the Initiative. Mille Lacs Band Family Services Program continues infrastructure building by hiring employees dedicated to Initiative readiness and development, engaging consultants with experience in Initiative planning and implementation, beginning to provide direct services to families to improve well-being and enhance family preservation and reunification, and paying for standard administrative costs.

2024 Update

The Mille Lacs Band is still in its final stages of becoming the fourth American Child Welfare Initiative Tribe in Minnesota. The “planning period” has been extended due to unforeseen events, pushing back the date for going live to January 2025. The department is actively working in collaboration with the six county agencies and Tribes to address staffing needs and getting newly elected officials up to date with this project. This year, the county and Tribes have taken action to address access to the Social Service Information System (SSIS) to assist with identifying an average amount of cases that should transfer once the Tribe is ready to implement it. Items that continue to be negotiated and discussed include the development of a Title IV-E agreement, Medical Assistance (MA) agreement, local county agreements (MOUs), and implementation of the Families First Preservation Service Act requirements.

Strategy 2.2.3: Provide extra support to agencies determined out of compliance with ICWA and MIFPA. Department ICWA Compliance and Training staff will work closely with county agencies not meeting substantial compliance standards, and provide ICWA curriculum training and technical assistance.

2020 Update

Upon Completion of the 2019 Indian Child Welfare Act – Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA) compliance review, the department’s ICWA unit staff scheduled onsite technical assistance with each county reviewed. A total of 48 onsite visits occurred between August 2019 and January 2020. In some instances, onsite assistance included several counties represented when discussion occurred. These discussions involved implementation of ICWA/MIFPA provisions, as well as case consultations using the ICWA/MIFPA Desk Aid tool, given to each worker. ICWA unit staff was also asked for onsite technical assistance with Tribal Nations/communities discussing components of ICWA/MIFPA implementation and policy expectations of county agencies.

The department’s Training and ICWA units collaborated in developing and implementing six webinars focusing on major components of ICWA and MIFPA. These 45–60-minute webinars, known as “ICWA Coffee Talks,” focused on ICWA/MIFPA data entry in the Social Service Information System with correlated policy requirements. ICWA team members received and responded to questions posed by participants, and incorporated cultural/Tribal language whenever possible to educate and expose participants to differences with Tribal Communities and Nations.

The department collaborated with the Minnesota Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council (11 Tribal and six Urban Indian representatives), and county agency representatives, to develop an ICWA/MIFPA Compliance Review tool. Collaboration continues in development of program improvement planning when an agency is found out of compliance.

Measures used to determine effectiveness of federal and state requirements are based on outcomes with the ICWA/MIFPA compliance review. In 2018, statewide incompliance was rated at 49%, with an increase to 61% in 2019, with ICWA/MIFPA requirements.

The ICWA unit, the department’s Continuous Quality Improvement staff, Tribal and county agency partners, collaborated to work together in development of the program improvement plan process. It utilizes the Collaborative Safety review model that incorporates Human Factors and System Safety (Safety Science). The process includes outcomes from the compliance case file reviews, following up with debriefs involving front-line staff making case decisions, and a mapping process including representation from local county and Tribal agencies and department partners. The process is to understand decision making in real time, identifying underlying systemic barriers to ICWA and MIFPA compliance.

2021 Update

Upon completion of the 2020 Indian Child Welfare Act – Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA) compliance reviews, the department's ICWA unit staff provided technical assistance with each county reviewed. Due to the pandemic, all technical assistance meetings occurred virtually in 2020. A total of 44 technical assistance sessions occurred between January and December 2020. In some instances, assistance included multiple counties represented when discussion occurred. These discussions involved implementation of ICWA/MIFPA provisions, as well as case consultations using the ICWA/MIFPA Desk Aid tool, as well as other resource documents provided to each worker. ICWA unit staff was also asked for technical assistance with Tribal Nations/communities discussing components of ICWA/MIFPA implementation and policy expectations of county agencies.

The department's Training and ICWA units collaborated in developing and implementing six webinars focusing on major components of ICWA and MIFPA. These 45–60-minute webinars, known as "ICWA Coffee Talks," focused on ICWA/MIFPA data entry in the SSIS with correlated policy requirements. ICWA team members received and responded to questions posed by participants, and incorporated cultural/Tribal language whenever possible to educate and expose participants to differences with Tribal communities and Nations.

The department collaborated with the Minnesota Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council (11 Tribal and six urban Indian representatives), and county agency representatives, to develop an ICWA/MIFPA Compliance Review tool. Collaboration continues in development of program improvement planning when an agency is determined out of compliance.

Measures used to determine effectiveness of federal and state requirements are based on outcomes with the ICWA/MIFPA compliance reviews. All reviews are completed for the prior year starting February 1 and wrap up around the end of May. In 2017, the baseline review year, statewide compliance was rated at 49%. Since that time, there has been a steady increase in compliance to 62% in 2018, 79% in 2019, and 84% in 2020.

The ICWA unit, the division's CQI staff, and Tribal and county agency partners, collaborated in developing the program improvement plan process. It utilizes the Collaborative Safety review model, which incorporates Human Factors and System Safety (Safety Science). The process includes outcomes from the compliance case file reviews, following up with debriefs involving front-line staff making case decisions, and a mapping process, including representation from local county and Tribal agencies and department partners. The process is to understand decision making in real time, identifying underlying systemic barriers to ICWA and MIFPA compliance.

2022 Update

The Tribal/State Agreement provides a process for the department to respond to complaints of ICWA non-compliance. Department staff review complaints and if found non-compliant, the county agency is required to complete a corrective action plan.

In response to the results of the 2021 Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA) compliance case review, ICWA unit team members met with over 40 county agencies and Tribal social services agencies for virtual technical assistance (TA) meetings. Team members shared ICWA/MIFPA tools, resources and discussed federal and state practice requirements and expectations with data entry. In addition, team members collaborated with the Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy by hosting six WebEx sessions called "ICWA Coffee Talks." Sessions were 45 to 60 minutes, with 100 to 200 participants, covering topics from data entry within the SSIS-ICWA tabs, policy and practice, and questions and answers related to ICWA and MIFPA. For a one-year period (January 2021 to January 2022), team members responded to more than 315 ICWA/MIFPA questions received by email in the Customer Relations Management (CRM) system.

2023 Update

For the 2022 Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA) case review required for American Indian children in out-of-home placement, the state average for compliance is 85%. Department staff met and collaboratively developed or updated program improvement plans with 20 counties. The American Indian Wellbeing Unit (formerly ICWA Unit) provided compliance training for 21 counties and agencies. Team members shared ICWA/MIFPA tools and resources and discussed federal and state practice requirements and expectations with data entry. Team members also meet with Tribal Training Certification Partnership (TTCP) once a month to start development in sharing what gaps and additional supports are needed through the TTCP training with the implementation of ICWA/MIFPA provisions. Additionally, through the Tribal/State Agreement, department staff respond and investigate ICWA/MIFPA non-compliance complaints. This year, the department has received an increase in the number of complaints submitted. In response, department staff have submitted a proposal to increase resources to actively provide “real time” support for county and Tribal supports who work with Indian children and families.

For a one-year (January 2022 to December 2022), team members responded to more than 200 ICWA/MIFPA questions received by email in the Customer Relations Management (CRM) system, covering topics from data entry within the SSIS-ICWA tabs, policy and practice, questions and answers related to ICWA and MIFPA and documenting/tracking complaints received.

Major provisions of ICWA/MIFPA reviewed stemming from Minnesota Statutes 477A.0126:

- Inquiry
- MIFPA Notice
- ICWA Notice
- Active Efforts
- Due diligence in finding and following order to obtain QEW
- Due diligence in following placement preference order.

Provisions noncompliant

Areas that are most noncompliant are inquiry, timely notice to child’s Tribe, child’s parents or Indian custodian and following placement preferences.

ICWA/MIFPA provisions:

Inquiry of child’s American Indian affiliation/lineage: The Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA) requires all cases at the time an agency begins working with any family (i.e., child welfare, child protection, children’s mental health, development disabilities, educational neglect and truancy) to inquire of Tribal affiliations and possible lineage. Inquiry applies to cases regardless of whether the case is in court or not. Immediate inquiry of parents (including fathers), custodians, immediate and extended family, as well as other appropriate persons (i.e., Tribal representatives, child’s teachers, service providers, etc.) is required. In 2019 efforts to improve practice around inquiry have led department staff to pilot a continuous quality improvement process utilizing the Collaborative Safety model to work with Tribal, county and department staff in identifying barriers to inquiry.

Notification of American Indian parents and Tribes of state proceedings involving American Indian children and their right to intervene: MIFPA expands and strengthens the federal Indian Child Welfare Act by requiring notification of, and providing intervention by, Tribal social services when an American Indian child is at risk of placement, including those cases where American Indian children are voluntarily in placement. Specific policies and procedures to comply with these

requirements are outlined in the department's Indian Child Welfare case worker checklist, manual, and desk aid available on the department's website. Compliance is supported by SSIS features that include a caseworker checklist and built-in documentation features to guide county workers in meeting ICWA and MIFPA requirements. The Minnesota Tribal Training Certification Partnership (TTCP) provides basic, advanced, and specialized training curricula on ICWA, MIFPA and the Tribal/State Agreement.

Placement preferences for American Indian children: Requirements to follow special placement preferences for American Indian children are defined in numerous citations in Minnesota Statutes and Rules, included in SSIS ICWA/MIFPA tab to ensure compliance with ICWA and MIFPA. Efforts to maintain compliance with this requirement are through the ICWA noncompliance complaint and review response system with procedures outlined in the TSA and Indian Child Welfare Case Worker checklist, Manual, SSIS ICWA/MIFPA tabs, AFCARS, and information provided to county and Tribal staff through department technical assistance and case consultation.

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 County and Hennepin County
- ICWA non-compliance complaint process established through Tribal/State Agreement
- ICWA/MIFPA compliance review, established through county aid funding (Minnesota Statutes 477A.126).

2024 Update

The American Indian Wellbeing (formally ICWA) Unit currently has two compliance processes: The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and the 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. For the 2023 review outcome, 18 of 40 counties reviewed were found to be out of compliance for two consecutive years. The state average for compliance is 86%. 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 updated and developed a training that was piloted with nine counties in person to strengthen practice around the implementation of state and federal requirements.

Complaints: Through the Tribal State Agreement, staff respond to public complaints of non-compliance. Sixteen complaints have been received this year. In 2023, due to the high volume of complaints received and awaiting responses, Minnesota legislation authorized and funded the addition of three permanent staff to solely respond and investigate non-compliance. These additional positions are vital and have increased the unit's ability to respond "in real time" to complaints as well as

complete the multiple back logs of complaints yet to be reviewed. Onboarding and acclimating staff who respond to complaints has been a major portion of the complaint work; however, staff have been hired and are now fully onboarded and ready to start responding to complaints of non-compliance.

This year, the American Indian Wellbeing Unit staff, in partnership with the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare (CASCW), developed and published six podcasts, [A Guide through ICWA & MIFPA – Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare \(umn.edu\)](https://www.umn.edu/center-for-advanced-studies-in-child-welfare). The podcast reviews the six major provisions of ICWA and MIFPA as an individual learning/listening tool. This project was a major accomplishment for the team and a great partnership with CASCW.

For a one-year period (January 2023 to December 2023), team members responded to more than 130 ICWA/MIFPA questions received by email through the Customer Relations Management (CRM) system, addressing general technical assistance questions around ICWA/MIFPA implementation, SSIS-ICWA/MIFPA tabs, policy, and received documents and complaints.

Staff continue to meet with the Tribal Training Certification Partnership on a quarterly basis to keep updated and abreast of training that is available or will become available for alignment with training county social workers.

Major provisions of ICWA/MIFPA reviewed stemming from Minnesota Statutes 477A.0126:

- 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.

Provisions noncompliant

Areas highest to be found noncompliant are inquiry, timely notice to child's Tribe, child's parents/Indian custodian, and following placement preferences.

ICWA/MIFPA provisions:

Inquiry of child's Indian affiliation/lineage: The Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA) requires all cases at the time an agency begins working with any family (e.g., child welfare, child protection, children's mental health, development disabilities, educational neglect, and truancy) to inquire of Tribal affiliations and/or possible lineage. Inquiry applies to cases regardless of whether the case is in court or not. Immediate inquiry of parents (including fathers), custodians, immediate and extended family, as well as other appropriate persons (e.g., Tribal representatives, child's teachers, service providers, etc.) is required. In 2019, efforts to improve practice around inquiry have lead department staff in piloting a continuous quality improvement process utilizing the Collaborative Safety model to work with Tribal, county and department staff to identify barriers to inquiry.

Notification of Indian parents and Tribes of state proceedings involving Indian children and their right to intervene:

MIFPA expands and strengthens the federal Indian Child Welfare Act by requiring notification of, and providing intervention by, Tribal social services when an Indian child is at risk of placement, including those cases where Indian children are voluntarily in placement. Specific policies and procedures to comply with these requirements are outlined in the department's Indian Child Welfare case worker checklist, manual, and desk aid available on the department's website. Compliance is supported by SSIS features that include a caseworker checklist and built-in documentation features to guide

county workers in meeting ICWA and MIFPA requirements. The Minnesota Tribal Training Certification Partnership (TTCP) provides basic, advanced, and specialized training curricula on ICWA, MIFPA, and the Tribal/State Agreement.

Placement preferences for Indian children: Requirements to follow special placement preferences for Indian children are defined in numerous citations in Minnesota statutes and rules, included in the SSIS ICWA/MIFPA tab to ensure compliance with ICWA and MIFPA. Efforts to maintain compliance with this requirement are through the ICWA non-compliance complaint and review response system with procedures outlined in the TSA and Indian Child Welfare Case Worker checklist, manual, SSIS ICWA/MIFPA tabs, Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS), and information provided to county and Tribal staff through department technical assistance and case consultation.

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 \(state.mn.us\)](#)

Minnesota Department of Human Service ICWA/MIFPA Compliance Processes

	Compliance Complaint	Compliance Review System
Authority	Tribal State Agreement The Minnesota Department of Human Services (department) has agreed to create and maintain a process that provides Tribes, parents, family members and members of the public the ability to file complaints regarding their belief that a county social services agency has not followed federal or state Indian child welfare laws in a case involving a tribal child. The authority to research, review and make findings from complaints is established through the 2007 Tribal State Agreement (TSA pg. 24). Link to TSA	Minnesota Statutes Minnesota legislature authorized funding to county social services agencies to offset their costs of foster care for tribal children in 2017. Counties are required to comply with federal and state Indian child welfare laws and the statute authorizes the department to withhold a portion of the funds when a county social services agency is found out of compliance. The department is required to establish a statewide county case compliance system. Minn. Stat. §477A.0126 (county aid reimbursement). Link to 477A.0126
Purpose	Complaints alleging county social services agencies to be out of compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA) are reviewed by department staff for the purpose of improving county performance and practice. There has been no fiscal consequences tied to this process.	This legislation requires department staff, in consultation with tribal and county agency staff, to develop a system to review county agency compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA) and to report county performance to the Department of Revenue to authorize a fiscal withhold.
Criteria	Complaints are reviewed for the time period from when a county has initiated a case in the Social Services Information System (SSIS) up to the date the department received the complaint. The case review process is initiated based on the department receiving a compliant form. Provisions of ICWA and MIFPA that are reviewed: Inquiry, MIFPA notice, ICWA notice, active efforts (prior to removal, ongoing and reunification), due diligence in finding a qualified expert witness (QEW), and due diligence in following placement preferences.	Cases selected for review are based on out-of-home placement data of tribal children by county social services agencies in the Social Services Information System (SSIS). Case reviews are conducted starting February through June. Provisions of ICWA and MIFPA that are reviewed: Inquiry, MIFPA notice, ICWA notice, active efforts (prior to removal, ongoing and reunification), due diligence in finding a QEW, and due diligence in following placement preferences.
When non-compliance is determined	When the review of the complaint is completed, a summary report is provided to the complainant, child's Tribe(s), county social service agency identified in the complaint, the ICWA Advisory Council and Ombudsperson for American Indian families. In addition the county agency is requested to complete a corrective action plan (CAP) to identify policies and practice to improve compliance with ICWA and MIFPA.	Certification of the statewide case review outcome is provided by the department to the Department of Revenue each year by July 1 st , to determine amount of fiscal withhold for county social service agencies found out of compliance for two consecutive years. Communication is provided to county social service agencies when a program improvement plan (PIP) is requested and technical assistance is recommended to develop the plan collaboratively with department staff in the ICWA Unit, Child Safety and Permanency Division.

- 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 County
- ICWA non-compliance complaint process established through Tribal/State Agreement.

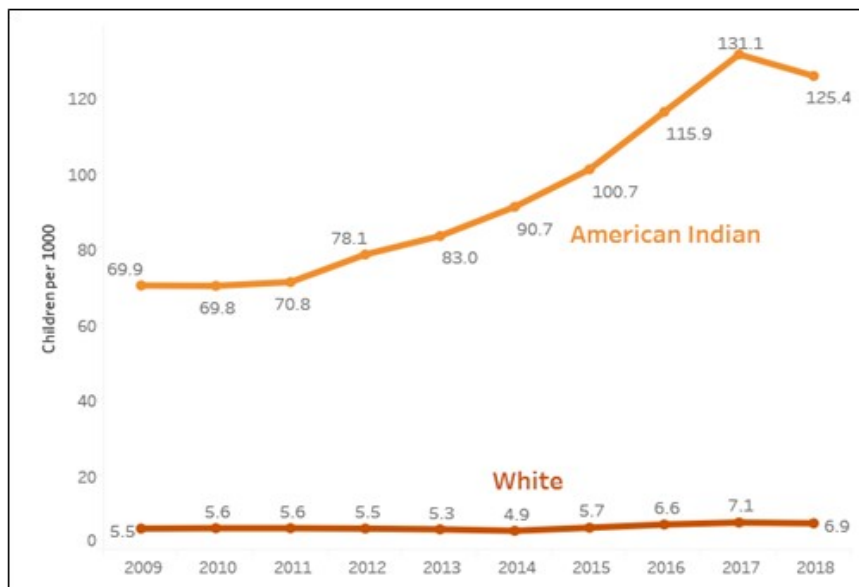
Strategy 2.2.4: Leverage Family First Prevention Services Act and Pre-school Development grant work to build capacity among departments and local levels to co-create and support systemic child and family well-being/prevention strategies, particularly for American Indian children, families and communities (using a Targeted Universalism approach).

2020 Update

The Child Safety and Permanency Division, Prevention unit/Children’s Trust Fund uses the data below to determine focus populations. American Indian families live within inequitable systems, which have been instilled in structures over centuries through racism and resulting biases.

This line graph shows the rate of children experiencing out-of-home care in Minnesota. The rate is per 1,000 children in the population. Two separate lines are shown: one for American Indian children, and one for white children. American Indian children experience care at substantially higher rates than white children —roughly 15-20 times higher over the last decade.

Figure. American Indian and White Children in Out-of-Home Care



It is understood that while staff have engaged families in the work, that engagement has not been the primary driver of work. Minnesota’s Children’s Trust Fund programs will now be based in what has been learned from partnering in two

large-scale community engagement efforts: The Preschool Development Grant community-based needs assessment,¹ and the Minnesota Maternal and Child Health Needs Assessment Discovery Survey.²

Figure. Guiding Principles



While staff intends to work within values of the department (above), they also adopted guiding principles for its work, created through collaboration with families, communities, and state agencies as part of the Preschool Development Grant planning process. From the Maternal and Child Health Discovery Survey, it was learned that families have needs that cannot be dissected from each other. There is no one single solution.

From the Preschool Development Grant community-based needs assessment, department staff learned that families need help navigating programs and services, and adopting a targeted universal approach is needed for practice, policies, and systems to better support families and communities experiencing inequities due to race and ethnicity, wealth and geography.

The department and its partners are moving toward a system of promotion and prevention that supports families before they enter the child welfare system. This will be done through:

- Making it easier for families to get what they need, increasing access to supports and services
- Cultivating community engagement and partnership, and
- Leveraging community- and parent-developed solutions.

In collaboration with the Minnesota Departments of Education and Health, the Children’s Trust Fund will leverage Preschool Development Grant (\$6 million over two years), and Community-based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) funds to offer community-based grants to develop Implementation Hubs (Hubs). Hubs will support pregnant and parenting families with young children up to age 8. Grantees will develop partnerships within communities to facilitate ease of navigation,

¹ The PDG Community-based Needs Assessment engagement process included 134 events within 56 communities and 11 Tribal Nations in as many as six different languages. Out of 1,372 participants, 73% were parents.

² The Minnesota Maternal and Child Health Needs Assessment Discovery Survey included 2,160 respondents, of which 50% identified as community members.

referrals, and families getting what they need in a timely way.³ Grantees will support families and communities experiencing inequities due to race and ethnicity, wealth, and geography – as determined by data to be the focus population. CTF will offer up to 15 grants statewide for the following:

- Develop universal access points for families coupled with relationship-based, culturally appropriate navigation of programs and systems. Due to COVID-19, guidance for Hubs will include brick and mortar, mobile, and virtual access points
- Increase access to systems through pilot testing the state’s Help Me Connect (based on the national Help Me Grow model) system coupled with the Children’s Defense Fund, Minnesota’s online Bridge to Benefits platform, and
- Grow community engagement and support community-developed solutions (which will look and feel different for each community).

This work naturally intersects with the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) Prevention Plan development. As seen in the diagram at left, the work of CTF staff is to engage with partners to build a targeted universal system of promotion and prevention.

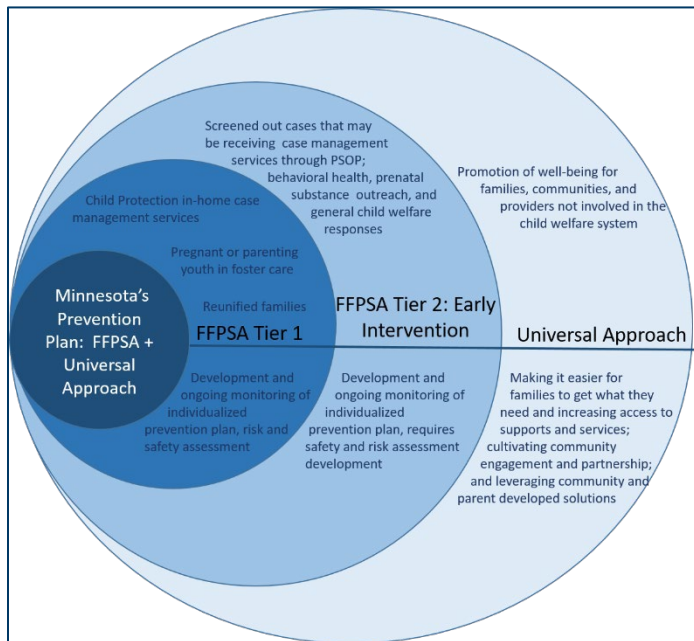


Figure. Minnesota’s Prevention Plan

2021 Update

Minnesota Tribes that have an agreement with the department to provide child protection, foster care, and adoption services, department staff submitted a request for a waiver to the Children’s Bureau allowing these Tribes to have the same allowances regarding evidence-based requirements through the FFPSA, as Tribes with a direct Title IV-E relationship with

³ Referral services may be: Family home visiting, early care and education (including Early/Head Start), behavioral health, housing, food security, income supports, primary and dental care and more.

the federal government. The department is providing \$1.5 million of Family First Transition Act funding for a request by the Indian Child Welfare Act Advisory Council to support a research institute of their choosing to collect data and evaluate services identified by Tribes as supportive of American Indian families, communities for submission to the FFPSA Clearinghouse.

Additionally, through the Preschool Development Grant (PDG), a collaboration between the Minnesota Departments of Health, Education, and Human Services, there are multiple collaborations with Tribes and organizations serving the American Indian community, including:

- Investing in community solutions. The Minnesota Department of Health Community Solutions Fund is working with multiple communities to identify challenges, prioritizing people of color and American Indians. This is in partnership with the Department of Health and Center for Health Equity. American Indian and Tribal grantees include:
 - Division of Indian Work: Ninde. Doula support for American Indian mothers in the Twin Cities metro.
 - Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. Development of a community doula program to improve maternal and child health of community members.
 - Fond du Lac Tribal College: Ojibwemotaadidaa Omaa Gidakiiminaang/ Grandma's House. Support Ojibwe language immersion for children prenatal to age three led by elder-first speakers.
 - Indigenous Visioning: Creation of the Native American Parent Leadership Training Institute where parents learn core cultural teachings to foster cultural connections and relationships to improve outcomes for children.
 - Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe: Manidoo Ningadoodem/Family Spirit Program. Train community members to deliver health and cultural education through flexible home visits.
 - Montessori American Indian Childcare Center. Develop a home-visiting program by hosting community Talking Circles to identify needs and future services to improve the health and well-being of Indian children and parents.
 - Northwest Indian Community Development Center: Ojibwe Immersion Academy. Adopt a holistic, multi-generational Anishinaabe Care Coordination model to improve health incomes for parenting and pregnant Anishinaabe youth.
 - Red Lake Comprehensive Health Services: Culturally Healthy Early Childhood Indicators of Progress Training Academy. Train Early Head Start, child care and public school teachers on the language, culture and history of the Red Lake Nation while also working on their own professional development.
 - Wicoie Nandagikendan: Our Sacred Foods and Language. Expansion of language immersion programs, including more and new activities that promote health, wellness and interconnectedness within families and the community.
 - Community Resource Hubs. As part of the PDG, the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Child Safety and Permanency Division is collaborating and coordinating with multiple partners to accomplish the following goals:
 - Make it easier for families to get what they need. Develop universal access for families, paired with culturally appropriate, relationship-based navigation of programs and systems.
 - Increase access to services. Collaborate with state agencies to test and evaluate [Help Me Connect](#) and [Bridge to Benefits](#) paired with culturally appropriate, relationship-based navigation.
 - Grow community engagement and support community developed solutions. A community-based, whole family approach so families have what they need to thrive. This will look and feel different in every community.

Minnesota has 12 grantees including one Tribal nation; three of the grantees have sub-contracted partnerships with Tribal Nations:

- Red Lake Nation. Red Lake Nation is working to provide mobile Community Resource Hub services to urban Tribal populations in the Twin Cities and Duluth areas to support the well-being of families.
- Northwest Minnesota Foundation. Partnering through sub-contract with child care centers within Red Lake Nation and the White Earth Nation to offer culturally appropriate service navigation and relevant services.
- Northland Foundation. Partnering through sub-contract with Bois Fort Band of Chippewa, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, and Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe to help pregnant and parenting families connect with local resources.
- Sawtooth Mountain Clinic. Partnering through sub-contract with Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa to increase access to health services, provide transportation and access to community based services.

Department staff, in conjunction with the BUILD Initiative, are offering Communities of Practice to support Community Resource Hubs. Planning is underway to offer an ongoing Community of Practice around equity practice to develop a shared understanding, language, and practice to support the strengths of families most impacted by structural inequities due to race/ethnicity, economic instability, and geography. Changing the practice of state agency personnel, community organization personnel, county personnel to be anti-racist, inclusive, strength-based, and trauma informed will benefit all families in the future.

The Preschool Development Grant has hired an Indigenous Evaluator to evaluate grant activities as they relate to Minnesota's American Indian communities and Community Resource Hubs and Community Solutions grantees. An Indigenous Evaluation recognizes Tribal Nations are sovereign nations, creates value for the community, respects traditional knowledge systems, and is created in collaboration with communities.

Finally, the PDG supports the Help Me Connect platform on which a dedicated resource page for [Tribal and American Indian Families](#).

2022 Update

Work of the PDG Community Resource Hubs continues to support previously mentioned grantee and partner Tribes. An initial considerations [report](#) was developed and released in 2022. The findings in this report demonstrate that the community resource hubs are successfully improving service navigation and delivery to families with young children and well positioned to expand into additional communities. The report outlined key concerns for state leaders who can implement the following considerations. Preliminary data shows that hubs are serving American Indian families at higher rates than their respective state population. See *Table 18 Community Resource Hubs*.

2023 Update

Work of the Minnesota Preschool Development Grant (PDG) Community Resource Hubs continues to support 12 grantees across the state. The [final evaluation report](#) for the MN PDG Hubs was released in January of 2023. This report indicates over 10,000 families served by the hubs over seven quarters. Data in this report continues to show that hubs have served a disproportionate number of Black, Indigenous and Latino families. The report highlights recommendations for sustainability. A final round of engagement features [how families feel](#) about PDG funded programs. Governor Walz offered an [ambitious legislative package](#) to better support children and families. This package includes a proposal that builds on the learnings of the hubs to develop a network of Community Resource Centers across the state. Minnesota PDG Community Resource Hubs will sunset in June 2023.

2024 Update

Research from Chapin Hall suggests that economic instability is a key driver (especially for Black, Indigenous, and families of color) of entry into, and continued involvement in, the child protection system. Creating multiple access points for programs and services within priority populations remains a strategy to support family well-being. Minnesota is using this research and multiple strategies toward narrowing the front door of child protection by promoting and supporting family well-being.

While Preschool Development Grant (PDG) Hubs have sunsetted, the interagency work that has occurred in the spirit of PDG over the course of this CFSP has led to multiple strategies to help achieve a reduction in disparities for both American Indian and African American families. Specifically, the 2023 Minnesota legislative session brought billions of dollars into the state budget to support family well-being. Community Resource Centers (CRCs), modeled after the PDG Community Resource Hubs, were funded at \$7.1 million dollars over two biennia. CRCs will focus on creating access to economic stability programs and other services and supports for families. CRC funding will prioritize community-based organizations that serve families experiencing inequities. More explicitly, funds will focus on communities with low child opportunity (per the [Child Opportunity Index](#)), high rates of poverty, and high rates of neglect reports involving Black, Indigenous, and families of color. The department also received funds to implement a kinship navigator (KN) program. The department is coupling CRC and KN funds together to provide programming that will offer culturally responsive, relationship-based service navigation and concrete supports as well as other community-driven programs and services that strengthen all families and support well-being.

Long-term intended results for a network of Community Resource Centers and kinship navigator programs include families having culturally responsive access to critical programs and services that promote family economic stability and well-being and prevent child welfare system involvement.

The universal piece of this strategy continues to be the online resource tool Help Me Connect. [Help Me Connect](#) was developed through PDG funds and was fully funded during the 2023 legislative session to become an ongoing universal access strategy for providers and families.

The 2023 legislative session also brought billions in funding to increase available services and economic supports to families across domains. Notable investments include, but are not limited to, a new child tax credit, housing supports, food supports, child care scholarships and workforce supports, paid family leave, and a new Department of Children, Youth, and Families.

Objective 2.3: Promote reunification, when possible, and other permanency options in a timely manner when reunification is not possible.

Progress on the third objective will be assessed through use of federal permanency measures. The measurement benchmarks for this objective are below.

Measurements for Goal 2-Objective 3 - American Indian Child Permanency

Benchmarks	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Permanency in less than 12 months: 37.7%	Target: 41.2%	44.6%	48.1%	51.5%	55.0%

Benchmarks	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	Observed: 40.3%	39.5%	38.1%	41.2%	37.8%
Permanency in 12-23 months: 49.6%	Target: 52.7% Observed: 44.9%	55.8% 45.1%	58.8% 49.0%	61.9% 53.1%	65.0% 54.1%
Permanency in 24 months or more: 28.1%	Target: 30.5% Observed: 30.7%	32.9% 31.8%	35.2% 36.3%	37.6% 41.8%--	40.0% 35.4%

Strategy 2.3.1: Continue to expand the experiential training on the court process through the Children’s Justice Initiative (CJI) partnership.

2020 Update

In an effort to improve the quality of EPC (emergency protective care) hearings, and to ensure all findings are made, beginning in August 2018 the Children’s Justice Initiative began partnering with Mitchell Hamline School of Law to hold [EPC Experiential Learning Trainings](#). To date, five such trainings were held involving 12 counties. During these trainings, multi-disciplinary teams (judges, county attorneys, caseworkers, attorneys for parents and children, Tribal representatives, and GALs) are brought together to simulate an EPC hearing using a mock child protection case scenario. Following the simulation, each county team is given constructive feedback by peers (judges, county attorneys, caseworkers and attorneys) for parents/children of what they can do to improve quality of EPC hearings. Additional EPC trainings will be scheduled once the pandemic is over.

2021 Update

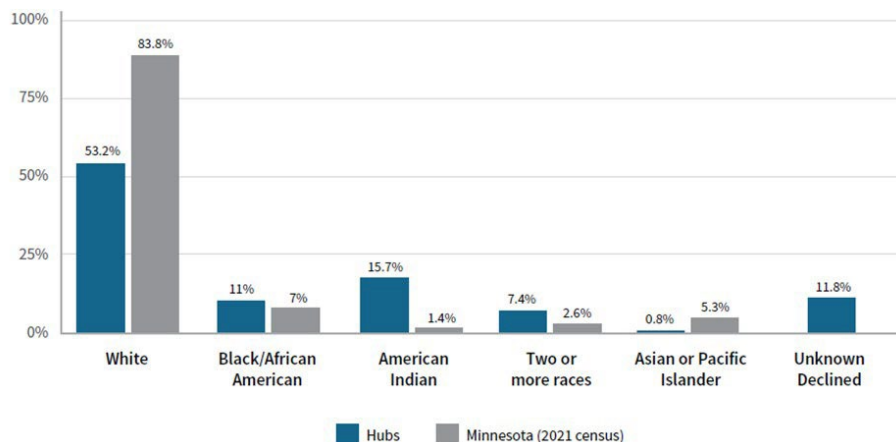
The experiential training on the EPC process was put on hold during the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, all trainings were in-person, which was not possible during the pandemic and peacetime emergency. The State Court Administrator’s Office (SCAO) has been in dialogue with Mitchell Hamline School of Law regarding a virtual option for this training; the training is currently offered in two different formats, in-person and virtual. Recent targeted recruitment efforts for county participants were unsuccessful due to heavy workloads. Recently, recruitment efforts were expanded statewide. There is great interest in the training; it is anticipated that as workloads lessen and court backlogs decrease, trainings will resume.

2022 Update

Work of the Preschool Development Grant (PDG) Community Resource Hubs continues to support previously mentioned grantee and partner Tribes. An initial considerations [report](#) was developed and released in 2022. Findings in this report reveal that community resource hubs are successfully improving service navigation and delivery to families with young children, and well positioned to expand into additional communities. The report outlined key concerns for state leaders who can implement the following considerations. Preliminary data shows that hubs are serving American Indian families at higher rates than their respective state population.

Figure. Community Resource Hubs

In Q2/3 2021, Community Resource Hubs served a greater percentage of Black/African American families and Indigenous families than their respective populations in the state.



2023 Update

This remains a continuation of an event first conducted in 2018. Three in-person Emergency Protective Care (EPC) mock hearing trainings were held before the public health emergency. In March 2022, this event was modified to accommodate virtual attendance with two counties. Following that session, the department engaged six counties in the 8th Judicial District, which share judges and other stakeholders, to discuss the training opportunities the department could offer, and they chose the EPC mock hearing training. They preferred to do this in person, though given the success of the March 2022 training, they could select either the in-person or virtual option. Because there were six counties and the department planned to hold the event in-person, the training was planned to include six hours and three mock hearings. All original documents were updated, and three scenarios were planned: one with physical abuse allegations, one with allegations of opioid use, and one with allegations of drug use and neglect. The training was planned to be held in Morris, Minnesota, at the Stevens County courthouse. Given the distance many stakeholders would have to travel to attend, the “feedback” format was amended to offer forms for feedback to be completed. Thirty-five people registered for this training, and teams were set to conduct each mock hearing scenario. The training was scheduled for April 21, 2023, but sadly, a police officer known to many in the community was killed in the line of duty one week prior to the training. The judges asked the department to postpone the training, which will now be held in October 2023.

2024 Update

As reported in the 2023 update, the department continues to offer this important interactive training. The postponed April 2023 training was held in October 2023. There were about 35 attendees, and counties held mock hearings. This training uncovered internal struggles experienced by one county; since the training, the department has been working with that county on addressing some of those challenges.

The department continually promotes this training through a newsletter, CJI teams, and informal conversation. Clay County reached out and expressed interest in participating in November 2023. Because this training is suited for multiple counties, the department reached out to Becker and Ottertail counties, as they are close in proximity and all three counties are in the seventh judicial district. They were both interested and quickly assembled their teams. The department facilitated this

training in March 2024 and had over 80 attendees, including six judges. The department again asked stakeholders attending to provide feedback to their colleagues (judges to judges, etc.); however, this portion needed very little facilitation as the group conducted extremely helpful and meaningful conversation among themselves.

The department will continue to offer this training as requested and continue to facilitate it in partnership with the Mitchell Hamline School of Law.

Strategy 2.3.2: Implement an Innovation Zone in Judicial Districts 6 and 9 to identify contributing factors to increased disparity rates in those areas.

2020 Update

No activity to report.

2021 Update

Minnesota's Court Improvement Project staff and department CQI staff began meeting on a regular basis during this reporting year for monitoring performance and planning for upcoming CFSRs and the CIP plan. Upon further review, it was determined this strategy would not be completed. A separate joint project is being planned, reflected in Strategy 3.3.2. **This strategy is discontinued.**

Strategy 2.3.3: Target Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) resources to children and families most at risk for poor permanency outcomes, and support consistency in implementation through modifications to the RFP process.

2020 Update

Department staff continue to review and assess current FGDM practices across 15 grantees that include 50 county and three Tribal agencies. Department staff also continues to host annual meetings, webinars, and site visits to monitor FGDM practice across the state. In partnership with the Research unit and FGDM grantee agencies, the Safety and Prevention unit developed a FGDM data dashboard. The FGDM dashboard allows department staff to monitor and report on client data related to FGDM practice. The dashboard allows agencies and department staff to track and monitor who, when, and what type of cases receive FGDM services. The dashboard also helps identify practice outcomes and service gaps related to FGDM.

Department staff utilizes FGDM practice data to inform programs and guide future funding decisions. In addition, agencies that have responsibility to implement FGDM practice must report those activities in quarterly program narrative reports through SSIS, and submit summary-level participant conference evaluation forms. This includes how agencies will share and incorporate feedback received within the FGDM service model.

For safely maintaining children in their family, agencies are requested to dedicate a minimum of 25% of FGDM meetings to "early in the life" of a case. This is defined as any FGDM conference held during the 45-day time period of a child protection Family Assessment or Family Investigation within the grant reporting period.

In 2021, the department plans to re-issue the RFP with increased focus on equity and early intervention to promote in-home service delivery, and timely permanency outcomes.

2021 Update

Department staff continue to review and assess FGDM practices across 15 grantees, which includes 50 county and three Tribal agencies. Department staff also continues to host annual meetings and webinars to monitor FGDM practice statewide. In partnership with the Research unit and FGDM grantee agencies, the Safety and Prevention unit developed a FGDM data dashboard.

The FGDM dashboard allows department staff to monitor and report on client data related to FGDM practice. The dashboard allows county and Tribal agencies and department staff to track and monitor who, when, and what type of cases receive FGDM services. The dashboard also helps department staff identify practice outcomes and service gaps related to FGDM. FGDM practice data inform programs and guide future funding decisions. Agencies that have responsibility to implement FGDM practice must report those activities in quarterly program narrative reports through SSIS, submit summary-level participant conference evaluation forms, and how an agency will share and incorporate feedback received within the FGDM service model.

For safely maintaining children in their family, agencies are asked to dedicate a minimum of 25% of FGDM meetings to “early in the life” of a case. This is defined as any FGDM conference held during the 45-day time period of a child protection Family Assessment or Family Investigation within the grant reporting period.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact FGDM practice across the state. In the past year, delivery of FGDM services rapidly changed from in-person conferencing to virtual to protect staff, clients, the communities they serve, and comply with guidance from the Minnesota Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Many grantees were able to adapt and began providing FGDM services virtually via online meeting platforms like Zoom, WebEx, and Microsoft Teams. Pivoting to virtual conferences enabled agencies to provide families and youth with meaning involvement and a voice in their case during this time. In some cases, agencies were able to involve people who may not have been able to participate in person.

2022 Update

Department staff continue to review statewide Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) practices. The department released a new grant application in March 2022 seeking qualified responders for implementing Family Group Decision Making approaches and services models to enhance family engagement and promote safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families involved in Minnesota’s child protection/welfare system. The new grant cycle is intended to support FGDM approaches and services, prioritizing outcomes related to:

- Reducing racial disparities and disproportionality in child protection programs
- Preventing out-of-home care for children at risk of placement
- Reducing the length of stay for children currently in out-of-home care.

The department received 17 grant applications and is in the process of finalizing grant awards for seven of the applicants.

2023 Update

A total of seven agencies received grant funds beginning July 1, 2022.

One of the agencies awarded, Red Lake Nation, has created its first FGDM program. Red Lake Nation’s grant application included the utilization of this service “to improve outcomes for Red Lake families and children who are involved in county child welfare, or at risk of involvement in county intervention to aide in holistic, healing-centered practice that is grounded

in traditional Anishinaabe family preservation.” Red Lake Nation has hired and trained staff, developed program policies and procedures, and has begun service provision to children and families.

Within the second quarter, the six other agencies reported 145 white and 103 families of color served. Agencies reported a variety of outcomes including:

- Increasing service delivery to families identified as experiencing inequities and disproportional outcomes in the child welfare system
- Increasing relationship building with partners, both internally and externally (Lower Sioux Human Services)
- Four of the seven agencies sub-contract with a community agency whose staff reflect the racial/ethnic identities of families served.

2024 Update

A total of seven agencies are in their second year of receiving grant funds that began on July 1, 2022. Within the first and second quarters of Fiscal Year 2024, the seven agencies have reported 389 white and 217 BIPOC families served. Agencies reported a variety of outcomes including:

- A reduction in the amount of time children are in out-of-home placement when completing Family Group Decision Making (FGDM); trends also indicate there is a lower reoccurrence of child protection involvement post-FGDM
- Continued relationship building with partners both internally and externally, including utilization of contract agencies who can provide culturally appropriate services.

Four of the seven agencies continue to contract with a community agency that shared racial and ethnic identities with the families being served. Since June 2023, the department contracted with The Kempe Center to conduct monthly learning circles to enhance FGDM practice across Minnesota. Learning circles focus on practice improvement, equity, and the values rooted in FGDM.

Strategy 2.3.4: Continue the Permanency Technical Assistance Workshop (PTAW), which ensures that achieving timely child safety, permanency, and well-being are the foundational principles underlying procedures and decisions in all child protection proceedings. PTAW will educate all stakeholders on the permanency timeline, and provide strategies on how to keep cases from going beyond timelines. The project will focus on county-specific data compiled from the court and the department to understand practice patterns, as well as areas of strength, and those needing improvement. A detailed county action plan will be developed from this work.

2020 Update

Minnesota has completed the Permanency Technical Assistance Workshops, and county agencies completed detailed action plans that developed from that work. The Children’s Justice Initiative and department staff collaborated on a number of technical assistance workshops in 2017 and 2018 to share individual county data, provide education regarding timelines, roles and responsibilities for each group participating, and discuss patterns and trends for each county. Each team developed an action plan they worked on throughout 2019 and the first half of 2020, with a goal of lowering the length of time to permanency overall for children in their counties. As part of this plan, county agencies identified issues that negatively affected their ability to establish timely permanency for children, along with strategies they employed to improve internal processes. As of April 2020, all teams completed action plans, implementing strategies to continue their success.

There was no formal evaluation done of this project as a whole, rather each county was responsible to identify, collaborate, and implement approaches that would improve overall length of time to permanency. The project identified and followed a specified grouping of children and tracked their path to permanency.

The Children’s Justice Initiative shared the strategies statewide, so other CJJ teams could review them and identify what areas they may recognize as issues, and what strategies they may employ to improve timely permanency outcomes for children served.

2021 Update

Permanency has now been established for all individual children identified through the Permanency Technical Assistance Workgroups as not having achieved permanency within timelines. **This strategy is complete.**

Objective 2.4: Preventing children and families from entering the child welfare system through collaboration with community-based agencies and community members. This includes urban Indian organizations, with a focus on equity.

Progress on the fourth objective will be assessed through development of partnerships, co-creation of strategies to address disparities, and engagement outcomes to be determined through targeted work around serving American Indian children and families in the Whole Family System grant. The American Indian Early Intervention Program will be established in the first two years, and progress demonstrated in years three – five by increasing the number of American Indian children served. Progress will be assessed using the number of American Indian infants removed because of parental drug use. The benchmarks for this objective are below.

Measurements for Goal 2-Objective 4

Benchmarks	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
American Indian children under age 1 placed in out-of-home care for parental drug use, baseline (2018): 236	Target: 220 Observed: 195	205 192	189 221	174 198	158 158
Number of American Indian children served in newly opened PSOP work groups, baseline (2018): 349	Complete plan for implementation of early intervention program with Tribes	Implement early intervention program	395 282	418 301	464 332

Strategy 2.4.1: Using the human-centered design (HCD) process, co-create strategies to address disparities with communities experiencing inequities based on race, geography, and/or economics through the Whole Family Systems grant under the umbrella of 2Gen Network supported by the department’s Economic Assistance and Employment Supports and Child Care divisions.

2020 Update

In October 2019, the department funded eight grantees, including four focused on serving American Indian children and families. The following provide descriptions of the four focus grant recipients:

Fond du Lac Tribal College: The college's Ojibwe Motaadidaa Omaa Gidakiiminaang language immersion program is partnering with the department, Child Care Aware, and Fond du Lac Social Services, to plan and implement "Grandma's House," a language nest where infants and toddlers, with the help of their parents, elders, and language staff will grow up immersed in Ojibwe language and culture in a rich, home-like environment to convey a sense of identity, responsibility, and spiritual relationship to all creation.

Minneapolis American Indian Center: With its partners, including families, and the center's Bright Beginnings program, will develop individual and systems-level solutions to barriers faced by American Indian women who experienced substance use, and at risk of or have a history of child welfare involvement, helping them develop a stable, nurturing environment for their children. The project will incorporate cultural teachings and seek additional cultural resources for working with families.

Northwest Indian Community Development Center: Working with partners, Tribes and families, the center seeks to identify systemic solutions to family separation caused by intergenerational incarceration and substance use disorder for Anishinaabe and American Indian relatives in Beltrami County.

People Serving People: Family homelessness overwhelmingly affects African American and American Indian communities. With partners including families, Mill City Kids, and the Hennepin County Office to End Homelessness, People Serving People will explore issues related to access to child care and quality early childhood education, and ways to prevent recurrence of family homelessness.

Grantees are currently engaging with families and community members, core team members, and state partners to explore challenges faced by communities, and possible whole family systemic solutions that can be prototyped and implemented in 2020/2021.

2021 Update

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting strategies to manage it, created significant barriers to the work of grantees with children and families, as the social distancing requirements and move to virtual work impacted engagement with families. Many communities being served by grantees were disproportionately impacted by the health and economic impacts of the pandemic; many grantees shifted work to meet the emerging and urgent needs of families in their communities.

The following grantees identified and begun work on described prototypes:

Fond du Lac Tribal College (FDLC): FDLC has prototyped and implemented the first Ojibwe language and culture immersion program for age's birth to 3 in Minnesota, focusing on the Ojibwe community in the east central and northeastern parts of the state. The program provides a homelike environment for infants and toddlers with their childcare Ojibwe- speaking parents and elder first speakers experienced in teaching and. The setting is modeled after "Grandma's House," where children are safe and comfortable, participate in day-to-day activities with adults, learn the language, hear stories, and sing, dance and make art in their cultural tradition. The model includes financial support for parents to engage during the day with their children in the program to support racial and cultural healing in families. This program will help young Ojibwe children to form clearer self-identities, and stand resilient against the pitfalls they face growing up.

Minneapolis American Indian Center (MAIC): Implemented Bright Beginnings program with modifications to enhance and promote recovery, and partner with mothers to identify and address systemic barriers to recovery. Goals of the Bright Beginnings Recovery Support Program: Helps American Indian women who are pregnant or parenting an infant, with a history of substance abuse, and have a history of involvement with the child welfare system or at risk of involvement. The goal is to have healthy babies; achieve stable long-term recovery from substance abuse; avoid involvement/re-involvement with the child protection system; and create a healthy, stable, nurturing family/home environment for their families where their children can grow and thrive. During the pandemic, MAIC worked with mothers to create video presentations of Native women's voices affected by disparities in the child welfare system, housing system, early childhood system, and SUDS system. These videos are intended to educate community stakeholders, and workers in hospital settings, about impacts of implicit bias on women giving birth in their facilities.

Northwest Indian Community Development Center (NWICDC): Based on research demonstrating the role of concrete supports in supporting families at risk of child welfare involvement and placement, NWICDC is exploring a prototype to provide a cash stipend to families at risk of placement. The work is to explore barriers that may be experienced by families on Minnesota's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, or Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), to receiving a cash stipend.

People Serving People (PSP): PSP has developed and implemented a prototype to create fellowship aimed at actively involving families experiencing homelessness as part of a team of core partners working to systemically identify and address structural racism, including practices, programs, and policies that result in higher rates of homelessness in American Indian populations. A stipend was offered; the fellowship requires an average of 10 hours per month for two years. People Serving People is developing and piloting an ethnic/multi-cultural curriculum in an early learning center that helps children and families celebrate their culture and identify.

2022 Update

There is no update at this time.

2023 Update

Evaluation of the WFS Grant will be completed over the next five years in partnership with Future Services Institute at the University of Minnesota, focused on understanding the barriers and successes achieved through the co-creation and implementation of cross-system coordination at the local and state levels.

Other activities have included:

- Bi-annual reports drafted from implementation plans continue for 2023 (year four of WFS implementation)
- Evaluation of learnings from site-specific prototypes continues as the focus shifts to sustainability for 2024 (year five of WFS implementation)
- Discovery of inequitable systemic opportunities for change continues
- Researched evaluation policy briefs are being drafted (site specific). Site specific briefs for the promising prototypes impacting systems change. These will be a deeper dive into implementing promising prototypes and how they have affected systems change in policy, practice, and programs.
- In April 2023, the Core Team meeting began with a check-in to re-ground the team in its shared purpose in this work. Members shared the importance of an intergenerational approach to well-being for African American and Indigenous families and discussed the different angles from which each pilot addresses the core problems.

2024 Update

In 2023-2024, teams focused on sustainability planning and change and implementation work resulting from the emergent learning process with each site.

- Biannual reports drafted from implementation plans continue for 2024 (year five of WFS implementation).
- Discovery of inequitable systemic opportunities for change continues using evaluation of learnings, and analysis of system levers influence stemming from site-specific prototype implementation.
- The state is leveraging human-centered design, coupled with community engagement/voices through feedback loops with the sites. These mechanisms have enabled the state to identify solutions in collaboration with the partnering agencies and honoring lived experience to address and remove relevant systemic barriers that children and families in communities facing inequities encounter when engaging with programs and services.
- With support from site teams, the state is in the process of enacting new practices to test and adapt as they receive feedback from families and core teams, and taking actionable steps to continue making systems change by shifting policies, practices and/or programs.
- Additionally, momentum to orient new DCYF leadership and workstreams of staff on the WFS approach is currently underway.
- The learnings from each site will be shared with the WFS network and other state agencies upon completion of the WFS grant in October 2024. The learnings will be compiled by site teams in five-year learning reports (due in September) and published as Department of Human Services policy briefs for each site by the end of the WFS grant end in October 2024. Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association (IMAA) also has a brief published. A final overall network evaluation report will be prepared by BUILD by the end of December 2024.
- Each site is working on developing sustainability plans to continue work that was started using the WFS grant funding. Some sites have added new funding streams to continue their work.
- BUILD will host a final conference in September 2024 to wrap up WFS work with communities where discussion about learnings and next steps for Minnesota will take place.

Strategy 2.4.2: Establish the American Indian Early Intervention Program modeled after the Parent Support Outreach Program (PSOP) so Tribal and urban American Indian programs can access culturally appropriate intervention services and resources to assist them in addressing issues that place families at risk of entering the child protection system.

2020 Update

The Indian Child Welfare unit, Child Safety and Permanency Division, received legislative funding for Early Intervention grants, as well as funding for one FTE. This FTE will oversee both Early Intervention grantee management and coordination/engagement with the Minnesota ICWA Advisory Council (11 Tribal representatives and six urban Indian representatives) to collaborate and provide input in planning and development of the Family First Act Minnesota state plan.

The Early Intervention program's purpose is to support and assist Minnesota American Indian families living in both rural and urban areas in accessing preventative services to decrease the amount of children entering the child welfare system.

Programming is aligned with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA) in efforts to support the intent to protect the best interests of Indian children, and promote stability and security of Indian Tribes and families. The focus is on culturally appropriate services for families at risk of entering the child

protection/welfare system. An outcome is to impact strengthening relationships with Tribal, urban and county social services so families are supported and accessing assistance from both Tribes and county agencies.

Collaboration with the ICWA Advisory Council members included development of a position description for the Early Intervention consultant (one FTE), interviewing applicants, drafting Early Intervention Grant request for proposal, and selection of approved proposals.

In the upcoming year, the focus will be on relationship-building around Indian values and responses. One major goal is to engage the ICWA Advisory Council on the early intervention plan for the Family First Act through work groups, active consultation, and guidance with policies and procedures impacting American Indians living in Minnesota.

2021 Update

The Early Intervention with American Indian Families (EI-AIF) grants were awarded to six candidates, including Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, Red Lake Nation, Ain Day Yung Center, Northwest Indian Community Development Center, and the Minneapolis American Indian Center. The EI-AIF grants began on July 1, 2020, (FY21) and conclude June 30, 2023, (FY23). The Early Intervention grant provides direct support to families by providing financial help with rent, utilities, transportation, medical, behavioral and chemical health care, basic needs items, and cultural activities, to reduce the risk of child protection involvement. In fiscal year 2021, up to 50% of the grant may be used for staffing and infrastructure, and 25% in subsequent years.

On a quarterly basis, grantees provide a report that includes summary data and narrative of grant activities. The data requested includes numbers of children and families who receive direct financial assistance, and number of families who avoid out-of-home placement after receiving assistance. As of Fiscal Year 2021, quarter 3, the Early Intervention funds were administered to 149 American Indian families, including 424 children. Because of receiving EI-AIF funds, 148 families avoided out-of-home placement. The quarterly report includes a narrative of changes to staffing, efforts to build infrastructure to administer funds, and challenges grantees experience.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused significant challenges for Early Intervention grantees. Several reported they may not spend their budget for the fiscal year. As a result, the ICWA Prevention and Early Intervention consultant requested an extension on encumbrances for the Early Intervention with American Indian Families grants. In one case, the grantee was unable to hire a staff member to provide case management and administer financial support to clients. Another grantee was unable to host in-person cultural activities because of the pandemic. Each grantee had a unique challenge to implementing the grant, but they have seen great results with work they were able to do. One grantee stated this year marked the lowest number of court-involved families because they were able to provide support using early intervention funds prior to child protection involvement.

To better understand implementation of the grant, the ICWA manager and ICWA Prevention and Early Intervention consultant hosted a meet-and-greet for Early Intervention with American Indian Families grantees. Five grantees invited staff to attend the virtual meeting to share their experiences of implementing the grant, innovative ideas, and information about how the department can better support them. One of the primary challenges faced by grantees included reduction in staffing due to furloughs, hiring freezes, or lack of interested applicants due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Additional challenges observed by grantees included families experiencing historical intergenerational trauma, increased fatal overdoses in the community, hesitation of families to work with child welfare services, and not being able to host in-person services. Grantees shared stories of success with clients using the Early Intervention funds, and advice to help others who face similar challenges. For the upcoming year, grantees requested another meet-and-greet event, as well as technical assistance, when necessary.

2022 Update

There is no update at this time.

2023 Update

The department has engaged with the American Indian Child Welfare (ICWA) Advisory Council, Tribal Child Welfare Agency and Urban Indian Organizations to develop the Early Intervention with American Indian Families grants. The purpose of the Early Intervention grant is to provide direct support to families by providing financial help with rent, utilities, transportation, medical, behavioral, and chemical health care, basic needs items and cultural activities to reduce the risk of child protection involvement. Programming is aligned with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA) in its efforts to support the intent to “protect the best interests of Indian children, and to promote the stability and security of Indian Tribes and families” with the focus on culturally appropriate services for families at risk of entering the child protection or child welfare systems.

- 886 Native children received Early Intervention services or funds.
- 456 Native families received Early Intervention services or funds.
- 95% of families receiving EI-AIF services received direct funding for housing, rent, utilities, transportation or personal needs to improve family well-being and reduce stress.
- 92% of families receiving EI-AIF services did not have a child protection case opened while receiving services.
- 90% of families avoided out-of-home placement while receiving EI-AIF services. In several cases, grantees were able to support a family to identify a temporary caregiving arrangement. At the same time, they addressed risk factors of child maltreatment without formal child protection cases being opened.

2024 Update

The Early Intervention with American Indian Families (EI-AIF) grants were set to end July 30, 2023; however, department staff extended this funding for another year to continue to support grantees in servicing families and limit the need for child protection. The purpose of the Early Intervention grant is to provide direct support to families by providing financial help with rent and utilities; transportation; medical, behavioral, and chemical health care; basic needs items; and cultural activities to reduce the risk of child protection involvement. Programming is aligned with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA) in its efforts to support the intent to “protect the best interests of Indian children, and to promote the stability and security of Indian Tribes and families” with the focus on culturally appropriate services for families at risk of entering the child protection/child welfare system. Ninety percent of families continue to avoid out-of-home placement while receiving EI-AIF services.

Strategy 2.4.3: Engage in planning with Tribes/public health/Medicaid/behavioral health/health care to reach pregnant women and families, specifically African American and American Indian parents and families, and create a continuum of culturally appropriate services to address addiction and support parenting using technical assistance from the Center for Healthcare Strategies.

2020 Update

CAPTA funding has been directed to communities to develop a multi-sector coordinated response to prenatal substance exposure and to develop plans of safe care. The department released a request for proposals in winter 2019, receiving four responses, entering into contracts with the four sites in fall 2019. These sites are located across Minnesota and include metro and non-metro sites. The Plan of Safe Care grants include a deliverable that states 1) An integrative collaborative will

be developed including Tribal social service agencies or other cultural liaisons; and 2) A Tribal liaison will be involved in planning processes and service delivery, including Tribal healing, doulas, and midwives incorporated into prenatal care and hospital treatment for American Indian families.

2021 Update

The department continues to work with Minnesota's Hospital Association to explore and improve relationships between hospital and clinic settings and county/Tribal child welfare agencies regarding supporting pregnant women and their infants affected by substance abuse. In 2020-2021, the Hospital Association began working with several hospitals across the state, piloting efforts related to improving Plan of Safe Care, development of pre-birth and care coordination among hospital and child welfare agencies. Planning for a potential statewide convening is also underway to build understanding and improve coordination efforts across agencies and service providers.

2022 Update

The department continues to contract with four agencies across the state to improve Plan of Safe Care (POSC) coordination and development within their communities. These grants will continue through June 2023. These grantees are demonstrating promising practices with almost all infants remaining at home and safe with their families.

Partnership continues between the department and the Minnesota Hospital Association. Department staff participated in the summer 2021 Minnesota Hospital Association statewide convening, providing information on mandated reporting, and supporting pregnant women struggling with substance use. The Minnesota Hospital Association completed a pilot with several hospital/health systems and local child welfare agencies to improve work regarding plans of safe care. Goals included:

- Pilot and refine a statewide Plan of Safe Care template for use prenatally or at birth for mothers and infants with prenatal substance exposure, in coordination with child welfare services
- Help community partners to understand Minnesota's POSC information sharing protocols and implementation of CARA legislation
- Improve collaboration and communication with service providers working with families caring for infants with prenatal substance exposure and their mothers.

As part of this pilot, Plan of Safe Care documents were created to support coordination and improve services to pregnant women and their families. These documents were launched statewide.

2023 Update

Department staff made efforts to connect, build relationships and explore possibilities for partnerships beyond the division to address the critical issue of prenatal substance exposure. These partners included staff from the Behavioral Health and Health Care divisions. Department staff has collaborated with the hospital association to learn more about system needs and strengths across the state. Efforts to coordinate at the state level will continue.

The additional CAPTA funding has been directed to communities to develop a multi-sector coordinated response to prenatal substance exposure and to develop plans for safe care. The department continues to contract with four agencies across the state to improve Plan of Safe Care (POSC) coordination and development within their communities. Work regarding these contracts continues and will be extended through 2024.

The department monitors agencies' compliance with completing a Plan of Safe Care through data in the Social Service Information System. This information is available when requested from the Research Unit. Department staff developed a process to monitor agency compliance in real-time regarding completion of the Plan of Safe Care. Staff will provide targeted technical assistance to agencies not completing Plans of Safe Care on prenatal exposure cases and broad technical assistance to all agencies. The department will include information and requirements regarding the Plan of Safe Care in monthly updates sent to county and Tribal agencies.

2024 Update

The department continues to contract with four agencies to improve Plan of Safe Care (POSC) coordination as their contracts were extended through June 2024. Current grantees have focused on improving care coordination and referral processes. Grantees have worked to develop multidisciplinary teams that meet regularly to increase communication and partnerships for the families that they serve. These multidisciplinary teams are comprised of medical professionals, community treatment providers, county social workers, and peer recovery specialists. Increased communication and understanding of each member's role on the team has made a positive impact on the referral process for Plan of Safe Care.

Community education and awareness surrounding families and infants impacted by substance use is ongoing. Grantees have held open educational events for professionals and community members to attend. Educational events have focused on addressing stigma and support for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, cognitive bias when working with individuals impacted by substance use, and trauma-informed care, among other topics.

- Dedicated staff work directly with families who are impacted by prenatal substance use. Grantees have found success in building relationships with families by having specialized staff to work with this population.
- Families are connected with peer recovery specialists and peer recovery services. This has been a focus of grantees to help build formal and informal supports for families.
- The department has assisted families by reducing barriers through direct participant support. Grantees have been able to utilize grant funding to support families impacted by prenatal substance use. Examples include assisting with transportation barriers for treatment, providing necessities (e.g., safe sleep spaces, diapers, bottles, etc.), and assisting with daycare costs; these supports reduce everyday stressors that can impact substance use.

In anticipation of grants ending, department staff completed engagement sessions with Initiative Tribal Nations, county agencies, current grantees, medical providers, and community providers to discuss best practices for supporting and reaching pregnant people and families impacted by substance use disorder. Two major themes were found through these engagement sessions:

- Providing concrete supports for these families such as housing assistance/funds, transportation/car repairs, food support, baby equipment, and other basic needs are essential to aide in their success.
- A dedicated case worker is critical for supporting parents, preventing relapse, assisting in early identification, and creating trust with families.

The department has issued a new Request for Proposals (RFP) for up to four new grantees to implement a coordinated systemic response for POSC. The additional Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) funding will continue to be directed for this project. The new grant period will be July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2026, with the ability to extend the contract up to five years.

Additionally, the department is monitoring agencies' compliance of completing a Plan of Safe Care through data entered in the Social Service Information System. This information is available when requested from the Research Unit. Department

staff developed a process to monitor agency compliance in real time regarding completion of the Plan of Safe Care on an ongoing basis. Staff will provide targeted technical assistance to agencies around Plans of Safe Care on prenatal exposure cases and will provide broad technical assistance to all agencies. The department will include information and requirements regarding the Plan of Safe Care in updates sent to county and Tribal agencies.

Subsection C. Goal 3: Reduce disparities for African American children throughout the child welfare system.

To address the CFSP goal regarding reducing disparities for African American children, progress will be assessed using federal performance measures on permanency timelines, as well as internal CSP measures on the relative rate index comparing children by race who are alleged victims in a child protection investigation or assessment and in out-of-home care. Targets were set to reduce the disproportionate involvement of African Americans as alleged victims in screened in child protection reports in out-of-home care by half; and reduce the difference in performance on permanency measures between African American and white children by half. The measurement targets for this goal are below.

Measurements for Goal 3 - African American Children, Relative to White Children

	Target	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Child protection involvement	2.4x more likely	2.8	2.7	2.6	2.4	2.3	2.2
Out-of-home placement	1.5x more likely	2.9	2.7	2.5	2.3	2.2	2.2
Permanency 0 -12	Difference <= 2.0%	3.7%	7.9%	6.3%	3.0%	10.8%	14.0%
Permanency 12-23	Difference <= 4.8%	9.6%	12.5%	25.1%	1.8%	9.8%	13.8%
Permanency 24 +	Difference <= 3.5%	7.0%	1.6%	0.1%	0.2%	0.5%	10.5%

Objective 3.1: Identify factors that lead to disparities, including racial bias.

Progress on the first objective will be assessed through development and use of the disparities index, to be published in the first year and updated on a monthly basis.

Strategy 3.1.1: Create and publish a disparities index at the different decision-making points throughout the child welfare system to understand where racism/bias is present. This will be shared for internal department use, as well as externally with local child welfare agencies through Tableau Server.

2020 Update

During 2019, the CSP Division's Research unit staff had conversations with Ramsey County Human Services staff and social services staff from the state of Oregon, both doing similar work to create a disparities index. Research staff developed a draft dashboard, in consultation with a group from the division's Leadership Team to complete and publish the dashboard.

2021 Update

CSP research staff shared the draft disparities index dashboard with CQI leadership and staff within the division's CQI section. Revisions were made, and the dashboard will likely merge with ongoing CQI redesign work. Research staff also met with representatives from the ICWA and African American Child Well-being units to discuss specific data regarding American Indian and African American populations, respectively. Research staff plans to have continuing data conversations with the two units throughout the year. The disparity index dashboard is on Tableau server for division staff to access.

2022 Update

The disparities index dashboard has been added to and updated regularly in conjunction with other work. The dashboard now contains over 33 unique data points along the child welfare continuum which can be viewed through the lens of racial disparities. Our section has continued to work most directly with the African American Child Well-being Unit in using the data to drive program planning and stakeholder engagement. The dashboard is currently available on the internal Tableau Server site for use by division staff.

2023 Update

The disparities index dashboard continues to be added to and updated regularly. The dashboard now contains 40 unique data points along the child welfare continuum, which can be viewed through the lens of racial disparities. The African American Child Well-being Unit and the Research Unit are working together to create a dashboard specific to data points illuminating African American children's experiences in the child welfare system. The development of the dashboard will be used to drive specific unit program planning and stakeholder engagement.

2024 Update

The disparities index dashboard has been added to and updated regularly in conjunction with other work. The dashboard now contains 40 unique data points along the child welfare continuum which can be viewed through the lens of racial disparities. Recently, the department began to reintegrate this data into its ongoing CQI work, its next five-year plan, as well as other program specific initiatives ongoing in the division.

Strategy 3.1.2: Adapt and implement the Collaborative Safety learning processes to capture systemic factors that specifically lead to disparities, including racial bias.

2020 Update

Activities in this area focused on adapting processes in collaboration with Tribes.

2021 Update

As part of the CQI redesign, additional CQI staff are being trained in utilizing processes grounded in Safety Science designed to lead to identification of systemic factors that influence decision-making. Identifying ways in which these processes may be used to identify factors that specifically lead to disparities continues to be explored.

2022 Update

CQI staff have partnered with the African American Child Well-Being (AACWB) team to explore intersections of each team's work and how to integrate and share learnings from CQI learning processes, as well as learnings from the AACWB team's

case review process. Additionally, the CQI section has created an Equity work group to further explore how to capture systemic factors that lead to disparities.

2023 Update

The AACWB unit is developing and refining an individual case review system to better track review cases, collaborate across the division and extract broader cumulative data from the collective individual reviewed cases. Additionally, unit staff has been working with the research team to develop methods of tracking specific child welfare data using Tableau to disaggregate it to identify patterns and trends and compare individual county practices with state practices.

2024 Update

A foundational "draft" of the system was created in early 2023 and the unit spent the majority of 2023 beta testing the various child welfare tabs created in Tableau. These tabs include, but are not limited to, disaggregated data about out-of-home placement, maltreatment reporting, seeing decisions, kinship placement trends, case management, safety, and other relevant child welfare information and outcomes. These tabs allow the unit to look at child welfare outcomes with greater focus and intentionality to better understand how children and families are doing beyond our state and federal performance measures as well as look at child welfare outcomes across multiple years to better identify positive or negative data trends.

The unit continues to participate in the CSP Participation in the CSP Continuous Quality Improvement Champions work group, which explores strategies to identify and analyze which child welfare practices are working to improve outcomes and which show a need for improvement. The unit also assists the CSP Continuous Quality Improvement and Research Units to ensure improvement in the division's process and method for gathering and analyzing data in a more targeted and disaggregated manner, using an equity and cultural lens to identify positive trends in practice as well as areas of need for African American populations.

Objective 3.2: Improve access to culturally appropriate child welfare services for African American children and families.

Progress on the second objective will be assessed through the relative rate index for African American children who are alleged victims of maltreatment, and those who experience out-of-home care. The benchmarks for this objective are below.

Measurements for Goal 3-Objective 2

Benchmarks	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Relative rate index of alleged victims, African American to white children, baseline (2018): 2.8 x more likely	Target: 2.5	2.2	2.0	1.7	1.4
	Observed: 2.7	2.6	2.4	2.3	2.2
Relative rate index of children in out-of-home care, African American to white children, baseline (2018): 2.9 x	Target: 2.6	2.3	2.1	1.8	1.5
	Observed: 2.7	2.5	2.3	2.2	2.2

Strategy 3.2.1: Develop culturally specific guidance and provide technical assistance to local child welfare agencies to meet the needs of African American children and families, such as community-based agencies working with these families as key partners in developing guidance.

2020 Update

The CSP Division formed an African American Child Well-being unit to specifically target and address the needs of African American children to ensure equity in child welfare, culturally appropriate practices and policy, and eliminate disparities and disproportionality.

The African American Child Well-being unit supervisor has been actively involved in the division's planning related to the implementation of the Family First Prevention Service Act, including, but not limited to, planning regarding prevention services, foster care and placement of children in a qualified residential treatment program, and case planning. This is to ensure the needs of the African American community are met through proposed legislative policies or child welfare practices, and there are no adverse unintended consequences, such as increased disproportionality or disparity.

The CSP Division crafted and submitted a legislative proposal to address the needs of the African American community using data collected from community forums, individuals who experienced child welfare, and qualitative/quantitative data collected from internal and external child welfare professionals. While the initial proposal did not progress in the legislative process, it was reintroduced in spring 2020; some parts of the proposal remain under legislative consideration.

Some CSP Division staff are participating in a blended legislative work group crafting a proposal to support policy to address the needs of the African American community.

The Foster Care unit coordinated a series of trainings with Hennepin County, the state's most populous county, to strengthen practice on kinship searches and permanency planning. While this training was not exclusively focused on African American children and families, the content of the training included quantitative and qualitative data indicating a need for improvement in these efforts, which contributed to disproportionately impacting the African American community. Improving the county's practice in this child welfare domain can significantly and positively impact child welfare outcomes for this population by increasing relative placements; increasing relative placement stability; shortening time in placement; supporting reunification and/or achieving permanency through adoption, or transferring legal and physical custody to a relative.

As stated above, the African American Child Well-being unit worked collaboratively to support development of a community-driven legislative proposal. This initiative includes collaboration with county partners from both Hennepin and Ramsey counties, community advocates, and other child welfare representatives.

In drafting the above legislative proposal, collaboration occurred between the Foster Care and Permanency units, with external collaboration from the community and county partners, as well as department and other state agency leadership, to support development of this proposal.

Collaboration regarding Family First Prevention Services Act implementation is taking place internally across various department divisions, and specific CSP units as needed. This also included formation of targeted work groups consisting of department staff, county and Tribal partners, community advocates, service providers, and individuals from communities with personal child welfare experience.

2021 Update

In 2020, the Child Safety and Permanency Division formed an African American Child Well-Being (AACWB) unit to specifically target and address the needs of African American children to ensure equity in child welfare, culturally appropriate practices and policy, and eliminate disparities and disproportionality. In 2021 the African American Child Well-being unit continued to work with county partners, state agency leaders and staff, community organizations and advocates, and other child welfare representatives to collaborate and explore opportunities for strategic partnership and alignment.

The African American Child Well-Being unit supervisor continued to be actively involved in the division's planning related to the implementation of the Family First Prevention Service Act, including but not limited to, planning regarding prevention services, foster care and placement of children in a qualified residential treatment program, and case planning, including redesigning the in-home and the out-of-home case plan. This is to ensure the needs of the African American community are met through proposed legislative policies or child welfare practices related to the implementation of Family First Prevention Service Act requirements, and there are no adverse unintended consequences, such as increased disproportionality or disparity.

Collaboration regarding Family First Prevention Services Act implementation is taking place internally across various divisions, and specific Child Safety and Permanency units as needed. This included formation of targeted work groups consisting of department staff, county and Tribal partners, community advocates, service providers, and individuals from communities with lived child welfare experience.

In 2020 staff drafted and submitted a legislative proposal to address the needs of the African American community using data collected from community forums, individuals who experienced child welfare, and qualitative/quantitative data collected from internal and external child welfare professionals. While the initial proposal did not progress in the legislative process, it was reviewed, revised through internal and external partnership, and reintroduced in spring 2021 but did not move forward beyond the introduction stage.

In drafting the above legislative proposal, on-going collaboration occurred between the African American Child Well-Being Unit, Foster Care and Permanency units, with external collaboration from the community and county partners, as well as department and other state agency leadership, to support development of this proposal.

In 2021, members of the African American Child Well-Being Unit and other division staff participated in multiple legislative work groups to provide ongoing technical assistance to external community stakeholders and legislative authors drafting two proposals to support policy to address the needs of the African American community. Despite ongoing collaborative assistance from the department, neither one of these proposals moved forward in legislation.

Since the department initiated legislative proposal and the community driven proposals did not move forward legislatively, the department did take steps to identify other resources and strategies that could be utilized and put into place to address the needs of African American communities and address ongoing disparity and disproportionality in child welfare. Through this process the Child Safety and Permanency Division staff developed a pilot program that would implement similar elements of the division-initiated proposal and one of the community driven legislative proposal to create targeted actions to address key child welfare needs. This pilot would support the creation of an African American Advisory Council to which would assist with developing and shaping the work of the AACWB and Child Safety Division through active engagement and partnership. The pilot supports developing more comprehensive continuous quality improvement strategies to use data to address disparity and disproportionality as well as develop a more efficient system to review cases involving African American children and families. The pilot creates support efforts to ensure current and future policy are culturally affirming and responsive and any implementation efforts are done so with community involvement. Through the pilot, resources will

be allocated to community-based prevention services to support reducing child welfare involvement as well as out-of-home placement. Lastly, the pilot creates resources and supports to partner with schools and districts to develop proactive and prevention services to reduce the likelihood a child, parent, or family becomes involved in the child welfare system, has a child maltreatment finding, or experiences a child in out-of-home placement.

At the time of this report, members of the African American Child Well-Being Unit, in collaboration with Child Safety and Permanency leadership, Child and Family Services Administration leadership, and external partners from the University of Minnesota are exploring applying for a grant from the Administration of Children and Families to establish and develop a national research center focused specifically on African American communities. On the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) website, this research center would lead and support research on the needs of African American populations served by ACF and promising approaches to promoting social and economic well-being among low-income African American populations. This Center would ideally bring together a diverse, inclusive, culturally sensitive, and interdisciplinary team of academic and organizational partners to provide leadership on culturally competent research that can inform policies concerning low-income African American populations and to foster significant scholarship regarding the needs and experiences of the diverse African American population throughout the nation.

2022 Update

The AACWB unit oversees culturally affirming prevention and family preservation strategies and the department's child welfare systems response, focused on understanding and addressing (ideally eliminating) disparities and the disproportionate over-representation in Minnesota's child welfare and foster care systems for these children and families. African American and other disproportionately represented children and families face inequitable outcomes at each decision point in Minnesota's child welfare system. The AACWB unit assists with leading statewide child welfare practice and efforts to ensure broader agency approaches aimed at improving equity for disproportionately represented children and families and supporting prevention and family preservation include micro-, mezzo-, and macro system changes, including, but not limited to:

- Improving practice across the child welfare continuum including safety and prevention, placement, and permanency
- Improved access to community-based, in-home, and individualized services for children and families
- Ensuring families are given opportunities to ensure the safety of their children prior to removing them from their homes, in instances not including egregious harm
- A greater emphasis on keeping children within their family/kin network, rather than placing with non-relative providers
- Resource provision for communities to deliver needed services for children and families
- Increased community engagement and shared decision-making processes
- Targeted data informed practice and policy development
- Collaborative systemic partnership and strategic planning
- Targeted systemic and practice interventions based on case reviews conducted with a cultural and equity lens
- Legislative changes for policy and resource improvements through a cultural, community, and equity lens.

The AACWB unit has continued to partner with other DHS Child Safety and Permanency Division units to support broader division and agency activities related to child welfare practice and policy. The unit has continued to be involved in the agency efforts to implement changes in child welfare policy and practice related to the statewide implementation of the federal 2018 Families First Preservation Services Act requirements. As part of these efforts, AACWB Unit staff continue to be involved in the administration of the state's Qualified Individual program. AACWB unit staff participated in internal

follow-up work group meetings to make additional changes and edits to the redesigned out-of-home case plan templates housed in the Social Service Information System (SSIS), which is the state's Statewide Automated Child Welfare System (SACWIS). AACWB unit staff have also been involved in assisting with the development of both a state Parent Leadership Program as well as a state Parent Mentorship Program.

AACWB unit staff have also been actively involved in additional child welfare efforts such as improving practice related to supporting and engaging noncustodial parents, strengthening Family Group Decision Making and working with data and research staff to better track child welfare outcomes, identify inequity, disparities, and disproportionality, share information with state, county, and community partners, and use data to develop targeted, effective, and culturally responsive solutions to support prevention and family preservation.

AACWB unit staff continue to provide assistance to developing systemic solutions to support prevention and family preservation by working with agency leadership and legislative staff to develop and support existing legislative priorities and activities as well as identify opportunities for further legislative action. AACWB unit staff also work with partners from the state court system through the state's Children's Justice Initiative (CJI). This has included attending CJI meetings and making presentations about the work of the unit and participating in the development of trainings and training materials for court staff including judges, lawyers, and guardian ad items. AACWB unit staff have also continued to participate in work groups with CJI staff to support efforts to address disparity in the rate of foster care reentry for African American children.

A significant focus and priority of the AACWB unit is the development of a targeted pilot to address the needs of African American and African Heritage children and families and address the continued disparities and the overrepresentation of these populations in child welfare. This pilot is planned to run from 2021-2023 and will serve as a primary strategy to better understand the root systemic causes of disparities and overrepresentation, the impact of these causes on child welfare practice, better identify the needs of the communities most impacted, and develop effective and sustainable culturally affirming child welfare solutions. The pilot is developed to address specific child welfare outcomes identified throughout data research and diverse stakeholder engagement. Through this engagement the aim is to create community-driven responsive solutions to the needs of children and families that focus on family preservation and prevention and are built on partnership, equity, collaboration, innovation, and targeted universal strategy. Key elements of the pilot include:

- Establish, implement an Advisory Council for Communities of African Heritage who will assist the department with developing strategies to improve child welfare and practice and eliminate disparity and disproportionality
- Review & advise on child welfare continuum/out-of-home care policy & practice throughout CSP to deconstruct arbitrary criteria, timelines, and practices driving overrepresentation/outcome disparities, develop best practice guidance for child welfare and communities of African Heritage
- Engage and partner with external public child welfare and related city, county and state agency stakeholders and other organizations to develop systemic strategies to address the disproportionality and related disparities
- Engage individuals, families, and community organizations to strengthen policy and practice strategies to address the disproportionality and related disparities through partnership and collaboration
- Develop and administer grants to community-based agencies, organizations, and providers to address identified community needs and provide culturally affirming and responsive services to eliminate disparate child welfare outcomes for children and families of African heritage
- Develop culturally focused Continuous Quality Improvement strategies (coordinated w/ existing Division processes) to include rapid consultation, screening reviews, permanency reviews, and county child welfare agency reviews to address disparity and disproportionality

- Develop a responsive case review process to review specific child welfare cases involving children and families of African Heritage when there are expressed or identified practice or policy concerns
- Exploring partnership between state and county social service agency and entities and educational partners including the state Department of Education, and school districts and exploring the possible development of a child welfare consultation pilot for school personnel.

At the time of this report, the department has hired and on-boarded three out of the four full-time staff that will be responsible for overseeing the work outlined in the above listed key elements, with the fourth staff beginning in the middle of July 2022.

2023 Update

In 2022, the AACWB staff presented the pilot program and the broader unit work to numerous stakeholders and nonprofit and governmental agencies. The unit held several forums in community spaces to provide people with information about the council to ensure sure people were informed before applying. The unit conducted a collaborative application and selection process and partnered with community members to review applications and recommend council selections. The unit is holding official meetings of the African American Advisory Council, which comprises 31 individuals from, representing, or with significant connections to and knowledge of the African American community. Over half of the current council members have lived child welfare experience.

The unit also held several in-person and virtual community forums to solicit feedback from the community to assist with developing community-based grants. Community members who attended a forum shared their thoughts on the types of needs and services they feel will support prevention and family preservation for African American families. This information will be used to prioritize granting efforts moving forward.

Additional information about the work and accomplishments of the AACWB unit can be found in Chapter 7.

2024 Update

The pilot itself consists of several key child welfare elements:

- The establishment of an African American Child Well-Being Advisory Council to partner with the African American Child Wellbeing Unit (AACWB) in the development and implementation of culturally affirming strategies to address disparity and disproportionality in the child welfare system
- Implementation of strategies to ensure equity and cultural responsiveness in child welfare practice and policy
- Community-based grants to support the provision of culturally affirming and responsive services and supports to promote and ensure child abuse prevention and family preservation of African American children and families.

Before the council was formally established, the unit held several in-person and virtual information sessions for prospective members to ensure sure people were informed about the council's functions, duties, and obligations before applying. The unit conducted a collaborative application and selection process and partnered with community members to review applications and make recommendations for council selections. After extensive planning work and a comprehensive and robust recruitment, application, and selection process, the African American Child Well-Being Council began meeting in March 2023. The council has 31 membership spots and as of March 2023, 24 individuals from, representing, or with significant connections to and knowledge of the African American community had been selected to fill those membership spots. Council members represent, but are not exclusive to, community providers, foster care providers, parents, county staff, state agency staff, faith-based institutions, and social work academic staff. Over half of the current council members are individuals with lived child welfare experience.

The council met monthly in 2023 and spent much of March 2023-August 2023 going through an extensive onboarding process. This included a broader orientation as well as specific training about theories of change, continuous quality improvement, governmental processes such as policy analysis, and the broader legislative process. In August 2023, the council engaged in a comprehensive problem exploration process to better identify and understand policy, practice, and other systems trends, patterns, issues, and improvements in child welfare and related outcomes. Towards the end of 2023, the council began exploring forming potential subcommittees as well.

The unit has funding to provide community-based services aimed at promoting prevention and family preservation. As part of the unit's strategic planning, developing a more equitable and collaborative granting process was a central focus. As a result, the unit held several forums in community spaces to gather information related to community-based service needs which the community would like to see provided. Community members who attended a forum shared their thoughts on the types of services they feel will support prevention and family preservation for African American families. This information was used to prioritize granting efforts to ensure community needs are met.

Unit staff also engaged the African American Child Well-Being Advisory Council through the facilitation of a two-week problem exploration process to gain further information, which mirrored the information received from the previously mentioned public forums. This collective information was used to develop an RFP focused on prevention and family preservation which was developed in 2023 and released in early 2024. The unit also worked to develop a community-partnered RFP application review process to be used once the grant is released in early 2024. This process involved the formation of a pool of community reviewers who would be responsible for reviewing and scoring RFP applications. These scores would guide and assist the unit in the selection of grantees through an equitable and community-focused selection process. Additional efforts to improve county and state practice include:

- Participation in a reentry project with the Minnesota Children's Justice Initiative
- Participation in an internal CSP multi-disciplinary reentry work group
- Continued involvement in Whole Family Systems
- Participation in a statewide Children's Mental Health Action Team
- Ongoing participation in the Thriving Families, Safer Children initiative
- Participation in the Minnesota Equity Partnership, a collaborative effort between county and state agencies to support equity within social and human services agencies
- Participation in a Cost of Care work group to develop strategies that support policy that addresses the potential negative financial impact of foster care placement on children and families
- Partnering with the Safety and Prevention Unit to review Structured Decision Making tools
- Collaboration with the Child Welfare Training Academy for review and development of new worker orientation and foundations training curriculum to support improved, equitable, and culturally appropriate case planning which supports and promotes prevention and family preservation including participation in Hennepin County child protection community forums.

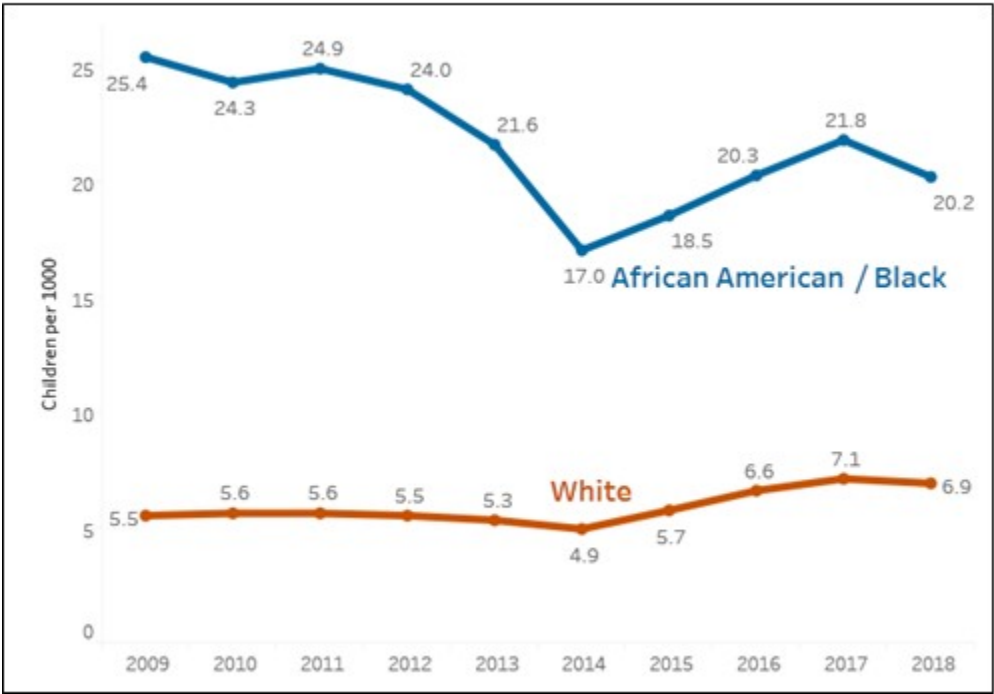
Strategy 3.2.2: Leverage Family First Prevention Services Act and Pre-school Development grant work to build capacity among the department and local agencies. This is to co-create and support systemic child and family well-being/prevention strategies, particularly for African American children, families and communities (using a Targeted Universalism approach).

2020 Update

The CSP Division’s Prevention unit/Children’s Trust Fund uses the data below to determine focus populations. African American families live in inequitable systems, instilled in structures over centuries through racism and resulting biases.

The line graph below shows the rate of children experiencing out-of-home care in Minnesota. The rate is per 1,000 children in the population. Two separate lines are shown, one for African American/Black children, and one for white children. American Indian children experience care at much higher rates than white children—roughly three – five times higher over the past decade.

Figure. African American/Black and White Children in Out-of-Home Care



It is understood that while caseworkers have engaged families in their work, that engagement has not been the primary driver of work. CTF programs will be based on what was learned from collaborating in two large-scale community engagement efforts: The Pre-school Development grant community-based needs assessment,⁴ and the Minnesota Maternal and Child Health Needs Assessment Discovery Survey.⁵

Staff intends to work within department values and adopted guiding principles for the work (see Figure 1). These were created through collaboration with families, communities, and state agencies as part of the Preschool Development Grant

⁴ The PDG Community Based Needs Assessment engagement process included 134 events within 56 communities and 11 Tribal Nations in as many as six different languages. Of 1,372 participants, 73% were parents.

⁵ The Minnesota Maternal and Child Health Needs Assessment Discovery survey included 2,160 respondents, of which 50% identified as community members.

planning process. From the Maternal and Child Health Discovery survey, it was learned that families have needs that cannot be dissected from each other. There is no one single solution.

From the Preschool Development Grant community-based needs assessment it was learned that families need help navigating programs and services. Programs need to adopt a targeted universal approach to practice, policies, and systems to better support families and communities that experience inequities due to race and ethnicity, wealth, and geography.

The department and its partners are moving toward a system of promotion and prevention that supports families before they enter the child welfare system. This will be done through:

- Making it easier for families to get what they need, increasing access to supports and services
- Cultivating community engagement and partnership, and
- Leveraging community- and parent-developed solutions.

In collaboration with the Minnesota Departments of Health and Education, the Children’s Trust Fund will leverage Preschool Development Grant (\$6 million over two years), and CBCAP funds to offer community-based grants to develop Implementation Hubs. Hubs will support pregnant and parenting families with young children up to age 8. Grantees will develop partnerships within their communities to facilitate ease of navigation, referrals, and families getting what they need in a timely way.⁶ Grantees will support families and communities experiencing inequities due to race and ethnicity, wealth and geography – as determined by data to be their focus population. CTF will offer up to 15 grants statewide for the following:

- Develop universal access points for families coupled with relationship-based, culturally appropriate navigation of programs and systems. Due to COVID-19, guidance for Hubs will include brick and mortar, mobile, and virtual access points
- Increase access to systems through pilot testing the state’s Help Me Connect (based on the national Help Me Grow model) system, coupled with the Children’s Defense Fund, Minnesota’s online Bridge to Benefits platform, and
- Grow community engagement and support community developed solutions (which will look and feel different for each community).

This work naturally intersects with the Family First Prevention Services Act Prevention Plan development. As seen in Figure 2, the work of CTF staff is to engage with partners to build a targeted universal system of promotion and prevention.

2021 Update

Through the Family First Transition Act funding, Minnesota has earmarked \$3 million to develop culturally specific services to meet the needs of Black, Brown and Indigenous families. Through work groups focused on supporting Minnesota’s development of the Title IV-E prevention services five-year plan, several community groups representing the African American community have recommended use of parent mentor programs to support families with children at risk of placement into foster care. Department staff is exploring which models in Minnesota may meet the FFPSA Clearinghouse standards, and how to incorporate a program into the five-year prevention plan.

⁶ Referral services may include family home visiting, early care and education (including Early/Head Start), behavioral health, housing, food security, income supports, primary and dental care and more.

Additionally, through the Preschool Development Grant (PDG), a collaboration between the Minnesota Departments of Health, Education, and Human Services, there are multiple collaborations with Tribes and organizations serving American Indian communities:

- Investing in community solutions. The Community Solutions Fund is prioritizing communities of color and American Indian communities to identify challenges in supporting pregnant and parenting families with young children and support community-based solutions. This is in partnership with the Department of Health and Center for Health Equity. Grantees supporting pregnant and parenting African American families include:
- African Community Services. This project is focused on developing and implementing strategies to overcome a particular cultural stigma that inhibits early screening for autism for children.
- Hallie Q. Brown Community Center. The project focuses on adding a transitional classroom in the Early Learning Center for older infants to bridge the transition from infant to toddler, a critical age period in child development. Support services will be expanded through a community resource navigator to help families.
- Minnesota Care Partner. The project provides support services to improve the changes of healthy child development over the long-term by focusing on diverting families from the child welfare system by providing culturally responsive, trauma informed services within the community by people from the community.
- Roots Community Birth Center. The focus of the project will be on the perinatal episode and first three years of the child's life. Roots will lead its partner organizations in a multi-pronged approach to amplify the impact of its model of care.
- Community Resource Hubs. As part of the PDG, the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Child Safety and Permanency division is collaborating and coordinating with multiple partners to accomplish the following goals:
- Make it easier for families to get what they need. Develop universal access for families, paired with culturally appropriate, relationship-based navigation of programs and systems.
- Increase access to services. Collaborate with state agencies to test and evaluate [Help Me Connect](#) and [Bridge to Benefits](#) paired with culturally appropriate, relationship-based navigation.
- Grow community engagement and support community developed solutions. A community-based, whole family approach so families have what they need to thrive. This will look and feel different in every community.
- As part of the PDG, the department in partnership with the Minnesota Departments of Health, Education, and Management and Budget, supports 12 grantees – including three working explicitly with African American families.
- Guiding Star Wakota. The grant supports efforts to build partnerships through community engagement and provide pregnant and parenting families with mental health services, system navigation and reduced service inequities for families.
- NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center, Inc. NorthPoint is a nonprofit organization and a Federally Qualified Health Center operating in partnership with Hennepin County. North Point provides culturally responsive, holistic primary health care, social care, education and economic support to over 40,000 individuals per year in North Minneapolis. The project focuses on planning activities that leverage resources across the county through outreach and engagement of families with infants and toddlers and those who are pregnant.
- Ramsey County. The project will implement a community-based navigation model for families of young children with a network of family coaches.

Department staff, in conjunction with the BUILD Initiative, is offering Communities of Practice to support Community Resource Hubs. Planning is underway to offer an ongoing Community of Practice around equity practice to develop a shared understanding, language, and practice to support the strengths of families most impacted by structural inequities due to race/ethnicity, economic instability, and geography. Changing the practice of state agency personnel, community organization personnel, county personnel to be anti-racist, inclusive, strength-based, and trauma informed will benefit all families in the future.

2022 Update

Work of the PDG Community Resource Hubs continues to support previously mentioned grantee and partner Tribes. An initial considerations [report](#) was developed and released in 2022. The findings in this report demonstrate that the community resource hubs are successfully improving service navigation and delivery to families with young children and well positioned to expand into additional communities. The report outlined key concerns for state leaders who can implement the following considerations. Preliminary data shows that hubs are serving American Indian families at higher rates than their respective state population. See *Table 18 Community Resource Hubs*.

2023 Update

Work of the Minnesota Preschool Development Grant (PDG) Community Resource Hubs continues to support 12 grantees across the state. The [final evaluation report](#) for the Minnesota PDG Hubs was released in January of 2023. This report indicates over 10,000 families served by the hubs over seven quarters. Data in this report continues to show that hubs have served Black, Indigenous and Latino families at higher rates than their respective state population. The report highlights recommendations for sustainability. A final round of engagement features [how families feel](#) about PDG funded programs. Governor Walz offered an [ambitious legislative package](#) to better support children and families. This package includes a proposal that builds on the learnings of the hubs to develop a network of Community Resource Centers across the state. MN PDG Community Resource Hubs will sunset in June 2023.

2024 Update

Research from Chapin Hall² suggests that economic instability is a key driver (especially for Black, Indigenous, and families of color) of entry into, and continued involvement in, the child protection system. Creating multiple access points for programs and services within priority populations continues to be a strategy to support family well-being. Minnesota is using this research and multiple strategies toward narrowing the front door of child protection by promoting and supporting family well-being.

While Preschool Development Grant (PDG) Hubs have sunsetted, the interagency work that has occurred in the spirit of PDG over the course of this CFSP has led to multiple strategies that are working to achieve a reduction in disparities for both American Indian and African American families. Specifically, the 2023 Minnesota legislative session brought billions of dollars into the state budget to support family well-being. Community Resource Centers (CRCs), modeled after the PDG Community Resource Hubs, were funded at \$7.1 million dollars over two biennia. CRCs will focus on creating access to economic stability programs and other services and supports for families. CRC funding will prioritize community-based organizations that serve families experiencing inequities. More explicitly, funds will focus on communities with low child opportunity per the [Child Opportunity Index](#), high rates of poverty, and high rates of neglect reports involving Black, Indigenous, and families of color. Further, the department received funds to implement a kinship navigator (KN) program. The department is combining CRC and KN funds to offer culturally responsive, relationship-based service navigation and concrete supports as well as other community-driven programs and services that strengthen all families and support well-being.

Long-term intended results for a network of Community Resource Centers and kinship navigator programs include families having culturally responsive access to critical programs and services that promote family economic stability and well-being and prevent child welfare system involvement.

² Weiner, D. A., Anderson, C., & Thomas, K. (2021). *System transformation to support child and family well-being: The central role of economic and concrete supports*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.
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The universal piece of this strategy continues to be the online resource tool, Help Me Connect. [Help Me Connect](#) was developed through PDG funds and was fully funded during the 2023 legislative session to become an ongoing universal access strategy for providers and families.

The 2023 legislative session also brought billions in funding to increase available services and economic supports to families across domains. Notable investments include, but are not limited to, a new child tax credit, housing supports, food supports, child care scholarships and workforce supports, paid family leave, and the new Department of Children, Youth, and Families.

Objective 3.3: Promote reunification when possible and other permanency options in a timely manner when reunification is not possible.

Progress on the third objective will be assessed through use of federal permanency measures. The benchmarks for this objective are below.

Measurements for Goal 3-Objective 3

Benchmarks	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Permanency in less than 12 months, African American: 49.3%	Target: 50.4% Observed: 45.6%	51.6% 43.8%	52.7% 48.7%	53.9% 43.1%	55.0% 39.8%
Permanency in 12-23 months, African American: 56.0%	Target: 57.8% Observed: 51.4%	59.6% 39.8%	61.4% 57.5%	63.2% 59.4%	65.0% 51.0%
Permanency in 24 months or more, African American: 32.8%	Target: 34.2% Observed: 35.2%	35.7% 33.0%	37.1% 43.4%	38.6% 40.9%	40.0% 33.7%

Strategy 3.3.1: Continue to expand experiential training on the court process through the Children's Justice Initiative partnership.

2020 Update

In efforts to improve the quality of Emergency Protective Care (EPC) hearings, and to ensure all findings are made, as of August 2018 the Children's Justice Initiative began partnering with Mitchell Hamline School of Law to hold [EPC Experiential Learning trainings](#). To date, five trainings were held involving 12 counties. During these trainings, multi-disciplinary teams (judges, county attorneys, caseworkers, attorneys for parents and children, Tribal representatives, and GALs), are brought together to simulate an EPC hearing using a mock child protection case scenario. Following the simulation, each county team is given constructive feedback by peers (judges, county attorneys, caseworkers, and attorneys for parents/children), of what they can do to improve the quality of EPC hearings. More EPC trainings will be scheduled once the pandemic is over.

2021 Update

The experiential training on the EPC process was put on hold during the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, all trainings were in-person, which was not possible during the pandemic and peacetime emergency. The State Court Administrator's Office has been in dialogue with Mitchell Hamline School of Law regarding a virtual option for this training; the training is currently being offered in two different formats, in-person and virtual. Recent targeted recruitment efforts for county participants were unsuccessful due to heavy workloads. Recently, recruitment efforts were expanded statewide. There is great interest in the training and anticipated that as workloads lessen and court backlogs decrease, trainings will resume.

2022 Update

Taking the information learned during our previous in-person training events, this new effort is a continuation of our previous one that aims to create more accessibility by offering it in a virtual format. The virtual format allows us to continue training when we otherwise would not be able to because of ongoing public health concerns associated with gathering in-person during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also offers us flexibility in terms of being able to offer the training in a blend of different formats moving forward (even after the pandemic) so that we can reach some of the most remote parts of our state and include areas that may not otherwise be able to participate because of staffing or other resource issues. In March of 2022, Itasca and Beltrami Counties participated in a pilot virtual version of this training. Forty-one people attended including guardian ad litem, state court administrators, court administration, judges, parent attorneys, social workers, child attorneys, law clerks, assistant county attorneys, court reporters, and Tribal representatives. Ongoing communication with three additional counties in expansion of the initial pilot effort is currently occurring.

2023 Update

This remains a continuation of an event first conducted in 2018. Three in-person Emergency Protective Care (EPC) mock hearing trainings were held before the public health emergency. In March 2022, this event was modified to accommodate virtual attendance with two counties. Following that session, the department engaged six counties in the 8th Judicial District, which share judges and other stakeholders, to discuss the training opportunities the department could offer, and they chose the EPC mock hearing training. They preferred to do this in person, though given the success of the March 2022 training, they could select either the in-person or virtual option. Because there were six counties and the department planned to hold the event in-person, the training was planned to include six hours and three mock hearings. All original documents were updated, and three scenarios were planned: one with physical abuse allegations, one with allegations of opioid use, and one with allegations of drug use and neglect. The training was planned to be held in Morris, Minnesota, at the Stevens County courthouse. Given the distance many stakeholders would have to travel to attend, the "feedback" format was amended to offer forms for feedback to be completed. Thirty-five people registered for this training, and teams were set to conduct each mock hearing scenario. The training was scheduled for April 21, 2023, but sadly, a police officer known to many in the community was killed in the line of duty one week prior to the training. The judges asked the department to postpone the training, which will now be held in October 2023.

2024 Update

As reported in the 2023 update, the department continues to offer this important interactive training. The postponed April 2023 training occurred in October 2023. There were about 35 attendees, and the counties held mock hearings. Internal struggles were uncovered in one county; since the training, the department has been working with that county to address some of those challenges.

The department continually promotes this training through a newsletter, CJI teams, and informal conversation. Clay County reached out and expressed interest in participating in November 2023. Because this training is suited for multiple counties, the department reached out to Becker and Ottertail Counties as they are close in proximity and all three counties are in the seventh judicial district; the counties were interested and quickly assembled their teams. The department facilitated this training in March 2024 and had over 80 attendees, including six judges. The department again asked stakeholders to give feedback to their colleagues (judges to judges, etc.); however, this portion needed very little facilitation as the group conducted extremely helpful and meaningful conversation among themselves.

The department will continue to offer this training as requested in partnership with the Mitchell Hamline School of Law.

Strategy 3.3.2: Implement an Innovation Zone in Judicial Districts 6 and 9 to identify contributing factors to increased disparity rates in those areas.

2020 Update

No activity to report.

2021 Update

Minnesota's Court Improvement Project and department CQI staff began meeting on a regular basis during this reporting year for monitoring performance and planning for upcoming CFSRs and the CIP plan. In planning for a joint project for inclusion in the CIP plan, department and CIP staff reviewed various data reports related to children in out-of-home placement. Based on review of data, a decision was made to discontinue this strategy and replace it with a strategy focused on reducing foster care re-entry for African American children. Additional work is being done to define the strategy and activities; the change in strategy will be reflected in the 2023 APSR.

2022 Update

The Children's Justice Initiative (CJI) and Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) are collaborating on a project to address the disparate re-entry of African American children into the foster care system. Beginning in August 2021 staff from CJI and the department have been meeting monthly to develop a plan to address the above identified disparity. The first step identified was to join with stakeholders from a variety of government, private, and community groups who could contribute to addressing this disparity. Committee members were identified, invited, and have convened with the following goals:

- Identify root causes
- Define an intervention to address those root causes
- Implement an intervention to reach our goal
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention
- Research if there are existing initiatives to tap into or learn from.

2023 Update

This project continues to develop. After convening a committee based on data related to the reentry of African American and Black children, the department spent the last year developing a team and planning for its root cause analysis. The department alternates between the first and second phases, identifying and assessing needs and developing a theory of change. Most recently, a flyer was created for members to distribute to build a participant list for the root cause analysis.

The data used for the initial project determination was also reviewed. A meeting in May focused on fully understanding the definitions that make up the data and reviewing any changes that may alter the path.

The root cause analysis is scheduled for July 12, 2023, in person, with three virtual pre-sessions June 17, 20, and 22 and a possible additional date of June 21. There are daytime, evening, and Saturday options to accommodate as many attendees as possible. Facilitators from the CBCC have been identified, as well as a person to cause map the session from the Department of Human Services Funds are also available to reimburse some participants for their time and expertise if they cannot participate as part of their employment. The pre-sessions will inform and prepare participants and begin narrowing the focus of what will be covered in the root cause analysis. The results will be used to create a theory of change and support moving this project forward.

2024 Update

This project continues to move forward in accordance with the Children's Bureau's Continuous Quality Improvement methodology. In June 2023, the department held three orientation sessions to identify common responses to the overarching question: "How have we allowed Black children to reenter foster care at a rate higher than other children?" The participants generated 17 different responses. The department then sent those 17 responses to a wide variety of stakeholders, including those with lived experience, in a survey. The department asked people to rank their top five reasons. The fourth and fifth answers were a tie, so the department used the top four answers for a discussion during the in-person root cause analysis in July 2023. Thirty-five people were present, including judges and those with lived experience. The Capacity Building Center for Courts (CBCC) provided facilitation and a department staff person mapped the responses. The department created four cause maps that have since been used to move this work forward. In January 2024, the department held two focus groups to allow the mandated reporters stakeholders and those with lived experience to provide feedback on the results of the root cause analysis. This feedback helped to narrow down the specific cohort of children to focus on.

The department then asked for committee members to help develop a theory of change. Two members volunteered along with a CBCC liaison, project chair, and co-chair (from the Court Improvement Program (CIP) and the agency). Meetings are scheduled to develop the theory of change; committee meeting agendas and dates are mapped out through the end of 2024.

Strategy 3.3.3: Target Family Group Decision-Making resources to children and families most at risk for poor permanency outcomes, supporting consistency in implementation through modifications to the RFP process.

2020 Update

Department staff continue to review and assess current FGDM practices across 15 grantees, which includes 50 county and three Tribal agencies. Department staff also continues to host annual meetings, webinars, and site visits to monitor FGDM practice statewide. In partnership with the Research unit and FGDM grantee agencies, the Safety and Prevention unit developed a FGDM data dashboard.

The FGDM dashboard allows department staff to monitor and report on client data related to FGDM practice. The dashboard allows county and Tribal agencies and department staff to track and monitor who, when, and what type of cases receive FGDM services. The dashboard also helps department staff identify practice outcomes and service gaps related to FGDM. FGDM practice data is utilized to inform programs and guide future funding decisions. In addition, agencies that have responsibility to implement FGDM practice must report those activities in quarterly program narrative reports through

SSIS, submit summary-level participant conference evaluation forms, and how an agency will share and incorporate feedback received within the FGDM service model.

For safely maintaining children in their family, agencies are asked to dedicate a minimum of 25% of FGDM meetings to “early in the life” of a case. This is defined as any FGDM conference held during the 45-day time period of a child protection Family Assessment or Family Investigation within the grant reporting period.

In 2021, the department plans to re-issue the RFP with increased focus on equity, early intervention to promote in-home service delivery, and timely permanency outcomes.

2021 Update

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The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact FGDM practice across the state. In the past year, delivery of FGDM services rapidly changed from in-person conferencing to virtual to protect staff, clients, and the communities they serve, and comply with guidance from the Minnesota Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Many grantees were able to adapt and began providing FGDM services virtually via online meeting platforms like Zoom, WebEx, and Microsoft Teams. Pivoting to virtual conferences enabled agencies to provide families and youth with meaningful involvement and a voice in their case during this time. In some cases, agencies were able to involve people who may not have been able to participate in person.

2022 Update

Department staff continues to review statewide FGDM practices. The department released a new grant application in March 2022 seeking qualified responders for implementing Family Group Decision Making approaches and services models that enhance family engagement and promote safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families involved in Minnesota’s child protection and child welfare system. The new grant cycle is intended to support FGDM approaches and services prioritizing outcomes related to:

- Reducing racial disparities and disproportionality in child protection programs
- Preventing out-of-home care for children at risk of placement
- Reducing the length of stay for children currently living in out-of-home care.

The department received 17 grant applications and is in the process of finalizing grant awards for seven of the applicants.

2023 Update

A total of seven agencies received grant funds beginning July 1, 2022.

One of the agencies awarded, Red Lake Nation, has created its first FGDM program. Red Lake Nation's grant application included the utilization of this service "to improve outcomes for Red Lake families and children who are involved in county child welfare, or at risk of involvement in county intervention to aide in holistic, healing-centered practice that is grounded in traditional Anishinaabe family preservation." Red Lake Nation has hired and trained staff, developed program policies and procedures, and has begun service provision to children and families.

Within the second quarter, the six other agencies reported 145 white and 103 families of color served. Agencies reported a variety of outcomes including:

- Increasing service delivery to families identified as experiencing inequities and disproportional outcomes in the child welfare system
- Increasing relationship building with partners, both internally and externally (Lower Sioux Human Services)
- Four of the seven agencies sub-contract with a community agency whose staff reflect the racial/ethnic identities of families served.

2024 Update

A total of seven agencies are in their second year of receiving grant funds that began on July 1, 2022.

Within the first and second quarters of Fiscal Year 2024, the seven agencies have reported 389 white and 217 BIPOC families served. Agencies reported a variety of outcomes including:

- A reduction in the amount of time children are in out-of-home placement when completing a FGDM; trends also indicate that there is a lower reoccurrence of CPS involvement post-FGDM
- Ongoing relationship building with internal and external partners, including utilization of contract agencies who can provide culturally appropriate services
- Four of the seven agencies continue to contract with a community agency that shared racial and ethnic identities with the families being served.

Since June 2023, the department contracted with The Kempe Center to conduct monthly learning circles to enhance FGDM Practice across Minnesota. Learning circles focus on practice improvement, equity, and the values rooted in FGDM.

Strategy 3.3.4: Continue the Permanency Technical Assistance Workshop, which ensures that achieving timely child safety, permanency, and well-being are the foundational principles underlying procedures and decisions in all child protection proceedings. PTAW will educate all stakeholders on the permanency timeline and provide strategies on how to keep cases from going beyond the timeline. The project will focus on county-specific data compiled from the court and the department to understand practice patterns, as well as areas of strength and those needing improvement. A detailed county action plan will be developed from this work.

2020 Update

Minnesota completed the Permanency Technical Assistance Workshops, and county agencies completed detailed action plans that developed from that work. The Children's Justice Initiative and department staff collaborated on several technical assistance workshops in 2017 and 2018 to share individual county data, provide education regarding timelines, roles and responsibilities for each group participating, and discuss patterns and trends for each county. Each team developed an action plan they worked on throughout 2019 and the first half of 2020, with a goal of lowering the length of time to permanency overall for children. As part of this plan, county agencies identified issues that negatively affected their ability to find timely permanency for children, along with the strategies they employed to improve internal processes. As of April 2020, all teams completed action plans, implementing strategies to continue their successes.

There was no formal evaluation done of this project, rather each county agency was responsible to identify, collaborate, and implement approaches that would improve its overall length of time to permanency. The project identified and followed a specified grouping of children and tracked their path to permanency.

The Children's Justice Initiative shared the strategies statewide, so other CJI teams could review them and identify what areas they may recognize as issues, and what strategies they may employ to improve timely permanency outcomes for the children they serve.

2021 Update

Permanency has now been established for all individual children identified through the Permanency Technical Assistance Work groups as not having achieved permanency. **This strategy is complete.**

Objective 3.4: Prevent children and families from entering the child welfare system through partnerships with communities and community-based agencies with a focus on equity.

Progress on this objective will be assessed through development of partnerships, co-creation of strategies to address disparities, and engagement outcomes to be determined through targeted work related to serving African American children and families in the Whole Family System grant. Progress will also be assessed using the number of African American infants removed because of parental drug use. The benchmarks for this objective are below.

Measurements for Goal 3-Objective 4

Benchmarks	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
African American children under 1 placed in out-of-home care for parental drug use, baseline (2018): 145	Target: 135	125	115	106	97
	Observed: 131	96	103	102	98

Strategy 3.4.1: Using the human-centered design (HCD) process, co-create strategies to address disparities with communities experiencing inequities based on race, geography, and/or economics through the Whole Family Systems grant under the umbrella of 2Gen Network, supported by the department's Economic Assistance and Employment Supports and Child Care divisions.

2020 Update

In October 2019, the department funded eight grantees, including four focused on serving African American/black children and families. The following are descriptions of the four focus grant recipients:

City of St. Paul: Through partnerships with financial institutions, community-based agencies and early childhood providers, St. Paul is expanding and building off its college savings account initiative to improve economic stability, as well as early childhood health and well-being outcomes for children and families experiencing disparities.

NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center: To support healthy child development during the critical period from conception to age 3, NorthPoint, along with partners and families, will research systemic failures that result in an abundance of risk factors and lack of protective factors for many African American children and their parents/caregivers.

People Serving People: Family homelessness overwhelmingly impacts African American and American Indian communities. With partners including families, Mill City Kids, and the Hennepin County Office to End Homelessness, People Serving People will explore issues related to access to childcare and quality early childhood education, and ways to prevent the recurrence of family homelessness.

Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association: The association, along with Families First of Minnesota, is leading a multi-disciplinary team collaborating with families and other community agencies to explore the social-cultural barriers of success in pre-kindergarten- to kindergarten-age children, whose families are first-generation immigrants and refugees.

Grantees are currently engaging with families and community members, core team members, and state partners to explore challenges faced by the community, and possible Whole Family systemic solutions that can be prototyped and implemented in 2020/2021.

2021 Update

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting strategies to manage it created significant barriers to the work of grantees with children and families, as the social distancing requirements and the move to virtual work impacted engagement with families. Many of the communities served by the grantees were disproportionately impacted by the health and economic impacts of the pandemic; many grantees shifted to meeting the emerging and urgent needs of families in their communities.

The following grantees identified and began work on described prototypes:

City of St. Paul: Through partnerships with financial institutions, community-based agencies, and early childhood providers, St. Paul is expanding and building off its college savings account initiative to improve economic stability, as well as early childhood health and well-being outcomes for children and families experiencing disparities. St. Paul is piloting a universal income program targeted to Black, Brown and Indigenous children and families. It began providing an additional \$500 per month for 24 months to families and evaluating the impact of these funds on the financial stability of these families, and developmental outcomes of children, including child welfare involvement.

NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center: NorthPoint is working with hospital systems and health care providers to better understand barriers to accessing prenatal care for mothers of African descent, and coordination of services for these women when there are concerns regarding misuse of illicit or controlled substances. They are identifying possible pilots to address these barriers.

People Serving People (PSP): PSP developed and implemented a prototype to create a fellowship focused on actively involving families experiencing homelessness as part of a team of core partners working to systemically identify and address structural racism, including practices, programs and policies that result in higher rates of homelessness in African American populations. A stipend was offered; the fellowship requires an average of 10 hours per month for two years. People Serving People is developing and piloting an ethnic/multi-cultural curriculum in its early learning center that helps children and families celebrate their culture and identify.

Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association (IMAA): Because of the pandemic IMAA identified digital equity as a key barrier to education success for immigrant and refugee families who receive public benefits and have young children. It is prototyping strategies to increase access to both computers and the internet for these families, identification of systemic barriers to digital equity, and the impact on the educational readiness of children.

2022 Update

An update for this strategy is not available currently.

2023 Update

Evaluation of the WFS Grant will be completed over the next five years in partnership with Future Services Institute at the University of Minnesota, focused on understanding the barriers and successes achieved through the co-creation and implementation of cross-system coordination at the local and state levels.

Other activities have included:

- Bi-annual reports drafted from implementation plans continues for 2023 (year four of WFS implementation)
- Evaluation on learnings from site specific prototypes continues as focus shifts to sustainability for 2024 (year five of WFS implementation)
- Discovery of inequitable systemic opportunities for change, which continue
- Researched evaluation policy briefs are being drafted. (These site-specific briefs will be a deeper dive into the promising prototypes implementation and how they have impacted systems change in policy, practice and programs.

In April 2023, the Core Team meeting began with a check-in to re-ground the team in its shared purpose in this work. Members shared the importance of an intergenerational approach to well-being for African American and Indigenous families and discussed the different angles from which each pilot addresses the core.

2024 Update

In 2023-2024, teams focused on sustainability planning and change and implementation work that came out of the emergent learning process with each site.

Biannual reports drafted from implementation plans continue for 2024 (year five of WFS implementation).

Discovery of inequitable systemic opportunities for change continues using evaluation of learnings and analysis of system levers influence stemming from site-specific prototype implementation.

The state is leveraging human-centered design combined with community engagement/voices via feedback loops with the sites. These mechanisms have enabled the state to identify solutions in collaboration with the partnering agencies, honor

lived experience, and take action to remove relevant systemic barriers that children and families in communities facing inequities encounter when engaging with programs and services.

With support from site teams, the state is in the process of testing and adapting new practices as it receives feedback from families and core teams. The state will continue taking actionable steps to make systems change by shifting policies, practices, and/or programs.

Additionally, momentum to orient new DCYF leadership and workstreams of staff on the WFS approach is currently underway for the new agency.

The learnings from each site will be shared with the WFS network and other state agencies upon completion of the WFS grant in October 2024. The learnings will be compiled by site teams in five-year learning reports (due in September) and published in Department of Human Services policy briefs for each site by the end of the WFS grant in October 2024. Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association has published a brief. A final overall network evaluation report will be prepared by BUILD by the end of December 2024.

Each site is working on developing sustainability plans to continue work started using WFS grant funding. Some sites have added new funding streams to continue their work.

BUILD will host a final conference in September 2024 to wrap up WFS work with communities where discussion about learnings and next steps for Minnesota will take place.

Strategy 3.4.2: Engage in planning with public health/Medicaid/behavioral health/health care to reach pregnant women and families, specifically African American parents and families, creating a continuum of culturally appropriate services to address addiction and support parenting using technical assistance from the Center for Healthcare Strategies.

2020 Update

CAPTA funding has been directed to communities to develop a multi-sector coordinated response to prenatal substance exposure and to develop plans of safe care. The department released a request for proposals in winter 2019, and received four responses, entering into contracts with these four sites in fall 2019. These sites are located across Minnesota and include metro and non-metro. The Plan of Safe Care grants include a deliverable that states 1) An integrative collaborative will be developed, including Tribal social service agencies or other cultural liaisons; and 2) A Tribal liaison will be involved in planning processes and service delivery, including Tribal healing, doulas, and midwives incorporated into prenatal care and hospital treatment for American Indian families.

2021 Update

Department staff continues to work with Minnesota's Hospital Association to explore relationships and improve relationships among hospital and clinic settings and county/Tribal child welfare agencies related to supporting pregnant women and their infants affected by substance abuse. In 2020-2021, the Hospital Association began working with several hospitals across the state, piloting efforts related to improving the Plan of Safe Care, development of pre-birth, and care coordination among hospitals and child welfare agencies. Planning for a potential statewide convening is also underway to build understanding and improve coordination efforts across agencies and service providers.

2022 Update

The department continues to contract with four agencies across the state to improve Plan of Safe Care coordination and development within their communities. These grants will continue through June 2023. These grantees are demonstrating promising practices with almost all infants remaining at home safe with their families.

Partnership continues between the department and the Minnesota Hospital Association. Department staff participated in the summer 2021 Minnesota Hospital Association statewide convening, providing information on mandated reporting, and supporting pregnant women struggling with substance use. The Minnesota Hospital Association completed a pilot with several hospital/health systems and local child welfare agencies to improve work regarding plans of safe care. Goals included:

- Pilot and refine a statewide Plan of Safe Care template for use prenatally or at birth for mothers and infants with prenatal substance exposure in coordination with child welfare services
- Help community partners to understand Minnesota's POSC information sharing protocols and implementation of CARA legislation
- Improve collaboration and communication with service providers working with families caring for infants with prenatal substance exposure and their mothers.

As part of this pilot, Plan of Safe Care documents were created to support coordination and improve services to pregnant women and their families. These documents were launched statewide.

2023 Update

Department staff made efforts to connect, build relationships and explore possibilities for partnerships beyond the division to address the critical issue of prenatal substance exposure. These partners included staff from the Behavioral Health and Health Care divisions. Department staff has collaborated with the hospital association to learn more about system needs and strengths across the state. Efforts to coordinate at the state level will continue.

The additional CAPTA funding has been directed to communities to develop a multi-sector coordinated response to prenatal substance exposure and to develop plans of safe care. The department continues to contract with four agencies across the state to improve Plan of Safe Care (POSC) coordination and development within their communities. Work regarding these contracts continues and will be extended through 2024.

The department monitors agencies' compliance with completing a Plan of Safe Care through data entered in the Social Service Information System. This information is available when requested from the Research unit. Department staff developed a process to monitor agency compliance in real-time regarding completion of the Plan of Safe Care on an ongoing basis. Staff will provide targeted technical assistance to agencies not completing Plans of Safe Care on prenatal exposure cases and broad technical assistance to all agencies. The department will include information and requirements regarding the Plan of Safe Care in monthly updates sent to county and Tribal agencies.

2024 Update

The department continues to contract with four agencies to improve Plan of Safe Care (POSC) coordination as their contracts were extended through June 2024. Current grantees have focused on improving care coordination and referral processes. Grantees have worked to develop multidisciplinary teams that meet regularly to increase communication and partnerships for the families that they serve. These multidisciplinary teams are comprised of medical professionals,

community treatment providers, county social workers, and peer recovery specialists. Increased communication and understanding of each member's role on the team has made a positive impact on the referral process for Plan of Safe Care.

Community education and awareness surrounding families and infants impacted by substance use is ongoing. Grantees have held open educational events for professionals and community members to attend. These educational events have focused on addressing stigma and support for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, cognitive bias when working with individuals impacted by substance use, and trauma-informed care.

- Having dedicated staff to work directly with families who are impacted by prenatal substance use. Grantees have found success in building relationships with families by having specialized staff to work with this population.
- Connecting families with peer recovery specialists and peer recovery services has been a focus of grantees to help build formal and informal supports for families.
- Assisting families by reducing barriers through direct participant support. Grantees have been able to utilize grant funding to support families impacted by prenatal substance use. Some examples of this are assisting with transportation barriers for treatment, providing necessities (e.g., safe sleep spaces, diapers, bottles, etc.), and assisting with daycare costs. This assistance reduces everyday stressors that can impact substance use.

In anticipation of grants ending, department staff completed engagement sessions with Initiative Tribal Nations, county agencies, current grantees, medical providers, and community providers to continue discussions on best practices for supporting and reaching pregnant people and families impacted by substance use disorder. Two major themes were found through these engagement sessions:

- Providing concrete supports for these families such as housing assistance/funds, transportation/car repairs, food support, baby equipment, and other basic needs are essential to aide in their success.
- A dedicated case worker is critical for supporting parents, preventing relapse, assisting in early identification, and creating trust with families.

The department has issued a new Request for Proposals (RFP) for up to four new grantees to implement a coordinated systemic response for POSC. The additional CAPTA funding will continue to be directed for this project. The new grant period will be July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2026, with the ability to extend the contract up to five years.

Additionally, the department is monitoring agencies' compliance of completing a Plan of Safe Care through data entered in the Social Service Information System. This information is available when requested from the Research Unit. Department staff developed a process to monitor agency compliance in real time regarding completion of the Plan of Safe Care on an ongoing basis. Staff will provide targeted technical assistance to agencies around Plans of Safe Care on prenatal exposure cases and will provide broad technical assistance to all agencies. The department will include information and requirements regarding the Plan of Safe Care in updates sent to county and Tribal agencies.

Subsection D. Goal 4: Improve access to and utilization of services that meet the needs of children and families.

To address the CFSP goal related to improving access to and utilization of services, progress will be assessed using federal performance measures on re-entry, internal CSP measures on the median time to permanency for adoptions and TPLPC, as well as a family preservation measure. The measurement targets and rationale for this goal are below.

Measurements for Goal 4 Measurement

Measure type	Measures	Baseline year	Baseline	Target	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Internal CSP	Median time to permanency, adoption (months)	2018	25.6	20.6	24.1	26.6	29.7	27.4	25.5
	Median time to permanency, TPLPC (months)	2018	19.9	14.9	19.1	21.2	22.1	21.9	19.3
	Family preservation, percent of children placed in out-of-home care during case management when determined to be conditionally safe using a standardized assessment.	2018	6.7%	5.7%	7.5%	7.2%	6.8%	6.0%	6.2%
Federal	Re-entry	2018	15.9%	10.9%	15.6%	15.8%	12.8%	14.8%	11.9%

Objective 4.1: Identify service needs across Minnesota.

Progress on the first objective will be assessed through use of CFSR Safety Outcome 2, item 3, which assesses risk and safety, as well as engagement and participation in the application for the Pre-school Development grant in fall 2019, and completion and use of service mapping on Tableau. The number of times the dashboard is accessed by local agencies will be reported in future years. The benchmarks for this objective are below.

Measurements for Goal 4-Objective 1

Benchmarks	Year 1 (2017-2018)	Year 2 (2018-2019)	Year 3 (2019-2020)	Year 4 (2020-2021)	Year 5 (2021-2022)
Safety Outcome 2, Item 3, baseline (2017): 64%	Target: 67.5% Observed: 76.9%	71% 84.6%	74.5% 85.1%	78% 88.19%	81.5% Not available

Strategy 4.1.1: Support and partner with the Minnesota Departments of Education and Health in the statewide needs assessment occurring through the Pre-school Development grant, and development of a statewide strategic plan to support young children and their families.

2020 Update

The statewide needs assessment for the Preschool Development Grant (PDG) was completed in December 2019. The PDG needs assessment had two components: quantitative – dealing with programmatic and systemic outcome measures; and qualitative – a community-based needs assessment strategy. Both portions, along with the resulting strategic plan are [here](#).

2021 Update

The needs assessment was completed in 2019. **This activity is complete.**

2022 Update

The Minnesota PDG state team is working with PDG evaluators to conduct a strategic refresh of the 2019 PDG Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan. This refresh begins in earnest in August 2022, based on preliminary evaluation findings, quantitative data, and a sustainability study, engagement with grantees, families, community-based organizations, and state staff. The scope of work describes a process by which evaluators would leverage resources and efforts initially slated for the required follow-up needs assessment and strategic plan. These will be combined for a streamlined final deliverable. The combined document will link the most current needs and opportunities with an ambitious yet manageable plan for implementation in the coming years. The final document will be captured via an addendum/companion guide to current reports, essentially applying a *2022 and beyond* lens to the early childhood system's most pressing needs and the commitment of Minnesota's leaders to address those needs. Critical opportunities include:

- Building on existing themes and challenges with applied impacts of current work
- Creating stronger alignment between the needs assessment and strategic plan, and
- Elevating family and community voice.

2023 Update

The Minnesota Preschool Development Grant efforts continue to focus on early childhood and family systems. The [Minnesota Early Childhood Strategic Refresh: An Updated Cross-System Plan for 2023 and Beyond](#)* is a fresh look at what Minnesota has accomplished in the early childhood space in the years since the initial needs assessment and strategic plan, gauging how recent events have reinvigorated, reshuffled and reshaped system priorities. The “refresh” was released in early 2023 and focuses on four priority areas.

- Priority Area 1: Families can access the early childhood services they need to help their young children thrive.
- Priority Area 2: Available early childhood supports and services achieve high-quality standards by meeting the needs of children and families and driving toward positive outcomes.
- Priority Area 3: Families and communities play an active role in informing the planning, implementation, and oversight of state and local early childhood efforts.
- Priority Area 4: A sustainable and comprehensive statewide infrastructure enables the state to implement a streamlined early childhood system.

Strategies in Priority Areas 1, 3, and 4 directly affect the work of the Promotion and Prevention unit. Examples include but are not limited to:

- 1.1 Improving outreach to build awareness of and get families connected to early childhood services
- 1.2 Eliminating barriers to enrollment and participation in early childhood services
- 3.1 Providing clear pathways for diverse families, providers and community members experiencing inequities due to race, ethnicity, geography and income to engage in decision-making processes that impact them
- 3.2 Engaging in trust-building with communities
- 3.3 Enacting a consistent approach for multidirectional communication with communities regarding early childhood efforts.
- 4.1 Seeking diverse and stable funding to sustain early childhood efforts.
- 4.2 Maintaining and improve the cross-sector alignment and collective decision-making structures solidified by PDG B-5.
- 4.3 Strengthening data-driven decision-making across the early childhood system.

*While the “refresh” focuses on early childhood systems, child welfare continues to operate as an intersecting system. Early childhood and family systems are also part of a prevention continuum.

2024 Update

Intersecting work between agencies continues to support expecting and parenting families with young children. Creating access to programs and services through Help Me Connect and other tools mentioned above continues to be prioritized. Interagency efforts and planning for the Department of Children Youth and Families continue to support the priority areas in the Minnesota Early Childhood Strategic Refresh. Significant community engagement has occurred in the past years as well as new methodologies for doing community engagement. Specifically, the use of feedback loops has been tremendously important in building relationships with communities – especially with priority populations.

Strategy 4.1.2: Continue statewide mapping of services focused on mental health, chemical dependency, parent support services and dental care that began as part of the PIP.

2020 Update

The department in partnership with the Minnesota Departments of Education and Health, have been working with early childhood partners across the state to address how families can learn about and choose essential services. They identified the solution of expanding and building on Minnesota’s Help Me Grow to provide a one-stop option (Help Me Connect) to help families and referring providers more easily find and connect to a wide range of prenatal and early childhood (birth through 8 years) services that support healthy child development and family well-being, including basic needs. Minnesota’s Help Me Connect provides a centralized access “no wrong door” approach to access local services that support healthy child development – including multi-generational supports for parents and families, taking advantage of the database previously completed and published here: <https://www.minnesotahelp.info/public/>.

The overall aim of Minnesota’s Help Me Connect is to improve equitable access and outcomes for early identification and services which address both developmental and behavioral health, as well as social determinants of health (i.e., Minnesota

Family Investment Program, WIC, housing, safety, high quality child care), for communities experiencing racial, economic, and geographic inequities.

2021 Update

Through the PDG, Minnesota has recently launched [Minnesota Help Me Connect](#). This platform is a digital navigator connecting pregnant individuals and families with young children (birth through 8 years) with services in their local communities that empower families to be healthy and safe. Help Me Connect is being tested by the navigators housed in Community Resource Hubs as well as others in health systems and local public health. Help Me Connect will have a celebrated launch in August 2021 and be universally available for use. Next steps for Minnesota Help Me Connect include building a digital referral loop mechanism to support families in getting to the services they have been referred to.

2022 Update

[Help Me Connect](#) is fully operational. Next steps for Help Me Connect include building a referral mechanism to be used between navigators and referral agencies.

Building on the systems connections demonstrated through Help Me Connect as well as the relationship-based, culturally responsive navigation of Community Resource Hubs, adding the work of Thriving Families Safer Children; the Minnesota Departments of Human Services, Education, and Health are supporting data gathering utilizing opportunity and social vulnerability indices overlaid with Minnesota-specific data (child welfare included). This data mapping will eventually allow for targeting of resources to communities experiencing compounded risk factors. This will allow for more access to critical supports for communities and families that need them most.

2023 Update

[Help Me Connect](#) is fully operational. Next steps for Help Me Connect include building a referral mechanism to be used between navigators and referral agencies. Funding for this project seems imminent in the state legislative process.

2024 Update

[Help Me Connect](#) was fully funded in the 2023 legislative session and continues to be utilized by navigators across the continuum. Community Resource Centers and kinship navigator programs will continue to use [Help Me Connect](#) as a navigation tool when working with families. Similar to PDG Community Resource Hubs, CRCs will also utilize [Bridge to Benefits](#), an online application that helps determine eligibility for programs and services for families across Minnesota. [MNBenefits](#) also offers a single (20-minute) application for nine economic stability programs. CRC and kinship navigators will have access to all of these tools when working with families to access programs, services, and supports.

Strategy 4.1.3: Support the child welfare workforce in assessing the needs of children and families through development of Safety Practice Profiles, which include the core component of assessing and addressing safety throughout the life of a case. Safety Practice Profiles will clearly articulate safety-related behaviors that are observable across the life of a case. The Safety Practice Profiles are in development in partnership with local child welfare agencies.

2020 Update

The CSP Division, with the Capacity Building Center for States, and Safety Framework Advisory Committee, developed Safety Practice Profiles, a tool for defining safety-related interventions, describing how it works in everyday practice across

the life of a case. The goal of the Safety Practice Profiles is to assist caseworkers and supervisors in assessing current skills and help guide appropriate goal setting as they work to enhance practice skills.

The Safety Practice Profiles have moved into a pilot phase; the first pilot started in April 2020. Department staff are in the process of selecting sites for two additional pilot cohorts, one to begin in September 2020, the second in January 2021. The pilots primarily engage child protection supervisors who will develop additional skills in coaching to support use of the tool. At the end of the pilot, it is expected that supervisors will be able to:

- Describe and differentiate between ineffective, foundational, and advanced safety practice behaviors
- Recognize safety practice behaviors of individual workers and identify current level of practice skills
- Apply coaching skills to help workers to deepen safety practice skills across a continuum
- Utilize Safety Practice Profiles to evaluate practice behaviors within a coaching framework
- Evaluate the pilot process and provide feedback to department staff on future efforts.

Each pilot will take place over six months. Agencies will receive both in-person and online support over the course of the six months, including individual coaching and group technical assistance opportunities (Learning Circles).

2021 Update

For the safety of children involved in the child welfare system, it is imperative that child welfare staff make safety decisions across the life of a case with fidelity to a model (consistent with guidelines and standards of the department). The Safety Practice Profile tool focuses on supporting that fidelity by establishing a model for practice. In 2020, the Safety Profiles project moved into a pilot phase. The first pilot took place between April and September of 2020. This pilot was to measure the utility of the tool and its implementation to make informed decisions about its improvements.

The initial pilot group included 46 participants consisting of six supervisors and 40 workers from three agencies serving six counties. Each participant agency involved in the initial pilot provides social services to predominantly rural areas of the state including:

- Minnesota Prairie County Alliance (MNPrairie) is a multi-county agency partnership among Dodge, Steele and Waseca counties in southern Minnesota
- Pope, Grant, and Traverse county social services agencies, in west central Minnesota, work in partnership and share a social services supervisor
- Rice County Social Services is in southern Minnesota approximately 50 miles south of the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area.

Workforce participants included a variety of professional roles across the child welfare continuum, including screening, assessment/investigation, ongoing case management and adoption/permanency.

During the first pilot, workers and supervisors were able to use the tool in a variety of ways and situations. Supervisors found the Safety Practice Profile (SPP) helpful as a supervisory tool. Workers found it helpful to reflect on their own practice and to use one-on-one with their supervisor. Both supervisors and workers found the tool somewhat useful for team discussion of cases and practice. Participation in the pilot and using the SPP tool allowed supervisors and workers to assess current skill levels in the different practice areas, and to see where they could identify areas for growth.

The data collected in the first pilot indicated a desire from supervisors and workers in the selected sample to utilize a tool-supported approach to improving safety practice behaviors. Workers and supervisors were positive about the tool's utility

as a supervision and self-reflection tool. In evaluating the tool, itself, respondents were most concerned with its length and format.

To move toward a vision of improved safety for children involved in child protection in Minnesota, the department will continue to pilot, evaluate, and revise the tool throughout 2021. To begin the work of integrating the Safety Practice Profiles holistically into work at local agencies, relationships and feedback loops will need to be established within department entities.

The second pilot started in April and will continue through August 2021; it includes child protection staff from Olmsted, Clay, Stevens, and Kandiyohi counties. This pilot will evaluate the effectiveness of revisions made and gather additional feedback on the tool itself. Pilot three will include a pilot integration with the Supervisor Core curriculum (TBA 2022). During Pilot three, efforts will be directed toward evaluating practice change in relationship with the tool.

2022 Update

The goal of Safety Practice Profiles is to assist caseworkers and supervisors in assessing current skills, and guide appropriate goal setting as they work on enhancing practice skills. The pilot's second phase process took place between April and October 2021.

In the second pilot, supervisors were similarly asked to implement the Safety Practice Profiles tool to support reflective practice in responding to children and families' safety needs. Implementation included additional training and discussion activities facilitated via web conferencing. Supervisors received monthly implementation support (Learning Circles) and group coaching sessions to assist them with developing supervisory coaching skills that support caseworker integration of new and/or deeper *reflective* practices in daily activities. The second pilot group included 39 participants consisting of 14 supervisors and 25 workers from four agencies serving four counties. For both the first and second pilots, a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods was used to collect data from participants. Evaluation methods included surveying participants with Likert scale and open-ended questions documenting facilitator/participant observations and statements, with reflections from written documents and learning materials. Data collected in the second pilot indicates a continued desire by supervisors and caseworkers in the selected sample to utilize Safety Practice Profiles as a reflection and coaching tool, and an approach to improve safety practice behaviors.

Similar themes were identified in both pilots, including:

- Implementation process
- Practical application of Safety Practice Profiles
- Skill development, and
- Tool feedback.

Discussion and further analysis are underway as to whether to conduct a third pilot, or begin a statewide phased rollout in 2022. During this period, efforts will be directed toward evaluating practice change in relationship to implementing Safety Practice Profiles in supervisor and workforce practice. It will also outline opportunities for deeper partnerships among the department's Safety unit, Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy (MNCWTA), Continuous Quality Improvement unit, and county and Tribal agencies.

2023 Update

Statewide pre-implementation of Safety Practice Profiles is underway. The department is in the process of contracting with a coaching professional. Additionally, the MNCWTA is finalizing New Supervisor Training curriculum, which will include the introduction to SPP and supervisory coaching.

The department will conduct two virtual Supervisor Forums in both October and November to introduce SPP to the Child Protection Supervisory workforce statewide. Starting in January 2024, the MNCWTA plans to launch the New Supervisor Training, which will be trained four times per year.

The SPP fidelity monitoring pilot participants will be involved in the New Supervisor Training. This fidelity pilot will occur for six months alongside the SPP coaching circles. After the completion of the SPP fidelity monitoring pilot all New Supervisor Training will include a six-month follow up of coaching circles that will support the implantation of SPP.

The finalization of a variety of tools and processes has occurred, which includes:

- Establishment of a statewide implementation work group
- Redesign and publication of the SPP tool - workbook
- Creation of a SPP introduction video
- Integration of SPP into Child Welfare new supervisor training
- Creation of the fidelity monitoring tool
- Creation of a communication plan and project timeline.

2024 Update

Safety Practice Profiles is in the third and final pilot. This includes the use of the [Safety Practice Profile Guidebook](#). The third pilot is intended to evaluate practice change while implementing the Safety Practice Profiles. Supervisors and their selected staff will be asked to complete “knowledge checks” between group coaching sessions to monitor fidelity and evaluate practice.

Primary research questions:

- Did worker behavior change after the SPP were implemented?
- What is the fidelity we want to measure?
- Specify core components, skills, and/or behaviors that are outlined in the SPP.
- Measure work behavior before and after SPP is implemented.
- Are workers and supervisors using SPP (job aids, coaching) in supervision?

Pilot three started in January 2024 and was completed in July 2024. Participants in the pilot include seven supervisors representing five different county agencies. This included a one-day in-person training in coordination with the Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy and monthly coaching circles offered as support to participating supervisors.

Mid-pilot fidelity monitoring includes the case workers that each supervisor will be working with.

Next steps: Statewide roll-out of the Safety Practice Profiles in coordination with the training academy. During the state-wide rollout, there will be four cohorts of learners per year with 10-15 learners per cohort. The Safety Practice Profiles are being integrated into child welfare foundations training as well as new supervisor training provided by the training academy.

Strategy 4.1.4: Request addition of data elements in the Social Service Information System to collect sexual orientation and gender identity expression (SOGIE) information for children and families, as a first step to support the CSP Division in improving outcomes, identifying and funding needed resources, and reducing disparities experienced by LGBTQ foster children.

2020 Update

Two enhancement requests were made and are in development with MNIT but have been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The first enhancement is to add an additional field for sexual orientation for youth in care, available for children 14+, but is not required. The second is to add a gender identity category to replace the current gender with sex, to sex assigned at birth, and adding gender with a start and end date for youth 14+, but not required.

2021 Update

Delays continue due to other project-level enhancements for SSIS.

2022 Update

Delays continue due to other project-level enhancements for SSIS.

2023 Update

Key Child Safety and Permanency (CSP) leaders and foster care advocacy groups met in March 2023, regarding data collection for youth's Sexual Orientation Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) in Minnesota's SACWIS system, Social Service Information System (SSIS). Currently, there is not a data collection process in place for SOGIE youth.

National data indicates over-representation of LBGTQ2S+ youth in the child welfare system. LBGTQ2S+ youth experience over-representation in foster care and have disproportionately high rates of abuse in placements, which may have unwelcoming environments and are unable to provide the needed supports, resulting in negative outcomes in health, mental health, education and well-being.

CSP strives to eliminate these disparities and in the coming year will consult with the DHS Business Solution Office on the gender terms initiative. In 2023, DHS approved phase 1 for persons 18 years and older: Name to Use, Legal Recorded Sex and Pronouns for recipients of Minnesota's health care and benefits systems.

2024 Update

Child Safety and Permanency, Continuous Quality Improvement section, Change Management Team began a work group with charter members from the Child Safety and Permanency and Behavioral Health Divisions, along with state and foster care advocates. The purpose was to improve outcomes for young people in foster care by understanding how youth's Sexual Orientation Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) data is currently documented and to provide guidance for best practice in supporting Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning and/or two-spirit (LBGTQ2S+) youth in the state of Minnesota.

The work group devised and sent a brief survey in March 2024 to supervisors and STAY (Successful Transition to Adulthood for Youth) coordinators to all 87 counties and three Initiative Tribes, seeking to understand current policies and practices related to foster youth with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGIE), and to collaborate with partners in addressing barriers, training, and/or other needs child welfare agencies may have around this topic area.

With over a 55% return rate, survey results will inform the work groups strategies going forward. Work groups will address a continued need for education and consistent data practice methods to ensure confidentiality and to provide youth with the services and foster settings they need to thrive and reach their fullest potential.

The department's gender terms policy has approved the use of preferred pronouns for people over the age of 18 only. The states' comprehensive child welfare information system, Social Services Information System (SSIS), is years away from potential changes. The work group efforts will seek best equitable practice and documentation standards when working with LGBTQ2S+ in coordination with community partners and the youth and families served.

At an October 2023 state to state meeting with Michigan, Michigan shared its best practice guide for working with LGBTQ2S+ youth in that state's child welfare system.

In March 2024, the CSP Adolescent Unit published an updated best practice guide, [A Practice Guide for Caseworkers, Foster Parents and Facility Staff: Working with gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning and two-spirit youth in the child welfare system \(DHS-6500\)](#).

Objective 4.2: Increase service capacity through investment in service providers and community-based agencies, and support of local child welfare agencies.

Progress on the second objective will be measured using an internally developed state performance measure of physical health exams for children in out-of-home care, as well as piloting the HMG electronic screening system in four communities. The implementation plan for the HMG pilot will be developed in collaboration with communities. Using the service-mapping tool created under objective 1, a measure of service availability will be created, used in future years to measure access by county and Tribal agencies. The benchmarks for this objective are below.

Measurements for Goal 4-Objective 2

Benchmarks	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Piloting HMG electronic screening system	Complete the service inventory	Identify 12 pilot communities	Plan and finalize implementation strategy	Implement pilot	
Physical health exam state measure: 60.2%	Targeted: 63.2% Observed: 59.5%	66.1% 55.7%	69.1% 59.1%	72.0% 56.8%	75.0% 52.9%

Strategy 4.2.1: Partner with the Minnesota Departments of Education and Health to co-create and implement with local communities the Help Me Connect model (based on the national Help Me Grow model).

2020 Update

An RFP was developed in response to feedback in the PDG community needs assessment to implement the Community Hubs described in Strategies 2.2.4 and 3.2.2, which will work with the department to develop and implement the Help Me Connect model described in Strategy 4.1.2.

2021 Update

As part of the PDG, the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Child Safety and Permanency Division is collaborating and coordinating with multiple partners to accomplish the following goals:

- Make it easier for families to get what they need. Develop universal access for families, paired with culturally appropriate, relationship-based navigation of programs and systems.
- Increase access to services. Collaborate with state agencies to test and evaluate [Help Me Connect](#) and [Bridge to Benefits](#) paired with culturally appropriate, relationship-based navigation.
- Grow community engagement and support community developed solutions. A community-based whole family approach so families have what they need to thrive. This will look and feel different in every community.

At the time of this report, 12 grantees have been selected and have started work:

Baby's Space: A Place to Grow: Is a child development center that works to create a cycle of academic success and prosperity for families dealing with the systemic impacts of poverty, racism and exclusion. Through the Strong Families, Strong Bonds project, they will collaborate with Hennepin County, Washburn Center for Children, and Minneapolis Public Schools to deepen and more effectively coordinate support for children and families in the Little Earth Housing Development. Through this work, they aim to better meet families' intersecting needs and help families achieve or maintain stability to create home environments in which they and their children can thrive.

Fraser: Its mission is to make a meaningful and lasting difference in the lives of children, teens, adults and families with special needs by providing education, health care and housing services. Families facing disparities in access to care often encounter barriers to necessary resources starting at the time of referral. Building partnerships with primary care providers will help guide families in their next steps and reduce barriers.

Guiding Star Wakota: Its mission is to serve any woman, any mother and any family with compassionate care and support. This grant will support efforts to build partnerships through community engagement and provide pregnant and parenting families with mental health services, system navigation and reduced service inequities for families.

Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota: Is creating a statewide community hub with youth and family, housing, and refugee services to create a systematic approach to intake, needs assessment, access, and parent and community engagement. This includes physical locations in Brainerd, Duluth, Minneapolis, St. Paul and Willmar, as well as a virtual network in Crow Wing, Hennepin, Kandiyohi, Ramsey and St. Louis counties.

Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board: This project focuses on developing a robust system of support for Minneapolis families through the planning and implementation process of building a culturally reflective, equitable place for families and providers to access support needed for their families to thrive.

Northland Foundation: Is a public supported foundation serving Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, and St. Louis counties. It also includes all or parts of five Tribal Nations within the same geographic boundaries: Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, and Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. Northland Foundation's programs have three intersecting focus areas: children and youth, individual and community well-being, and economy and jobs. This grant will support navigators in seven locations to help pregnant and parenting families connect with local resources. Navigators will focus primarily on parenting families facing racial, geographical and economic inequities with intentional outreach in these communities.

NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center, Inc: Is a nonprofit organization and a federally Qualified Health Center operating in partnership with Hennepin County. NorthPoint provides culturally responsive, holistic primary health care, social care, education, and economic support to more than 40,000 individuals per year in North Minneapolis, regardless of ability to pay. The Hennepin County Early Childhood Collaborative will focus on planning activities that leverage resources across the county through outreach and engagement of families with infants and toddlers, and those who are pregnant.

Northwest Minnesota Foundation: Its mission is to invest resources, facilitate collaboration and promote philanthropy to make the region a better place to live and work. The foundation works with the five Community Action Program agencies and two Tribal Nations in the region to reach all families throughout the northwest portion of the state and help them navigate local resources.

Ramsey County: Works to strengthen individual, family and community health, safety and well-being through effective safety net services, innovative programming, prevention and early intervention and environmental stewardship. Through this grant, they will implement a community-based navigation model for families of young children (prenatal to age 5) with a network of family coaches. Family coaches will have a deeper, culturally responsive understanding of the needs of the families, and will provide dedicated coaching and support. This is part of the county agency's' vision of advancing a holistic approach to strengthening families by aligning and coordinating multiple systems and non-traditional resources to assist families with a focus on those who experience racial, geographic and economic inequities.

Red Lake Nation: Is working to provide mobile Community Resource Hub services to urban Tribal populations in the Twin Cities and Duluth areas to support the well-being of families.

Sawtooth Mountain Clinic: Is a federally Qualified Health Care Center whose mission is to provide high quality preventative and primary care to the residents of Cook County and the Grand Portage Tribe of Lake Superior Chippewa. The grant will build capacity for expansion of programming, provide liaisons between facilities and programs, and provide community education about available resources in the community. Many families in the region have no access to transportation and often travel over four hours to receive services, and the community hub's goal is to help families find resources closer to home.

Tri-City Connections: Works to increase kindergarten readiness and close disparities in the early childhood space. Five bilingual early childhood navigators will support 500 southeastern Minnesota families annually in a culturally and trauma-responsive manner to access early learning resources. Each community will establish a centralized physical hub, a virtual hub with online resources in English, Spanish, Somali and Karen, and a mobile hub to move from neighborhood to neighborhood for community events. More than 40 community groups are involved in the initiative.

Department staff is also supporting grantees and their sub-contacted partners through a series of Communities of Practice, quarterly grantee meetings, and individual site visits. Robust evaluations are currently being implemented that include focus groups, individual interviews, and data collection with families, grantees, and department and other state agency staff. Department staff are including Scott County Social Services Agency as a non-funded partner at the request of the county child welfare director. Scott County is utilizing the national Family Resource Center model to support three communities within the county. This learning partnership is helping to expand the knowledge base about what works best to support families and narrow the door to the child welfare and child protections systems.

2022 Update

PDG Community Resource Hubs' work continues to support previously mentioned grantee and partner Tribes. An initial considerations [report](#) was developed and released in 2022. Findings in this report reveal that Community Resource Hubs are successfully improving service navigation and delivery to families with young children and well positioned to expand

into additional communities. The report outlined key concerns for state leaders to implement the following considerations. Preliminary data shows that American Indian families are being served by hubs at higher rates than their respective state population.

2023 Update

Hub navigators continue to utilize [Help Me Connect](#) to connect families to critical programs and services in their geographic area. Help Me Connect is part of a “no wrong door” approach to family navigation services. The [final evaluation report](#) for hubs indicates that Help Me Connect is a key tool for navigators and families. [Parent Support Outreach Program \(PSOP\)](#) county workers have been trained and use Help Me Connect to help direct families to appropriate services and supports.

2024 Update

[Help Me Connect](#) is a universal strategy fully operational and used by navigators across the child welfare and family services continuum as well as parents and other supportive adults.

Strategy 4.2.2: Expand and improve recruitment of resource families to include: (1) Data sharing between CSP and the Licensing Division to better understand how well the current array of resource families meets the needs of children in care – both in terms of cultural appropriateness and level of need. (2) Expansion of the contract with MN Adopt to expand access to family finding services for children in foster care, in addition to children with adoption as their permanency goal.

2020 Update

CSP and Licensing Division staff met multiple times to discuss data available for sharing, and opportunities for coordination. CSP staff has utilized data from the state’s licensing lookup website for compiling and providing data to the CJI Advisory Committee and Foster Care Advisory Work Group. This work is ongoing.

The contract with MN ADOPT to recruit foster and adoptive families, provide outreach to media, organize general recruitment events, and manage an information website and referral service for individuals interested in adopting or fostering, was expanded to include creation of a statewide system for matching children in need of foster care to available foster homes. MN ADOPT is in process of redesigning its system to include this expansion.

2021 Update

The department contracts with MN ADOPT to provide foster care recruitment services. The department’s current contract with MN ADOPT includes the following services:

- Recruit foster and adoptive families
- Provide outreach to media
- Organize general recruitment events
- Implement a social media campaign
- Create an information and referral service
- Establish a matching site that connects families interested in foster care with licensed child-placing agencies, and
- Develop a pilot with three Minnesota counties and private agencies to utilize a web-based licensing software that includes software capable of supporting licensed families through the licensing process; the software has the

capability of matching families to youth in need of foster care placements, also providing case management services.

In December 2019 and January 2020, the department held stakeholder meetings with county and Tribal agencies, private agencies, adoptive families, kinship families, foster families, and professionals that support these families, to evaluate effectiveness of current services, determine if expansion of existing services are required, and determine if additional services are needed. Division staff is in the process of exploring program evaluations with Minnesota Management and Budget, Management Analysis and Development Division, which would evaluate both quantitative and qualitative data. The goal is for the evaluation development to start in fall 2021. In the coming year, the MN ADOPT pilot will continue to expand to additional counties.

2022 Update

The department contracts with MN ADOPT to provide foster care recruitment services. Its current contract with MN ADOPT includes the following services:

- Recruit foster and adoptive families
- Provide outreach to media
- Organize general recruitment events
- Implement a social media campaign
- Create an information and referral service
- Establish a matching site that connects families interested in foster care with licensed child-placing agencies, and
- Develop a pilot with three Minnesota county and private agencies to utilize a web-based licensing software that includes software capable of supporting licensed families through the licensing process; the software has the capability of matching families to youth in need of placement, also providing case management services.

MN ADOPT launched a foster care social media campaign from June – September 2021. The webpage created to track this campaign saw 42,837 page views during the campaign. The Fostering Network web inquiries saw a 40% increase in submissions. The campaign focused on the following demographics:

- Empty nesters
- Parents of middle and high school ages
- Parents of transition-age youth, those attending trade schools, community colleges or universities
- Families who are reflective of Minnesota children in care, with special emphasis on Black/African American, American Indian/Native American, and those who speak languages such as Spanish, Somali and Hmong
- Individuals who are part of parenting groups, especially groups like attachment parenting and special needs
- Teachers in general, but an emphasis on specialty teachers such as EBD and special education
- Those who work in mental health fields
- Probation officers
- LGBTQ community
- Friends of existing foster parents
- Recruitment of foster parents for additional specific populations identified as needed by a Minnesota county or Tribal child-placing agency.

Messaging themes included:

- Normalize parenting; all kids are a little hard to parent

- Individuals will be supported through the process
- Clear verbiage about foster care, supporting kids until they can return home
- Children are typically in care for under one year
- Highlight specific statistics and needs from a geographic area.

MN ADOPTS Fostering Network service includes information, referral service, and a web-based inquiry form. The Fostering Network web-based inquiry form was submitted by 936 individuals in 2022. The form allows individuals to select whether they want MN ADOPT to contact them to provide information about foster care, or they select up to three foster care agencies operating in the region they live in. If requester selects follow-up call, they will receive contact within 24 hours from MN ADOPT, or they may select up to three child-placing agencies in Minnesota from which to receive information. MN ADOPT contacts all inquirers at two weeks and six months to discuss current status in the application process, providing guidance and assistance if necessary.

MN ADOPT continues to pilot [BINTI](#) with Ramsey County. Its staff completed training and began using the system in November 2021. The agency has 222 families in BINTI; 145 are approved, 42 are in the application process, 12 are recruiting, and 23 withdrew. Of the 42 in the application process, 27 are kinship families, and 14 are community families. Over the next year, MN ADOPT will expand the pilot to include additional county and two private agencies.

The department hosted 12 stakeholder meetings in March and April 2022 in preparation for the next Permanency Support Services (PSS) program Request for Proposals (RFP). One area of discussion was improvements to the department's activities and soliciting input on current grantee services.

2023 Update

In years past, the department has partnered with the Minnesota Twins and St. Paul Saints baseball organizations, together with five metro area counties, to host foster care appreciation and awareness events; these events were on hiatus for three years due to the COVID-19 pandemic and returned in 2023. For National Foster Care Month, the St. Paul Saints hosted an awareness evening on May 4, with recruitment tables and an interview for the radio broadcast during the second inning regarding the need for foster homes. The St. Paul Saints donated 1,000 tickets to current foster families. The Minnesota Twins donated 1,000 tickets between two dates in June of 2023. Foster home recruitment messaging will be featured on the scoreboard during the fifth inning.

The department updated its annual foster care [fact sheet](#) in May 2023 with current statistics and highlighting the greatest needs for foster care recruitment. Unfortunately, there is no avenue for tracking and linking views of the fact sheet directly with numbers of issued child foster care licenses. The department does not have data on the number of families inquiring about foster care, though the total number of active child foster care licenses is publicly accessible at [the department's licensing lookup tool](#). Families may inquire about foster care at their local county social service agency, at a private child placing agency, or with a community-based agency, such as Foster Adopt Minnesota.

The department contracts with Foster Adopt Minnesota, formerly known as MN ADOPT, to provide foster care and adoption recruitment services. Its current contract with Foster Adopt Minnesota includes the following services:

- Recruit foster and adoptive families
- Provide outreach to media
- Organize general recruitment events
- Implement a social media campaign
- Create an information and referral service

- Establish a matching site that connects families interested in foster care with licensed child-placing agencies, and
- Develop a pilot with three Minnesota county and private agencies to utilize a web-based licensing software that includes software capable of supporting licensed families through the licensing process; the software can match families to youth in need of placement and provide case management services.

Foster Adopt Minnesota Fostering Network service includes information, referral service and a web-based inquiry form. From April 2022 to March 2023, 757 individuals submitted the Fostering Network web-based inquiry. The form allows individuals to select whether they want Foster Adopt Minnesota to contact them to provide information about foster care or they select up to three foster care agencies operating in the region they live in. If the requester selects a follow-up call, they will receive contact within 24 hours from Foster Adopt Minnesota, or they may select to receive information from up to three child-placing agencies in Minnesota. Foster Adopt Minnesota contacts all inquirers at two weeks and six months to discuss the current status of the application process, providing guidance and assistance if necessary.

Foster Adopt Minnesota continues to pilot [BINTI](#) with Ramsey County. Its staff completed training and began using the system in November 2021. The agency has 331 families in BINTI; 160 are approved, 66 are in the application process, 23 are recruiting, and 79 have withdrawn. Of the 66 in the application process, 32 are kinship families, and 16 are community families. Over the next year, Foster Adopt Minnesota will expand the pilot to include an additional county and two private agencies.

The department hosted 17 stakeholder meetings from March 2022 through August 2022 in preparation for the next Permanency Support Services (PSS) program Request for Proposal (RFP). One discussion area was improving the department's activities and soliciting input on current grantee services. RFPs were issued in January 2023.

The Public Private Adoption Initiative (PPAI) issued new contracts, which include innovative targeted recruitment services. One agency is engaging in extensive community outreach to establish partnerships in the community focused on identifying resource families to meet the needs of African American youth under guardianship or youth who have sexualized behaviors. Also, the PPAI program has worked extensively with a child-specific recruitment consult providing education and guidance to professionals recruiting permanent families for youth under guardianship.

2024 Update

The Public Private Adoption Initiative (PPAI) issued new contracts, including innovative targeted recruitment services. One agency is engaging in extensive community outreach to establish community partnerships to meet the needs of African American youth under guardianship. Also, this agency is engaging in efforts to establish community partnerships to meet the needs of youth who have experienced sexual abuse and/or exhibit sexualized behaviors. These efforts for community partnership development also include education with a focus on greater Minnesota. Also, the PPAI program has worked extensively with a child-specific recruitment consultant to provide education and guidance to professionals working to recruit permanent families for youth under guardianship. The consultant provided monthly webinars on child-specific recruitment covering topics including, but not limited to, relative search, community engagement, and permanency teaming for youth.

As part of the Public Private Adoption Initiative (PPAI), each agency is required to engage in efforts to recruit resource families. Agencies provide the department 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 socioeconomic variations. The

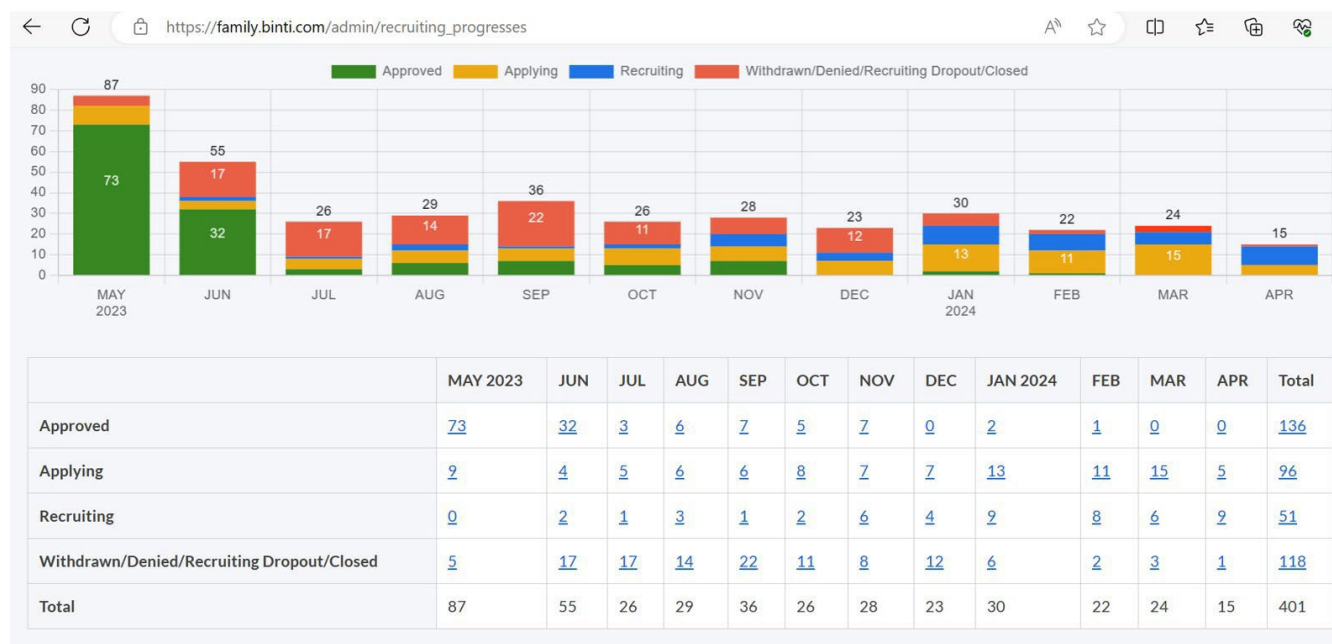
Public Private Adoption Initiative (PPAI) provides reimbursement to agencies who provide adoption services to families hoping to adopt a child under guardianship in Minnesota, ensuring fees are not a barrier to being an adoptive resource.

The department issued a Request for Proposals (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 both formal and informal kin caregivers.

The department contracts with Foster Adopt Minnesota (formerly known as MN ADOPT) to provide foster care and adoption recruitment services. Its current contract with Foster Adopt Minnesota includes the following services:

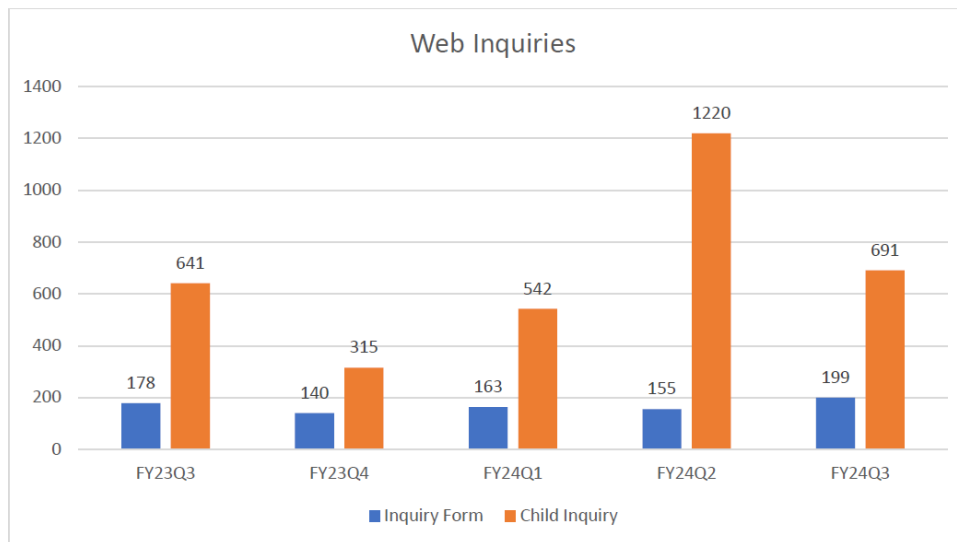
- Recruits foster and adoptive families
- Provides outreach to media
- Organizes general recruitment events
- Implements social media campaigns
- Administers an information and referral service
- Creates a centralized resource for Public Private Adoption Initiative (PPAI), Permanency Support Services (PSS), and Permanency Supports Kinship Services (PSKS) called the [Permanency Hub MN](#)
- Administers a matching site that connects families interested in foster care with licensed child-placing agency
- Administers a statewide launch of [Foster Care Software Binti](#).

Foster Adopt Minnesota continues to administer [BINTI](#) with Ramsey County. Additional agencies have joined the statewide BINTI contract including Becker County, Crow Wing County, Beltrami County, Lake of the Woods County, Minnesota Prairie County Alliance (Steele, Dodge, and Waseca Counties), Scott County, Saint Louis County, and Winona County. All staff completed training and are using the system. Recruitment progress for all counties using Binti is shown in the graph data below.



Foster Adopt Minnesota information and referral program services include information, referrals, and a web-based [Inquiry Form](#) that allows individuals to select whether they want Foster Adopt Minnesota to contact them to provide information about foster care. Alternately, individuals can select up to three foster care agencies operating in the region they live in. If the requester selects a follow-up call, they will receive contact within 24 hours from Foster Adopt Minnesota, or they may select up to three child-placing agencies in Minnesota from which to receive information. Foster Adopt Minnesota contacts all inquirers at two weeks and six months to discuss their current status in the application process, providing guidance and assistance if necessary.

The following graph shows the number of web inquiries for FY23 Q3 – FY24 Q3 received for general kinship, foster care, and adoption inquiry forms and child-specific inquiries.



Foster Adopt Minnesota (FAM) is contracted to provide continuous marketing and communications campaign through the term of the existing contract (June 30, 2024). FAM uses Social Snap, a social media plugin for WordPress that increases engagement by leveraging the power of social media.

The top three performing pages shared were:

- 1) [Waiting Kids](#)
- 2) [Home Page](#)
- 3) [Minnesota Waiting Kids](#)

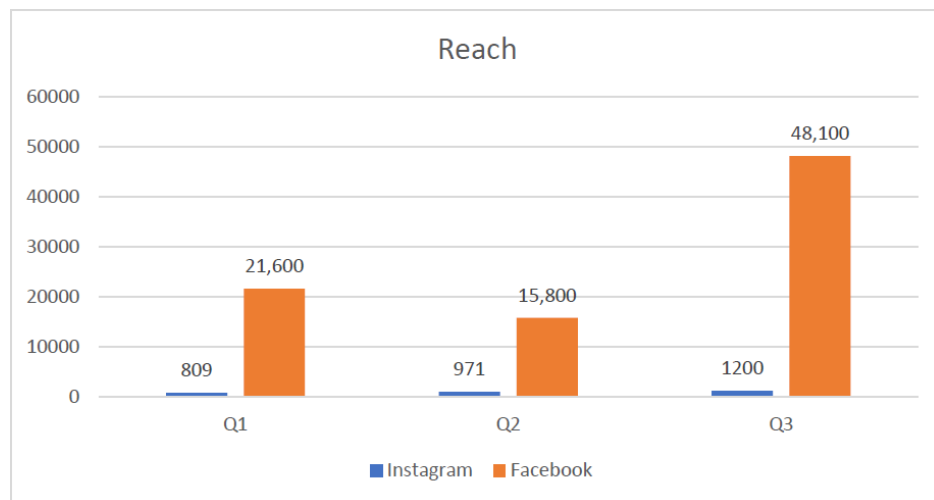
The top three performing posts shared are:

- 1) [Let's Talk – Foster Care 101: The Need](#)
- 2) [Let's Talk – FASD Through the Eyes of Barb Clark](#)
- 3) [Let's Talk – Foster Care 101: Grief & Loss in Foster Care](#)

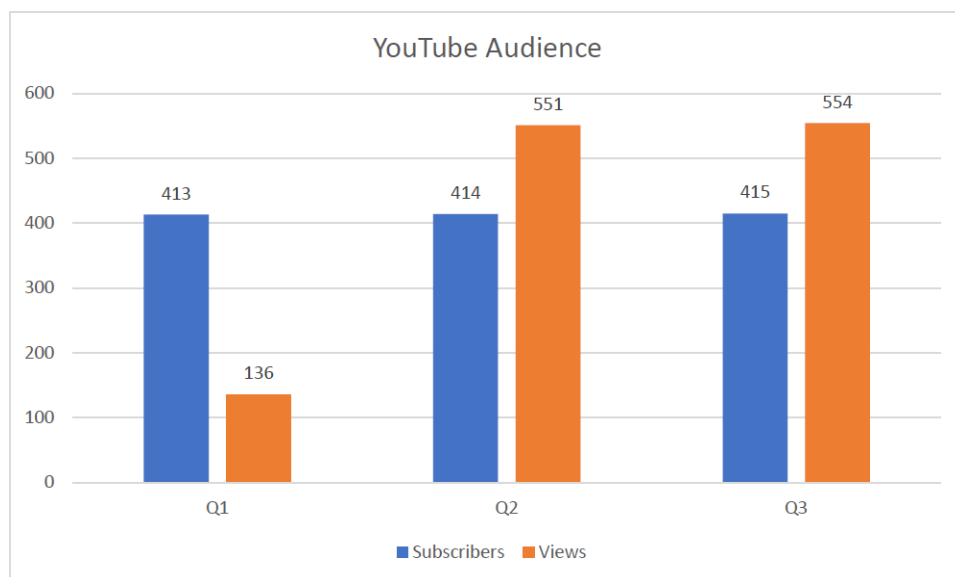
New videos were added, and they have had a positive reach and viewing.

- January 22, 2024 – [Storytime with Kayla: Being Adopted](#)
- January 24, 2024 – [Hair Talk: Empowering Your Understanding & Skills](#)
- March 18, 2024 – [“Parents Adopted” AdoptUsKids Public Service Ad](#)

The graph below shows the reach of Facebook and Instagram ads:



The graph below shows YouTube subscriber numbers and video views:



Strategy 4.2.3: Broaden post-permanency support program through state and federal funds to support adoption or kinship caregivers.

2020 Update

In 2017, the Minnesota Legislature enacted Minnesota Statutes 256N.261, creating the Minnesota Permanency Support Services (PSS) program. The goal is reducing the need for placement changes or out-of-home placements of youth in foster care, pre-adoptive placements, adoptive families, and permanent physical and legal custody kinship (kinship) families. It also improves functioning and stability of these families. Services are also provided to professionals who serve the families. Services include:

- Parent-to-parent support network
- Family activities
- Crisis services
- Mental health services
- Peer support for youth
- Respite care
- Educational support
- Training offered statewide in Minnesota for foster, adoptive, and kinship families, and the professionals who serve the families, on the effects of trauma, common disabilities of adopted children and children in foster care and kinship placements, and challenges in adoption, foster care, and kinship placements
- Training offered statewide in Minnesota for foster, adoptive, and kinship families, and the professionals who serve the families, on the effects of trauma, common disabilities of adopted children and children in foster care and kinship placements, and challenges in adoption, foster care, and kinship placements.

In 2019 and 2020, the department entered into contracts with eight agencies to provide 22 services. The PSS program is intended to assist children, youth and families with a continuum of support services, from a family's first interest in foster care or adoption through permanency support services.

In December 2019 and January 2020, the department held stakeholder meetings with county and Tribal agencies, private agencies, adoptive and kinship families, foster families and professionals that support these families, to determine additional needed services.

In 2020, the department issued a Request for Proposal with a focus on services in greater Minnesota. The focus was to create a coordinated and comprehensive program intended to strengthen and expand existing post-adoption support services in greater Minnesota. Three new agencies will join the PSS program and two agencies are expanding existing services with a focus on greater Minnesota. These additional support services will begin in 2021.

The department continues to meet with community stakeholders to with a focus of expansion of existing services.

A combination of Title IV-B funding; post-adoption expansion funding from Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, as amended by Public Law 113-183; the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act, enacted Sept. 29, 2014; de-links Title IV-E Adoption Assistance from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) requirements; Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive funds, and state funding.

2021 Update

As referenced in the 2020 update, Minnesota issued a Request for Proposal with a focus on services in greater Minnesota. The focus was to create a coordinated and comprehensive program intended to strengthen and expand existing post-adoption support services in greater Minnesota. In fall 2020, three new agencies joined the PSS program, and two agencies expanded existing services with a focus on greater Minnesota. These additional support services began in 2021.

In 2021 and 2022, the department is initiating two pilots. The first is a pilot of BINTI, licensing software, and the second is a pilot of 30 Days to Family, a kinship-focused recruitment and engagement program. The department will continue to meet with community stakeholders to evaluate existing services, whether they are meeting the needs of the community, if expansion or modification is needed while focusing on providing services, and where providers are that offer community-based and culturally centric while foster care and adoption competent.

Division staff is in the process of exploring program evaluations with Minnesota Management and Budget, Management Analysis and Development Division. The evaluation looks at both quantitative and qualitative data. The goal is for evaluation development to start in fall 2021.

The PSS program is funded by a combination of post-adoption expansion funding, including:

- From Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, as amended by Public Law 113-183
- The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act, enacted Sept. 29, 2014.

The above de-links Title IV-E Adoption Assistance from the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) requirements; Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive funds, and state funding.

2022 Update

As referenced in the 2021 update, the department initiated two pilots as part of the Permanency Support Services (PSS) program.

MN ADOPT continues to pilot BINTI with Ramsey County. It completed staff training and began using the system in November 2021. The agency has 222 families that started the home study process; 145 are approved, 42 are in the application process, 12 are recruiting, and 23 withdrew. Of the 42 in the application process, 27 are kinship families, and 14 are community families. Over the next year, MN ADOPT will expand the pilot to include additional county and two private agencies.

The 30 Days to Family pilot is a Kinship-focused recruitment and engagement program that launched in August 2021. Ampersand Families and Ramsey County are the pilot partners. Initial feedback on the pilot is positive. Ramsey County made 14 referrals. Services concluded on four cases, with positive outcomes of finding 80+ family members in each of the cases, with a support plan created comprised of many family members eager to support children while in care. Whether a case ended in relative placement or non-relative foster placement, the county and provider received a Roadmap to Family document outlining all supportive family members and what types of support they are willing to provide, such as virtual visits, child care, and transportation. As part of one of these support plans, the 30 Days to Family® specialist helped facilitate important sibling connections and visitation plans for children in care.

The department hosted 11 community stakeholder meetings in March and April 2022, with 143 participants. The purpose of these meetings was to evaluate existing services, whether they are meeting the needs of the community, if expansion or modification is needed, while focusing on providing services that are community-based and culturally centric, while foster care and adoption competent. Meetings were held in preparation for the next Permanency Support Services Request for Proposals in December 2022. Feedback about the programs was positive. Families and professionals identified needing expansion of existing Permanency Support Services to include respite care and crisis services.

The PSS program is funded with a combination of post-adoption expansion funding, including:

- From Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, as amended by Public Law 113-183
- The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act, enacted Sept. 29, 2014
- The above de-links Title IV-E Adoption Assistance from the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) requirements, Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive funds, and state funding.

2023 Update

As referenced in the 2022 update, the department initiated two pilots as part of the Permanency Support Services (PSS) program.

Foster Adopt Minnesota continues to pilot BINTI with Ramsey County. It completed staff training and began using the system in November 2021. The agency has 331 families in BINTI; 160 are approved, 66 are in the application process, 23 are recruiting, and 79 have withdrawn. Of the 66 in the application process, 32 are kinship families and 16 are community families. Over the past year, Foster Adopt Minnesota will expand the pilot to include an additional county and two private agencies.

The 30 Days to Family pilot is a kinship-focused recruitment and engagement program launched in August 2021. Ampersand Families and Ramsey County are the pilot partners. Initial feedback on the pilot is positive. Ramsey County made 23 referrals. Services concluded on four cases, with positive outcomes of finding more than 80 family members in each of case, with a support plan created comprised of many family members eager to support children while in care. Whether a case ended in relative or non-relative foster placement, the county and provider received a Roadmap to Family document outlining all supportive family members and what types of support they are willing to provide, such as virtual visits, child care, and transportation. As part of one of these support plans, the 30 Days to Family specialist helped facilitate important sibling connections and visitation plans for children in care. Expansion to include an additional county is being explored.

The department hosted 17 community stakeholder meetings from March 2022 through August 2022, with 217 participants. The purpose of these meetings was to evaluate existing services, whether they meet community's needs and if expansion or modification is needed while focusing on providing community-based and culturally centric services competent in foster care and adoption. Meetings were held in preparation for the next Permanency Support Services Request for Proposals published in January 2023. Feedback about the programs was positive. Families and professionals identified needing expansion of existing Permanency Support Services to include respite care and crisis services. Following the stakeholder meetings and feedback, the department issued an RFP in August 2023 focused on kinship-related services. Contract services include peer-to-peer support; non-recurring material support; placement support; home study supports; services that increase identification of potential kin families and support activity to children and youth in kinship placements.

The PSS program is funded with a combination of post-adoption expansion funding, including:

- From Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, as amended by Public Law 113-183
- The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act, enacted Sept. 29, 2014
- The above unlinks Title IV-E Adoption Assistance from the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) requirements, Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive funds and state funding.

2024 Update

Permanency Supports Kinship Services (PSKS) program (referenced in the 2023 update) continued in 2023 with seven grantees. We are extending this program through June 30, 2025. Existing Permanency Support Services (PSS) grants ended June 30, 2023, though many of the grantees submitted to provide the same or similar programming. The PSS RFP in January of 2023 resulted in 13 grant contracts for:

- Information, recruitment, and referral
- Services for adults who have experienced foster care and adoption
- Assessments (clinical, trauma, FASD)
- BIPOC-specific supports

- Consultation services for parents and caregivers
- Family events
- Kinship support services including outreach service, intensive licensing support, home study services, home study update
- Concrete supports and non-recurring material
- Post-adoption services
- Respite care resources
- Support groups for parents, caregivers, and families
- Therapeutic supports
- Training for kinship, foster, and adoption communities
- Youth support services including activities and support groups.

Foster Adopt Minnesota continues to administer the BINTI statewide launch. Agencies that have joined the statewide BINTI contract include Becker County, Crow Wing County, Beltrami County, Lake of the Woods County, Minnesota Prairie County Alliance (Steele, Dodge, and Waseca Counties), Ramsey County, Scott County, Saint Louis County, and Winona County. Expansion of the program has been placed on hold due to a law created during the Minnesota legislative session that requires the state to create a centralized licensing software using Salesforce. We will continue to support the PSS BINTI agencies until they transition to the new Salesforce application.

The 30 Days to Family is a kinship-focused outreach, engagement, and recruitment program that launched in August 2021 and has expanded to become Kin Link. The program focuses on services for relatives and kin. Partner agencies include Ramsey County, Stearns County, and Dakota County. Sixty-four youth have been served through this programming. Sixty-four percent were 10 and older. Services concluded on most cases, with 80+ family members reporting positive outcomes in each of the cases; a support plan was created by many family members eager to support children while in care. Whether a case ended in relative placement or non-relative foster placement, the county and provider received a Roadmap to Family document outlining all supportive family members and what types of support they are willing to provide, such as virtual visits, childcare, and transportation. An example of program success includes reunification with a birth father in another country.

[Minnesota Statutes 256N.261](#) (support for adoptive, foster, and kinship families) was created with the intent to prevent disruptions and dissolutions of placement services by creating programs through a continuum of services. The PSS program and the PSKS programs are funded with a combination of post-adoption expansion funding, including:

- From Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, as amended by PL 113-183
- The Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act, enacted Sept. 29, 2014

The above unlinks Title IV-E Adoption Assistance from the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) requirements, Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive funds, and state funding.

Strategy 4.2.4: Determine policies and reporting procedures regarding local child welfare distribution and use of funds allocated from the Minnesota Legislature to serve families impacted by substance abuse.

2020 Update

Minnesota Statutes, section 256.043, subd. 3, was passed in 2019 which established an Opiate Epidemic Response account allocated to county and Tribal social service agencies to provide supplemental child protection services for children and families affected by addiction. Funding for the allocation is based on actual fees collected by the Opiate Epidemic Response

account. The allocation formula, outlined in statute, is based on the number of out-of-home placements in each county or Tribal jurisdiction in the previous calendar year due to the primary removal condition of parental drug abuse. The first allocation will be issued July 1, 2020, for six months, and beginning January 2021, funds will be allocated for a 12-month period.

Funds will be used to promote optimal health, safety and well-being for families and their children. Agencies can target preventive interventions and work with at-risk-families in child protection, child welfare, Parent Support Outreach Program, prenatal exposure cases, minor parents, truancy, children's mental health and juvenile justice.

County and Tribal social service agencies must not use funds to supplant current state or local funding received for child protection services for children and families affected by addiction. A Child Protection Opioid Epidemic Response Account bulletin (#20-68-15C) was issued to county and Tribal agencies in May 2020 to provide guidance on the allocation, spending and reporting on use of funds.

All county and two Initiative Tribal agencies were involved regarding how the allocation could be used. This included in-person meetings with directors as well as information submitted through emails from agency supervisors and managers. This collaborative group recognized the challenges families encounter due to racial, cultural, geographic and economic inequities in gaining access to services. As needs differ, varying statewide, there was consensus the funds should be flexible in how they can be utilized, including:

- Conventional services: Programs, expenses related to treatment and recovery services, supportive services, culturally specific services, etc.
- Flexible spending: Tangible services for families including transportation, housing support, child care, food support, expenses related to traditional healing activities or cultural services, and expenses related to use of safety support networks, etc.
- Additional staff: New or expanded staff positions to support families affected by addiction. Family-based workers, county or Tribal caseworker positions, outreach workers, etc.
- Training: Provide new or expanded training opportunity for staff, including training related to working with families affected by addiction. This includes Tribal providers in cultural healing and traditional ceremonies.

County and Tribal social service agencies receiving funds from the Opiate Epidemic Response account must submit a plan approved by the department stating how they plan to use funds, proving funds were not used to supplant services. Plans may be modified during the year, if needed. At the end of each year agencies must submit an annual report to the department's commissioner stating how funds were used to provide child protection services, including measurable outcomes.

Measurement: Two data indicators will be used to monitor the success of the child protection opioid allotment; both will be disaggregated by race and age to ensure positive results are experienced equitably. The first indicator is the rate of removal for children because of parental drug use, and the second is the median time to permanency for children who were removed because of parental drug use.

2021 Update

As referenced in the 2020 Update, the 2019 Minnesota Legislature passed a bill on opiates, which established an Opiate Epidemic Response account. The allocation formula, outlined in statute, is based on the number of out-of-home placements in each county or Tribal jurisdiction from the previous calendar year due to the primary removal condition of parental drug abuse. Available funding for the allocation is based on actual fees collected by the Opiate Epidemic Response account.

In 2020, the opioid allocation funds were distributed to 86 county and two Tribal agencies. One county agency did not receive an allocation, as the county had no out-of-home placements due to drug abuse in the previous year.

In 2021, funding is being distributed to 86 county and three Tribal agencies, as Red Lake Nation became an American Indian child welfare Initiative Tribe. The agencies received an 18-month allocation for July 1, 2020 through Dec. 31, 2021. The first distribution of the opioid allocation was issued in July 2020; 20% of the total allocation is sent to each agency quarterly. This 20% distribution was issued in July and October 2020, and in January, April, July and October 2021. Uses of funds are to promote optimal health, safety and well-being for families and their children.

County and Tribal social service agencies receiving funds from the Opiate Epidemic Response account submitted a plan approved by the department prior to July 2020, indicating how they plan to use funds, and demonstrating funds were not used to supplant current services. Plans could be modified during the year, if needed. Agency plans identifying services and expenditures for the 2022 allocation is due at the department Nov. 16, 2021.

Agencies must submit an annual report to the department's commissioner on how funds were used to provide child protection services, including measurable outcomes. Child protective services are defined as any service or intervention that protects a child from maltreatment or risk of maltreatment. The annual reports regarding agency services and expenditures for 2020 were submitted on Jan. 31, 2021. The annual report for 2021 services and expenditures is due Jan. 31, 2022.

Two data indicators are used to monitor success of the child protection opioid allotment; both will be disaggregated by race and age to ensure positive results are experienced equitably. The first indicator is the rate of removal for children because of parental drug use; the second is the median time to permanency for children who were removed because of parent drug use. In 2020, the overall rate of removal of children being placed in out-of-home care due to parental drug use in Minnesota decreased slightly. The median time to permanency for children who were removed is not determined at this time, as the time limit for permanency has not been reached yet.

Based on annual reports submitted to the department in January 2021 for services and expenditures made in 2020, agencies varied on how they used funding. Agencies can target preventive interventions and work with at-risk families in child protection, child welfare, Parent Support Outreach Program, prenatal exposure cases, minor parents, truancy, children's mental health and juvenile justice. Agencies have different needs regarding specific populations; it was important to recognize families experiencing racial, cultural, geographic and economic inequities in gaining access to services, and to consider the challenges they encounter.

Services, program availability, and staffing vary across the state, because of input from county and Tribal agencies, funding was meant to be flexible. Funding was used in the following approved areas:

Recovery programs	Payments for children placed in a SUD facility with a parent and other services
Treatment court	Transportation, e.g., gas cards, bus fare, auto repairs for families to access substance use testing, treatment visits, and other related appointments
Peer support specialist	Expansion of supervised visitation contracts to increase visitation length and frequency
Recovery coaches	Housing support, such as deposits, back rent, utilities, furniture
Culturally specific services	Expenses for reunification or to maintain a child in their home
FGDM	
Psychological education services	
Restorative Justice Circles	
Support with transitional housing	
Family expenses related to treatment	
Parent support groups	

Food support
 Daycare expenses
 Drug education classes
 Phone cards
 Expenses related to traditional healing activities or cultural services
 Sober family activities
 Expenses related to driver's license reinstatement
 Paying relatives or kin emergency funds to take care of a child
 Expenses related to use of safety support networks
 New or expanded staff positions to support families affected by addiction
 Family-based workers

Contracts with community-based providers to respond to prenatal exposure reports
 County or Tribal caseworker positions
 Caseworker or chemical dependency workers doing outreach and referral for services
 Casework specialist to meet and support parents and children impacted by addiction
 In-home therapy positions to supervise visits
 Provide new or expanded training opportunities for staff, including training for provider staff in evidence-based practice, county and Tribal staff on motivational interviewing, or other training related to working with families affected by addiction, and Tribal providers in cultural healing and traditional ceremonies.

There will be a review of all agencies' plans and annual reports indicating how funds were used to determine if goals of reducing the rate of removal and median time to permanency for children who were removed because of parent drug use was achieved. Based on these measurements, some modifications may be made in 2022 to allocations with input from county and Tribal agencies and cultural groups.

2022 Update

Beginning in 2022, funding is being distributed on a calendar year basis to county agencies statewide, and the three Initiative Tribal agencies. Funding can be used to promote optimal health, safety and well-being for families and children, as outlined in a previous update. Agency plans were submitted in late 2021 outlining how each agency planned to use funding in 2022. A variety of activities and programs are being funded. A few of note include Motivational Interviewing and Safety Practice Framework training, peer support specialists, recovery coaches, peer mentors; funding for an early intervention social worker position to respond to reports of prenatal exposure, parent support groups, and Restorative Justice Circles.

County and Tribal social service agencies also submitted their 18-month report outlining how funding was used and number of families served. Department staff continues to analyze this information, along with child protection data related to substance involvement. Modifications will be made, if needed, after further analysis and consultation with external partners.

2023 Update

The Child Protection Opioid Epidemic Response Account is in its third allocation period, calendar year 2023. This year over 6 million dollars will be disbursed to 83 county and Tribal agencies statewide. The funds can be used in many ways to benefit children and families impacted by substance involvement, as per the annual plans submitted by the counties and Tribal Nations.

A new Bulletin regarding the opioid allocation was issued April 4, 2023. To further support Tribes and counties, allocation staff has met individually with many agency personnel to answer questions, problem solve, ensure compliance with reporting requirements, improve communication, and support fund planning.

Some of the initiatives that the counties and Tribal Nations will be utilizing these funds for this year are:

- New staff to work with families impacted by substance use disorder
- Increased Family Group Decision Making opportunities
- Training for staff in areas such as Motivational Interviewing, prenatal exposure, equity/inclusion, etc.
- Creating/remodeling space for more home-like supervised visitation
- Housing support for youth in extended foster care
- Peer mentors and peer support specialists
- Sober enrichment and cultural activities for children and families; and many more.

The department continues to collect data from yearly reports. Analyzing the information outlining how funds were used and how many families were served will help inform how this fund is managed and how counties and Tribal Nations can best be supported in using this allocation.

2024 Update

The Child Protection Opioid Epidemic Response Account is now in its fourth allocation period in 2024. This year, over \$5.1 million dollars will be distributed. County and Tribal agencies have flexibility in what service categories they choose to spend these funds to best meet the needs of their communities. The service categories are conventional services, flexible spending, additional staff, and training. Department staff continue to meet with Tribal and agency representatives individually as needed to support prudent spending of this allocation and answer questions. County and Tribal agencies continue to be required submit annual plans and reports for their allocation approved by department staff. Below is a summary of spending for the 2020-2021 and 2022 allocation periods:

- Conventional services: 36% of spending
 - Services funded under this category include Family Group Decision Making, adding peer recovery specialists, assisting families for out-of-pocket expenses related to treatment, housing support, and parent support.
- Staffing: 22% of spending
 - Funding allows agencies to add staff positions to support families impacted by substance use.
- Flexible spending: 75% of spending
 - Agencies were able to expand opportunities for to pay for transportation, expand supervised visitation to increase family time, and support families by reducing barriers in everyday living, such as daycare costs and food or housing support.
- Training: 13% of spending
 - Agencies were able to provide updated training to child welfare staff. Many of these trainings were regarding best practices in working with families impacted by substance involvement, trauma-informed practice, and motivational interviewing.
 - County and Tribal agencies have reported successes from this allocation such as the ability to hold community sober events, creating a youth outreach program regarding substance use, and providing Narcan to direct service staff, including training on use and related topics.

Department staff completed engagement sessions with county and Tribal agencies to discuss creative ways to spend the allocation to support families that are impacted by substance use. The department also elicited feedback on the allocation formula and distribution. In 2024, the department brought forth a legislative proposal to amend the Child Welfare Opioid Epidemic Response Allocation to modify the allocation formula and expand how the funds may be used to allow expenditures on prevention-related activities and programs prior to entering the child welfare system. The proposed

formula would stabilize the funds allocated to counties to reduce inconsistencies in funding from year to year for county and Tribal agencies.

Strategy 4.2.5: Partner with Mitchell Hamline School of Law and CJI to increase access to quality parent representation through training and capacity-building activities, e.g., CHIPS Parent Attorney Core Skills training.

2020 Update

Co-chairs of the Children's Justice Initiative created a CJI CHIPS Parent Attorney Representation subcommittee. This committee meets every other month to partner with the CJI regional groups and Mitchell Hamline School of Law to build strategies to recruit, train, and retain parent attorneys for CHIPS cases. Collaboration for this strategy included representatives from private attorneys, public defenders, judges, caseworkers, parent advocates, ICWA attorneys, dispositional advisors and clerks. Future work is expected to explore changes to certification and training requirements for parents' attorneys as recommended by the Parent Representation subcommittee.

2021 Update

The CJI CHIPS Parent Attorney Representation subcommittee continued to work on expanding resources for quality parent representation. Per Minnesota statute, establishing requirements for parent attorneys is the responsibility of the state's Judicial Branch; a Judicial Policy Committee maps out the qualifications and other requirements for parent attorneys. In the past, participation in an annual three-day in-person conference was required for an attorney to be placed on the parent attorney roster. That requirement changed; Mitchell Hamline School of Law developed a virtual training approved by the Judicial Branch and available on demand. This change satisfies two primary goals: 1) It removes a perceived conflict of interest with courts as trainers for parent attorneys, and 2) It expands opportunities for attorneys, particularly those outside of the metro area, to complete the required training and serve as a parent attorney.

2022 Update

The CJI Parent Attorney Representation subcommittee accomplished so much in this area that they sunset. During this year, the group developed a uniform eligibility application for clients requesting appointment of counsel, recommended a consistent IFP process for clients eligible for court-appointed attorney, partnered in the support of Title IV-E reimbursement with Hennepin County, and led policy changes to remove the court's role in monitoring the qualification requirements of parent attorneys. Although the courts are now removed from the training and qualifications of parent attorneys with the policy change, Mitchell Hamline continues to provide training for parent attorneys in an on-demand platform. Additionally, legislation will become effective January 1, 2023 mandating legal representation for parents at each stage of the court process, starting with the Emergency Protective Care hearing. As this work continues to move forward, we're working to ensure our partnership in this important support to families.

2023 Update

Mitchell Hamline School of Law continues to provide training for parent attorneys in an on-demand platform. New legislation became effective January 1, 2023, requiring the court to appoint an attorney to parents who request and financially qualify for a court-appointed attorney prior to the initial hearing and at all stages of the juvenile protection proceeding. For the past two years, the courts have been working on new processes to appoint parent attorneys in juvenile protection matters in anticipation of the legislative change. A new Guide and File interview was launched in the fall of 2022 to help streamline the process of completing, submitting and reviewing parent attorney applications. Communicating this

information to social services and law enforcement has been important to ensure parents are connected with information and resources to request an attorney as early as possible in the process.

During the past year, the courts provided the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) data on the presence of parent attorneys at the Emergency Protective Care (EPC) hearing to figure out a funding allocation for the legislative money appropriated to counties to help support these changes. Additionally, the courts and DHS have partnered to support expanding the use of Title IV-E reimbursement for counties statewide. As part of that collaboration, the courts are exploring a reporting solution to help counties and DHS efficiently receive the ongoing court information they need for Title IV-E reimbursement requests of parent attorney costs.

2024 Update

Title IV-E reimbursement can help grow the pool of qualified attorneys available for court appointments. During the past year, the courts (through the state Children's Justice Initiative (CJI) program and its collaboration with the department) identified and launched a new, on-demand report to help counties and the department efficiently receive the ongoing court information needed for Title IV-E reimbursement requests of parent attorney costs. The on-demand report launched in November 2023, along with information about what is needed for counties to qualify for Title IV-E reimbursement, such as no involvement from judicial officers and court staff in reviewing parent attorney billing statements.

The courts, through the CJI program, continue to collaborate with the department in support of expanding the use of Title IV-E reimbursement of parent attorney costs for counties statewide, and to explore possibilities for using Title IV-E reimbursements to support training and other capacity-building activities for courts and justice partners that also would increase access to quality legal representation for parents and children.

The courts and the department are currently exploring possible agreements between the department and the court improvement program (CJI) that could result in reimbursement of certain court-sponsored training events and staff time aimed at increasing access to, and use of, quality legal representation for children and families. The CJI is in the process of meeting with other court improvement programs across the country that have these types of agreements and receive these types of reimbursement to learn more about how they structured their agreements and whether it's something that could be replicated in Minnesota. The department is doing the same within their national network as well.

Strategy 4.2.6: Partner with Medicaid on an 18-month project funded through the Center for Healthcare Strategies to understand and improve access to Medicaid services for children involved with child welfare.

2020 Update

Monthly meetings occurred in person throughout the year (and virtually with the pandemic) between CSP and Medicaid staff, in addition to monthly calls with the Center for Healthcare Strategies to identify ongoing needs and provide technical assistance. These meetings frequently focused on coordination needs for implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act.

2021 Update

This was an 18-month project that ended in June 2020. **This strategy is complete.**

Strategy 4.2.7: Expand Rapid Consultation services for county and Tribal agencies beyond consultation on safety-related issues to include issues throughout the continuum of child welfare services, including foster care, relative and kinship support and ICWA.

2020 Update

Staff who coordinate Rapid Consultation services, generally Safety unit staff, include staff from other areas of the division, as needed, including staff from the Foster Care, Permanency, Indian Child Welfare and/or Continuous Quality Improvement units. Capacity for consulting with county and Tribal agencies was expanded in these areas of the division. The work to formalize Rapid Consultation services beyond consultations on safety-related issues is ongoing.

2021 Update

In addition to staff coordinating with other areas of the division, as needed, the division contracts with a grantee to provide a warm line to foster, adoptive, and kinship families and the professionals that serve these families. The grantee may provide the following assistance to professionals:

Training for professionals on the common needs of foster, adoptive kinship and foster families youth and how they can meet the needs of those families;

Recruitment tools for child specific and general recruitment;

Connection to resources including crisis resources, access to consultants and therapists, other advocacy and community resources to help the professional stabilize the family.

2022 Update

Division staff continue to provide Rapid Consultation Services to county and Tribal agencies. There are no further updates to this strategy at this time.

2023 Update

No updates on this strategy at this time.

2024 Update

The department has actively recruited and trained county partners for the Rapid Consultation services. The total partners are currently 39 county and two Tribal staff. This includes county partners who can consult within the expansion to include a continuum of services. The department has also collaborated with other teams to bring other policy experts into rapid consultation. The expansion has been publicized during trainings, webinars, and through written correspondence, such as monthly newsletters.

Subsection E. Goal 5: Improve safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for children and families through utilization of a statewide continuous quality improvement system.

To address the CFSP goal related to improving safety, permanency and well-being through continuous quality improvement, progress will be assessed using CFSR Safety Outcome 2, Well-being Outcome 1, and Permanency Outcome 1, as well as the state performance measure on timeliness to face-to-face contact when an alleged victim is the subject of a child protection report. The measurement targets and rationale for this goal is below. (Note for FY2024: The department will be conducting analyses of cases currently being reviewed and going forward.)

Measurements for Goal 5

Measure type	Measures	Baseline year	Baseline	Target	Year 1 (2018-2019)	Year 2 (2019-2020)	Year 3 (2020-2021)
State	Timeliness to face-to-face contact	2018	88.4%	90.2%	88.1%	85.0%	84.1%
CFSR	Safety 2, Item 2	2017	89.0%	97.0%	90.2%	100%	97.7%
	Safety 2, Item 3	2017	64.0%	81.0%	76.9%	84.6%	85.1%
	Well-being 1, Item 12	2017	66.0%	81.8%	69.2%	84.4%	81.6%
	Well-being 1, Item 13	2017	78.0%	92.0%	82.5%	89.2%	90.5%
	Well-being 1, Item 14	2017	68.0%	84.3%	75.7%	89.1%	91.0%
	Well-being 1, Item 15	2017	68.0%	84.5%	70.3%	78.5%	80.9%
	Permanency 1, Item 4	2017	83.0%	97.8%	78.4%	85.6%	83.3%
	Permanency 1, Item 5	2017	79.0%	94.8%	77.3%	87.9%	89.3%
	Permanency 1, Item 6	2017	70.0%	92.4%	68.5%	78.7%	77.2%

Objective 5.1: Improve CSP staff understanding of decision-making and systemic influences to case work to support development and implementation of targeted strategies for improving outcomes at the state and local levels.

Progress on the first objective will be assessed through use of training and technical assistance participation data, Tableau Server usage statistics, and survey data on the level of agreement and usefulness of CQI advisory team recommendations. Benchmarks for this objective are below.

Measurements for Goal 5-Objective 1

Benchmarks	Year 1 (2020)	Year 2 (2021)	Year 3 (2022)	Year 4 (2023)	Year 5 (2024)
Proportion of CSP staff trained in Safety Science baseline (2019): 30%	50%	65%	75%	85%	95%
Proportion of agencies using CQI, technical assistance, baseline: 0%	25%	30%	50%	Maintain 50%	
Proportion of agencies using regional supervisor-specific dashboards, baseline: -72.5% of agencies have at least one supervisor who logged into Tableau Server	Target: 80% Observed: 94%	90%	Maintain 90% rate		

Strategy 5.1.1: Implement the redesigned CQI model that occurred in Minnesota’s PIP, which includes utilization of Safety Science (human factors and systems safety) to understand decision-making and systemic influences to decision making to implement improvements to the child welfare system.

Refer to section 4, Quality Assurance System for this update.

Strategy 5.1.2: Enhance tracking tools to increase use of data-informed decision making throughout the CQI process, including dashboards on Tableau Server for both internal and external child welfare partners.

2020 Update

The department completed various activities over the past year to enhance tracking tools and increase use of data-informed decision making throughout the CQI process, including:

- Developed dashboards that enhance the ability of county and Tribal agencies to monitor performance on various child welfare indicators
- Provided technical assistance to most of the regional supervisor groups statewide, educating supervisors on available dashboards and how to access and utilize them
- Continued work on finalizing indicators for the redesigned CQI system
- Developed row-level lists for specific child welfare indicators (e.g., caseworker visits with children) that are regularly updated, provided to county and Tribal agencies.

2021 Update

The department continued to maintain many of the previously completed activities, as well as, developed additional dashboards and provided technical assistance to both internal and external child welfare partners. These efforts continue to support the use of data-informed decision making throughout the CQI process. Additional activities included:

- Developed dashboards that aided county and Tribal agencies in understanding and responding to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on delivering child welfare services.
- Provided technical assistance to the remaining regional supervisor groups statewide.
- Finalized CQI indicators for the redesigned CQI system.
- Began meeting with individual program areas through the Child Safety and Permanency Division to better understand what information, tools, and services would aid them in monitoring their work.

2022 Update

The department continues to maintain many of the previously completed activities as well as developed additional dashboards and provided technical assistance to both internal and external child welfare partners. These efforts continue to support the use of data-informed decision making throughout the CQI process.

2023 Update

CSP Division staff continue to provide updates to local agencies through monthly newsletters. Additionally, staff continues to meet virtually with the Minnesota Association of County Social Services Administrators (MACSSA) Children's Services Committee once per month. The department has continued to build internal procedures across units to provide access to specialized and targeted administrative data through customized dashboards on Tableau Server. Several dashboards have been either newly created or recently enhanced and are being utilized for ongoing work. Child Safety and Permanency units division staff have worked with this past year are Adoptions Operations and Adoption Programs, African American Child Wellbeing, American Indian Child Wellbeing, Title IV-E, Adolescent Services, Foster Care/NorthStar and Safety and Prevention units. CQI section staff regularly meet with staff from these areas to refine the information needed every week to guide decision making and efficiency.

2024 Update

CSP Division staff continues to provide updates to local agencies through monthly newsletters. Additionally, staff continues to meet virtually once a month with the Minnesota Association of County Social Services Administrators (MACSSA) Children's Services Committee. Internally, the department has been enhancing procedures across units to facilitate access to specialized administrative data. This is achieved through the development of customized dashboards on Tableau Server. These dashboards, whether newly created or recently improved, are integral to ongoing operations. This past year, two key dashboards were developed: one dedicated to review data related to child welfare cases used by the African American Child Well-being Unit, and the other dashboard focused on critical incident reports on fatalities and near-fatalities. To promote the use of data-driven decision-making, the research staff conducted a presentation last year emphasizing the significance of data literacy and facilitated data literacy exercises for the entire division, encouraging practical application of data skills.

Department staff from the Child Safety and Permanency Division continue to collaborate with each other on ongoing projects. The units includes Adoptions Operations, Adoption Programs, African American Child Well-being, American Indian Child Wellbeing, Title IV-E, Adolescent Services, Foster Care/Northstar, and Safety and Prevention units. The CQI section staff regularly engage with personnel from these areas to refine the information required for informed decision-making and operational efficiency through the CQI champions bimonthly meetings.

Strategy 5.1.3: Improve communication strategies and collaboration internally across units in CSP to ensure the CQI process is being implemented as intended.

2020 Update

Department staff continues to work on finalizing redesign of the CQI system; collaboration and feedback within the division is part of that work. Over the past year, there has been collaboration across the division related to establishing indicators for the revised CQI system. Consultation occurred with each program area to identify high-level indicators in program areas.

2021 Update

CQI staff facilitated a division-wide meeting to update all division staff on redesign of the CQI system. They led individual discussions with seven other units within the division, which included 73 participants engaged in conversations related to CQI redesign components. The meeting also covered hopes and worries related to the redesign, how the redesign will benefit families and communities served by the child welfare system, how it fits with current work, how to collaborate and be engaged and informed of future work. A survey was sent out following each meeting to obtain information needed for evaluating effectiveness of information sharing and gather recommendations for additional engagement and communication strategies.

2022 Update

CQI staff identified CQI champions from each unit in the division. CQI champions and staff meet monthly to discuss CQI redesign processes, connections among CQI and division projects, and maintain feedback loops. Division staff is participating in five work groups convened to advance specific areas of the CQI redesign, including technology, equity, communication, stakeholder input and prioritization, and CFSR round 4.

2023 Update

CQI staff presented the redesigned CQI process to the CSP division. CQI staff continue collaborating with division CQI champions on process development and project linkages.

CQI developed a communication plan to ensure internal and external partners are aware of and understand Minnesota's CQI process and their role in the process. By implementing a comprehensive communication plan, CSP will be well-positioned to launch and support the new CQI process. Some goals within that plan include:

- Enhancing interest in and awareness of what the CQI process is and how this process will be used to inform and support CSP's efforts
- Clarifying and reducing confusion within the Division around CQI processes, expectations, transitions and operating procedures
- Building engagement among external stakeholders in the CQI process and, as a result trust, in the Division's efforts to improve child outcomes and reduce disparities
- Providing teams and CSP staff with the information and resources needed to embrace CQI, leverage data in their decision making, seek input from diverse stakeholders (community members, families, people with lived experience, etc.), and collaborate across teams.

2024 Update

CQI staff continue to present the redesigned CQI process to the CSP division and throughout the broader Child and Family Services Administration. The section hired a staff person to complete Community Engagement and Communications, which has increased awareness of CQI both internally and externally. CQI champions have transitioned from providing feedback and support to the redesign and actively engaged in several CQI projects. This team also developed a request process for internal teams to request CQI support either through technical assistance or leadership in different phases of the CQI process. CQI developed a communication plan and community engagement guide to ensure internal and external partners are aware of, and understand, Minnesota's CQI process and their role in the process.

Implementation of this strategy over the past five years has enhanced CQI knowledge across the division. Internal requests for data and support from the CQI section have increased the department's ability to monitor improvements to the system with both qualitative and quantitative data.

Strategy 5.1.4: Provide technical assistance regarding CQI internally and to county and Tribal agency supervisors at regional supervisor meetings and through biannual onsite visits with Tribes.

2020 Update

Department staff met with all but two regional supervisor groups statewide. Meetings had been scheduled with all supervisor groups; however, some needed to be rescheduled due to the pandemic, peacetime emergency, and refocus on meeting COVID-19 related needs.

Initial conversations regarding CQI with Tribes occurred through the American Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council. To date, those conversations primarily focused on the child fatality/near-fatality review process, and the pilot for PIP development subsequent to the ICWA compliance review. Both of these processes include the foundational elements of the overall CQI redesign, and provide a foundation for broader CQI conversations.

2021 Update

Meetings with the two regional supervisor groups that did not occur prior to the 2020 update were completed virtually due to continuation of the governor's emergency peacetime order. Department staff provided information on Tableau and the dashboards developed to assist agency leadership and staff in monitoring performance. Dashboards specifically developed to assist in monitoring COVID-19-impacted measures were highlighted.

2022 Update

Department staff continue to offer technical assistance to county and Tribal partners as requested.

2023 Update

CQI staff have begun to provide technical assistance to other CSP units as requested. For example, CQI staff have assisted units in developing a theory of change and a project charter. CQI staff continue to offer technical assistance to county and Tribal partners as requested. CQI staff, in collaboration with MNIT, are in the process of building out a customer relations management system (CRM – Microsoft Dynamic) to track all CQI technical assistance requests.

2024 Update

CQI staff continue to provide technical assistance to other CSP units, and county and Tribal partners as requested. CQI staff, in collaboration with MNIT, have built out a customer relations management system (CRM – Microsoft Dynamic) to track all CQI technical assistance requests. Two additional staff have been added to the CQI section to provide implementation, fidelity monitoring, and evaluation of both FFPSA prevention programs being implemented around the state. These projects are joint efforts between the training academy, program areas, local agencies, and CQI.

The work completed in this area over the past five years has increased the CQI sections knowledge of CQI processes and the ability to provide support internally and externally to better understand what is working and not working in the child welfare system as well as implement potential solutions and measure outcomes.

Objective 5.2: Establish ongoing, authentic engagement with county and Tribal child welfare agencies to ensure input on department plans and establish feedback loops for continuous quality improvement activities to support equity.

Progress on the second objective will be assessed through use of items in a biannual workforce survey, meeting attendance with the ICWA Advisory Council, and onsite with all 11 Tribes, as well as progress on implementation of the CQI advisory team, which will occur in year one. The benchmarks for this objective are below.

Measurements for Goal 5-Objective 2

Benchmarks	Year 1 (2019)	Year 2 (2020)	Year 3 (2021)	Year 4 (2022)	Year 5 (2023)
Worker reported awareness of specific elements of child protection reforms and their impact on practice, baseline (2016): 74%	Target: 78% Observed: NA*	--	Target: 82% Observed: NA*	Move from column on the left	Target: 85% Observed: NA*
Worker reported having sufficient input in decision making at their agency, baseline (2016): 64%	Target: 68% Observed: 69%	--	Target: 72% Observed: NA**		Target: 75% Observed: TBD
Worker satisfaction with the department's communications and leadership, baseline (2016): 35%	Target: 50% Observed: 39%	--	Target: 65% Observed: NA**		Target: 75% Observed: TBD
Attendance at ICWA Advisory Council meetings	Attend all four of the quarterly meetings				

Benchmarks	Year 1 (2019)	Year 2 (2020)	Year 3 (2021)	Year 4 (2022)	Year 5 (2023)
Meet with Tribes biannually	Meet with 100% of Tribes biannually				

*Survey item discontinued

**Survey not conducted

Strategy 5.2.1: Improve communication and development of feedback mechanisms regarding practice and policy guidance with local social service agencies at all levels of the workforce.

2020 Update

Using GovDelivery, the CSP Division now has multiple topical monthly newsletters providing updates and links to key information. Assigned staff allows for release of information in a more coordinated way across units. The Foster Care, Adoption/Permanency, and Safety and Prevention units all release monthly newsletters. County, Tribal and state staff can subscribe to receive newsletters for areas they are most interested in, or most impacted by. Division staff use GovDelivery to release information from the division on an ad hoc basis, when needed, e.g., sending multiple e-updates providing information on COVID-19 in March/April 2020.

2021 Update

CSP Division staff continue to provide updates to local agencies through monthly newsletters. Throughout the pandemic, division staff met virtually with the Minnesota Association of County Social Services Administrators (MACSSA) Children's Services Committee at least twice per month to discuss pandemic-related practice and policy guidance and discuss challenges observed by agencies in service delivery.

2022 Update

CSP division staff continue to provide updates to local agencies through monthly newsletters. Additionally, staff continue to meet virtually with the Minnesota Association of County Social Services Administrators (MACSSA) Children's Services Committee at least twice per month

2023 Update

CSP division staff continue to provide updates to local agencies through monthly newsletters and monthly attendance at the Minnesota Association of County Social Services Administrators (MACSSA).

2024 Update

CSP division staff continue to provide updates to local agencies through monthly newsletters, webinars, technical assistance, constituency services, rapid response consultations, communities of practice, and monthly attendance at the Minnesota Association of County Social Services Administrators (MACSSA).

Strategy 5.2.2: Build on the relationship with the ICWA Advisory Council, consulting on department issues that impact American Indian children, families, communities, and Tribes.

2020 Update

Various activities occurred over the past year related to this strategy, including:

The ICWA unit, Continuous Quality Improvement staff, Tribal and county partners collaborated to design a process for developing the Program Improvement Plan following an ICWA compliance review. (See Strategy 2.2.3 for information.)

Department staff attends each quarterly meeting of the American Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council. Feedback received in one of those meetings resulted in changes in goals in this APSR, separating a single goal focused on reducing disparities for American Indian and African American/black children into two separate goals.

Department staff consulted with council chairs and Tribal leaders regarding presentation of data to a subgroup of the Children's Justice Initiative Advisory Committee, making adjustments prior to presenting data to the group.

Department staff explored the Comprehensive Child Welfare System (CCWIS) data system requirements with Red Lake Nation Tribal leaders and Children's Bureau staff in preparation for it becoming an American Indian Child Welfare Initiative Tribe.

2021 Update

Department staff continued to attend each quarterly meeting of the American Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council. All council meetings during this update period were virtually. Virtual meetings were convened with Tribal social service agency leaders to consult regarding challenges to service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic, waivers issued by the department, and other pandemic-related issues.

2022 Update

Department staff continued to attend each quarterly meeting of the American Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council. All council meetings during this update period were virtually.

2023 Update

Department staff continues to attend, assist and help develop the American Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council quarterly meetings. Meetings are available as hybrid options hosted by different Minnesota Tribes. Staff have presented, engaged and garnered input on several items this year, including request for proposal development for grants, development of foster care licensing guidelines, updates on the Chafee independent living skills and education training vouchers, and participated in the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act amendments that recently passed.

The American Indian Wellbeing (formally ICWA) unit, in collaboration with the council, is in the early planning stages of a department and council retreat. Discussion and planning include possible ongoing annual or every-other-year retreats. This retreat creates a space for strengthening relationships, onboarding new staff or council members and developing strategic planning together.

2024 Update

Department staff continue to attend, assist, and help develop the American Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council's (council) four quarterly meetings this year. Meetings continue with hybrid options hosted by different Minnesota Tribes and now urban representatives hosting for local sites. Staff have presented, engaged, and garnered input on several items this year such as:

- Kinship grant funding opportunities
- Development of foster care licensing guidelines
- Family First Prevention Services from qualified individuals/Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTPs)
- Updates on the Chafee independent living skills/ education training vouchers
- Development of a guide for Tribes for transferring out of state or in state
- Updating the ICWA state manual
- Participation in the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act amendments proposed for the 2024 legislative session.

Strategy 5.2.3: Implement biannual onsite meetings with all 11 Tribes to learn about child welfare programming and how the CQI process can best support their work.

2020 Update

Department staff had initial conversations with the American Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council members regarding biannual meetings with each Tribe. In response to requests to coordinate visits across the division, internal conversations regarding structure of these visits occurred. Planning is ongoing.

2021 Update

No progress was made on this strategy in this reporting period. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and executive orders issued by the governor, Minnesota has been under a continuous peacetime emergency since Mar. 13, 2020. Significant resources and efforts have been put toward ensuring safe, continued service delivery to Minnesota residents during this time, but resources were not available to address this specific strategy. Travel and in-person/onsite meetings have also not been occurring during this time.

2022 Update

No update at this time.

2023 Update

Department staff are focusing on supporting Tribal programs directly and have started meeting Tribal program staff in person. Discussions range from specific program supports needed from foster care licensing, IV-E agreements to ICWA/MIFPA compliance and future program planning to strengthen Tribes' resources to support their children and families.

2024 Update

Department staff met with seven Tribes in person to discuss how the department can further support Tribal social services programs as well as learn each Tribe's nuances with implementing their child welfare programs. Discussion around Title IV-E agreements, possible funding sources available, and foster licensing support/programs that are available through the state.

Strategy 5.2.4: Implement recommendations from the CQI Design team to develop a CQI Advisory team consisting of representation from local child welfare and tribal agencies, and other key stakeholders. The purpose of the CQI Advisory team is to prioritize areas that require a deeper understanding of decision making and systemic influences, make recommendations for removing barriers, and promoting improved outcomes.

2020 Update

Work groups were formed and began meeting to finalize the implementation plan for all components of the CQI redesign, including the CQI Advisory team. The general structure of the CQI Advisory team has been developed. Representatives from the Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACSSA) were identified to participate on the team. Plans for consulting with various stakeholder groups and communities in late March 2020 were delayed due to COVID-19, the peacetime emergency, and changes to work environments, e.g., limits on travel and in-person meetings. PIP activities related to convening the CQI Advisory team were extended for six months (to Oct. 31, 2020); the advisory team will be convened by that time.

2021 Update

A teaming structure for the CQI Advisory Council was developed and a draft charter was completed. An initial convening of the council occurred in October 2020 via meetings with individual communities, agencies and/or groups participating on the council during which an initial orientation to the process was provided. Following consultation and planning with Capacity Building Center consultants; they worked to develop CQI training that includes an overview of CQI, as well as information specific to Minnesota's processes. Two modules were drafted and a plan for reviewing the modules was developed. These modules will be used as training materials for the council.

Division-wide conversations regarding how the division utilizes advisory councils are beginning. There are a number of advisory groups or councils facilitated by division staff; planned discussions will focus on opportunities to coordinate efforts and possible collaboration across councils.

2022 Update

Convening of the CQI advisory council was delayed due to ongoing division-wide conversations regarding how the division utilizes advisory councils. The CQI section has identified work group members to create a plan to ensure the voices of people with lived experiences and other stakeholders are central to the CQI process and will continue this work into the next year.

2023 Update

The CQI section convened a work group to focus on how to center the voices of people with lived experiences and other partners. This work group has identified partners throughout the state that meet regularly and developed a survey to reach out to those groups to determine what level of involvement they are interested in having with the department's CQI work.

Additionally, the work group completed a RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) tool for each existing group as a consideration to orient outreach.

2024 Update

The CQI section is committed to centering the voices of people with lived experience and has added a position to support community engagement efforts including the CQI Advisory Team. The staff person has begun to collaborate with current advisory councils, attend youth events, build partnership with ombudspersons, complete community outreach efforts, and facilitate focus groups to better understand how the child welfare system is functioning in Minnesota. Staff worked with the Center for States in preparation for Round 4 CFSRs to develop a community engagement guide and define “person with lived experience.” The department has partnered with [Project Imani](#) to build a foundation for community partnering as it transitions to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families. Through that partnership, the department has hosted two community conversations to harvest information from community partners and people with lived experience to have their voices integrated into the 2025-2029 Child and Family Services Plan as well as the Round 4 CFSR Statewide Assessment. Attendance at each event included over 50 adults and 20 children. The department hosted additional gatherings to provide drafts of the plan to ensure what was developed integrated their voices in a way each community supported.

Section 3. Implementation and program supports

Subsection A. Technical assistance provided

In 2019, the Minnesota state Legislature appropriated funding to create the Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy, a collaborative partnership between the Department of Human Services and the University of Minnesota, to develop and provide training to the county child protection work force. In 2020, this partnership expanded to include the University of Minnesota Duluth’s Center for Regional Tribal Child Welfare Studies Tribal Training Certification Partnership. Through a joint powers agreement, this expansion was designed to add competency-based training for the work force serving Native American children and families where the Indian Child Welfare Act applies. The academy is partnering with the newly established African American Child Well-being Unit to develop culturally specific training for the state’s work force. The academy partnership provides foundational training for new child protection workers in addition to advanced trainings with a more specific focus. In partnership, the department provides new workers training on using the comprehensive child welfare information system system to document case practice.

In addition to the competency-based training provided through the academy and partnerships, the department provides policy bulletins, practice and resource guidance, and daily technical assistance to all Minnesota counties in support of improved practice at the local level. The development of guidance is driven by data outcomes, changes to federal and state law, engagement with stakeholders (including those with lived experience), and as issues are identified by department staff. The department sponsors communities of practice meetings across the state for providing technical assistance and strengthening best practice approaches for child protective and child welfare staff at the local level. Supervisor forums are also utilized to support supervisors of front-line staff in providing daily case management support to staff.

Subsection B. Technical assistance received

The department continues to participate in CQI practices to receive support with improving capacity with practice development and policy improvement. The Capacity Building Center for States, Casey Family Programs, Children’s Bureau peer learning opportunities, Collaborative Safety LLC., Center for Healthcare Strategies, the BUILD initiative, the University of Minnesota, the North American Council on Adoptable Children, and National Center on Diligent Recruitment.

Subsection C. Evaluation and research activities

The CSP Research and Evaluation Unit engages in evaluation and research endeavors to strengthen the department's initiatives, as well as those of county and Tribal agencies. Research staff are dedicated to addressing program-specific inquiries and issues by employing data-driven research, program evaluation, and insightful analysis whenever they arise.

Staff from the Research and Evaluation unit and CQI section attends regional supervisor meetings in each region of the state to provide guidance and specialized technical assistance on how local agencies can use the data available through the Child Welfare Data Dashboard(s) to monitor performance and identify areas to target for performance improvement.

Feedback loops are integrated through the MnCFSR process and regular engagements with stakeholders. This includes quarterly regional Communities of Practice meetings, Rapid Consultation sessions with local agencies, monthly phone calls, meetings with the Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators, and participation in ICWA Advisory Council meetings. These feedback mechanisms are strengthened by Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) processes, ensuring that identified barriers and potential solutions are consistently communicated to agencies, both in targeted areas and statewide, as part of an ongoing effort.

Performance measures are crucial to tracking the outcomes of children who are involved with the child welfare system. It is the responsibility of the department along with its county and Tribal partners to ensure that children:

- Are safe
- Remain with their families when safe to do so
- Receive services so children can return safely home and receive support to remain at home safely
- Live in safe, stable homes with relatives whenever possible
- Achieve permanency through adoption, if needed.

The Child Welfare Data Dashboard offers information to the public, county officials, and Tribal decision-makers on 12 key measures on outcomes. Through live Tableau Server data dashboards, agencies can access case-specific information to identify trends or gaps relevant to broader departmental objectives and strategies, or areas requiring attention that may have been overlooked previously. These dashboards also aid local agencies in their Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and evaluation processes, with support from the department's Research and Evaluation Unit.

The following are supported activities of CFSP goals and strategies:

- The DHS CQI MnCFSR Unit and Research and Evaluation Unit has convened to review and analyze findings from the cases reviewed and quantitative performance data. The team will identify themes and patterns across the cases reviewed; based on identified themes and patterns, select one or two areas for statewide focus; consult with CSP leadership and staff to identify statewide improvement strategies.
- Monitoring and evaluation is an integral part of the CQI redesign cycle, it supports implementation of new strategies or policies to address barriers at the time a recommendation is made, allowing recommendations to be evaluated early in implementation so adjustments can be made in a timely manner.
- On going support of evaluation for the Whole Family Systems Grant is coming to closure end of 2024 in partnership with BUILD Initiative. The focused has been about understanding the barriers and successes achieved through the co-creation and implementation of cross-system coordination at the local and state levels.

Chapter 3. Quality Assurance System

Overview

Minnesota's current Quality Assurance/Continuous Quality Improvement System collects and analyzes both qualitative and quantitative data through several review processes, including:

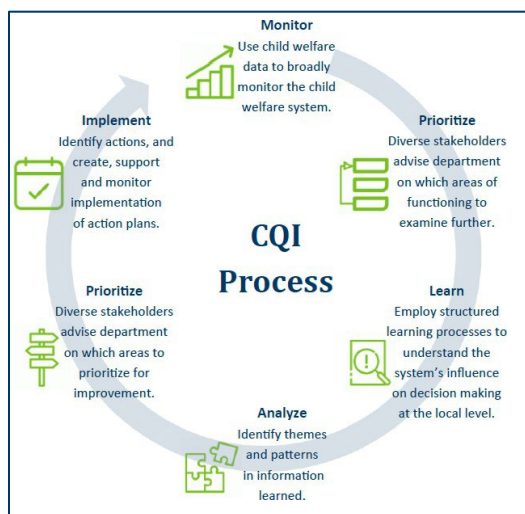
Child mortality reviews: Department staff conducts Systemic Critical Incident Reviews (SCIRs) of all fatalities and near fatalities due to maltreatment, in addition to those occurring in licensed facilities, e.g., foster care. The review process utilizes Safety Science practices and principles, focusing 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 stakeholder's 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 screened in and screened out maltreatment reports are reviewed annually.

Information collected through these review processes is used to identify problem areas and provide technical assistance to agencies, monitor progress of program improvement efforts, and identify themes and systemic influences affecting achieving goals.

The department began collaborating with the Capacity Building Center for States to redesign the QA/CQI system in 2018. Department staff continues to be engaged in execution of the child welfare CQI Redesign Implementation plan. Teams of CQI staff are engaged in defining and implementing processes for each component of the redesigned system. (See the draft visual of process below.)

CQI process



The CSP Division's CQI section grounded the work of the CQI redesign process by developing a mission statement and defining core values for work completed. Note that the mission statement and core values included are in draft stage. Values include:

- 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.

2021 update

The department continues to partner with the Center for States on the CQI redesign. Staff continues to identify, develop, and pilot processes for each component of the redesigned system. Noted activities for the overall process included:

- Completed a division-wide information session regarding the CQI redesign
- Facilitated discussions with seven individual units within the division that included 73 participants
- Completed five information/orientation sessions for people interested in participating on a CQI Advisory Council in October 2020
- Finalized a set of indicators that will be used initially to monitor statewide performance
- Developed a data dashboard for the finalized set of indicators
- Developed a ranking tool to be used by the Advisory Council when prioritizing indicators and piloted that process with CQI staff
- Piloted using the SCIR process to identify influences and barriers to achieving permanency for children in care for more than 24 months
- Completed training on Systemic Learning Reviews (SLR) and Systemic Learning Mappings (SLM) and piloted use of both of those learning processes with established regional mapping teams

Engaged in training for each step of Implementation and Action.

2022 update

The department continues to partner with the Center for States on the CQI redesign. Staff continues to identify, develop, and pilot processes for each component of the redesigned system. Activities completed since the submission of the 2022 APSR included:

Completed readiness assessments to explore motivation and capacity to implement the redesigned CQI system, including CQI unit staff and division leadership. Analysis of readiness assessments identified areas in need of further development. These areas include identification and use of technology to enhance and advance CQI work; how to store and share information within the CQI unit; further exploration of how race, equity, and inclusion should be integrated into each stage of the CQI process, feedback loops, and communication, both internally and externally; stakeholder engagement and round 4 CFSR planning.

In response to the above-identified needs, five work groups were developed, including technology, equity, communication, stakeholder input and prioritization, and round 4 CFSR. Work groups include staff from the CQI unit as well as across the division.

Teams within the CQI unit continue to enhance their skills through training, technical assistance and consultation. Support is provided through the Center for States, Collaborative Safety, and the Office for Continuous Improvement.

CQI champions were identified across the division and meet monthly to learn about the CQI redesigned process and how it intersects with work throughout the division.

The case review team piloted Systemic Learning Reviews (SLR) and Systemic Learning Mappings (SLM) for CFSR Items 4 and 6.

Identified four staff to complete qualitative coding following learning processes. This team has completed training on coding and piloted coding on fatality/near fatality cases from the years 2019-2021. Additionally the software Nvivo was purchased to support collection of themes identified through the coding process.

CQI staff continue explore the systemic analysis step of the CQI process to move from identification of systemic themes to considerations to move into the change process.

CQI staff continue to collaborate with other units within the division to support implementation and evaluation of Safety Practice Profiles, development of the African American Child Well-Being team's theory of change and implementation plan, and the State Court Administrator's Office on a project to reduce re-entry of African American children into the foster care system.

The screening team is exploring how to integrate the Screening Threshold Analysis Tool into their ongoing review of county and Tribal screening decision.

CQI staff continue to identify steps to their process and each team has documented these in manuals/guides.

CQI staff attended training on fidelity measurement and are exploring how to ensure fidelity to the CQI process as well as how to integrate fidelity measures into other projects.

2023 update

The department continues to partner with the Center for States on the CQI redesign. Staff continues to identify, develop, and pilot processes for each component of the redesigned system Activities completed since the submission of the 2023 APSR included:

The CQI team has resumed completed child and family service reviews and is planning for Minnesota's involvement in Year 2 of Round 4.

CQI champions and section staff piloted a prioritization process and selected placement into out-of-home care after conditionally safe to be the first indicator to go through the entire redesigned CQI process. Staff further explored the indicator through conversations with other department teams in that policy area as well as the African American and American Indian child well-being teams due to the disparities observed in the data. At the time of this report, CQI staff are completing case file reviews where this occurs to better understand what is influencing the decision to place a child after an SDM tool indicated the child was conditionally safe.

The CQI team began using a Screening Threshold Analysis dashboard to explore potential use with screening reviews. Through that process, it was determined that the work would stand alone and outside of the screening review process. The team used the data from that dashboard to identify cases that have disparate outcomes for children of color and identified cases to complete file reviews.

Work groups developed in the last reporting period continued through the past year.

The technology work group created several systems to ensure the team can access shared information using OneNote and Teams. Additionally, that team is building a system to track each CQI request and project through the Customer Relations Monitoring System.

The communication work group developed a comprehensive communication plan that included goals; identified primary, secondary, and tertiary audiences; and activities.

The stakeholder work group has identified partners throughout the state that currently have regular meetings and developed a survey to reach out to those groups to determine what level of involvement they are interested in having with our CQI work. Additionally, the work group completed a RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) tool for each pre-existing group.

The equity work group worked with the department's equity director to ensure a diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility lens is used at each stage of the CQI process. The work group supported each CQI team to explore how to incorporate DEIA in their processes and document that work in each manual.

The CFSR work group has completed communication efforts for the upcoming Round 4 CFSRs and uses the RACI tool for stakeholders and systemic factor alignment.

The CQI staff have provided support surrounding evaluation and fidelity monitoring for division-wide work related to implementing Safety Practice Profiles and Family First Prevention Services.

The CQI champions continued to meet monthly to learn about the redesigned process and provide feedback. Several CQI champions are involved in ongoing CQI work groups mentioned above and have joined the CQI team in case reviews and coding work.

The CQI coding team has piloted several data sources completing qualitative coding to identify themes using Nvivo software, including:

- Child and Family Services Reviews to determine if there is an ability to identify worker behaviors related to the Safety Practice Profiles
- Fatality/near fatality mappings
- Case review data from Screening Threshold Analysis and the indicator out-of-home placement following a conditionally safe safety assessment case.

2024 update

The department continues to partner with the Center for States to build and strengthen areas within the CQI redesigned process. Staff continues to identify, develop, and pilot processes for each component of the redesigned system. Activities completed since the submission of the 2024 APSR include:

- CQI staff completed 130 child and family service reviews and continue planning for Minnesota's involvement in Round 4 of Child and Family Service Reviews.
- CQI champions continue to work closely with the CQI team and have transitioned from a learning and feedback space to being fully engaged in many CQI projects.
- The CQI team used a Screening Threshold Analysis dashboard to identify cases to review related to educational neglect, completed a literature review related to educational neglect as a child maltreatment allegation, and made connections with Hennepin County, which uses a diversion program for educational neglect cases.
- Work groups that were developed in previous reporting years either ended or were transitioned to working teams during the past year.
 - The technology work group completed all their tasks.
 - The communication work group completed all their tasks and the CQI section added a position specializing in community engagement and communications.
 - The stakeholder (community engagement) work group developed a CQI Community and Partner Engagement Manual and has transitioned into an internal steering team designed to provide guidance in planning for focus groups related to the Round 4 Child and Family Service Reviews.
 - The equity work group completed all tasks related to developing an equity tool to be used throughout the CQI process and transitioned to a working group that will provide ongoing support to CQI and division staff using the equity tool.
- The CQI staff continue to provide support surrounding evaluation and fidelity monitoring for division-wide work related to implementing Safety Practice Profiles and Family First Prevention Services.
- The CQI coding team has piloted several data sources completing qualitative coding to identify themes using NVivo software, including:
 - Child and Family Services Reviews
 - Fatality/near fatality mappings
 - Case review data from Screening Threshold Analysis and the indicator out-of-home placement following a conditionally safe safety assessment case.

The CQI team continues to pilot projects and provide support to other business areas within the division. 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 Training Vouchers (ETV) project to better understand the barriers to youth using the funds.
- Court Improvement Project (CIP) is completing problem exploration related to reentry 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 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.

Chapter 4. Service descriptions

Section 1. Stephanie Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services Program (IV-B, subp.1)

Subsection A. Services for children adopted from other countries

Families of children adopted from other countries and the children themselves are able to access most services offered through the Permanency Support Services program (Minnesota Statutes 256N.261). The PSS program was created with a goal of reducing the need for placement changes or out-of-home placements of youth in foster care, pre-adoptive placements, adoptive families, and permanent physical and legal custody kinship (kinship) families, and to improve functioning and stability of these families.

The department issued a Request for Proposals (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 both formal and informal kin caregivers. The Permanency Supports Kinship Services (PSKS) program (referenced in the 2023 update) continued in 2024 with seven grantees. The department is extending this program through June 30, 2025. Existing Permanency Support Services (PSS) grants ended June 30, 2023, though many of the grantees submitted to provide the same or similar programming. The PSS RFP in January of 2023 resulted in 13 grant contracts with Tribal agencies, county agencies, community-based organizations, and child placing agencies. The service array they may access includes:

- Services for adults who have experienced foster care and adoption
- Assessments (clinical, trauma, FASD)
- 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.

Subsection B. Services for children under age 5

During this time period, significant work has occurred between the Minnesota Department of Education and the Department of Human Services to educate and support counties and school districts on the relationships necessary to support the CAPTA mandate regarding referrals to IDEA Part C services for infants and toddlers with substantiated cases of maltreatment. While this work did not result in any addition to services, it has clarified the roles and responsibilities of each agency at the local level.

[Help Me Connect](#) was developed (supported by PDG funds) as resource to aid providers serving families with young children. The program continues to support providers in navigating resources with and for families.

PDG Community Resource Hubs were designed to support expecting and parenting families with young children – offering navigation to both economic stability and child development supports. CRCs will continue to offer this specific navigation as well as support to families with older children and youth.

The [Parent Support Outreach Program](#) supports expecting and parenting families with children under 10. These funds are allocated to all 87 counties and two Initiative Tribes to offer referrals, services, and concrete supports to families. Approximately half of children served by PSOP are young children (age 5 and under). Ninety-seven percent of families served by PSOP in 2022 did not have an out-of-home placement within a year following their disenrollment in the program.

Subsection C. Tracking and preventing maltreatment deaths

In 2019, six considerations were developed following the review of 47 child fatality and near-fatality cases. The information learned from these 47 case reviews was coded and placed into themes, which supported the development of the following considerations:

- Consider ways to evaluate and narrow the current screen in and response criteria under statute and within the Intake, Screening, and Response Path guidelines and Best Practice FA/FI guidelines for which cases are screened in and warrant an assigned child protection/child welfare response.
- Consider legislative changes so that response time frames are based upon current safety and risk to the alleged victim(s) versus allegations as they are currently defined in state statute. For example, 24-hour predatory offender response when the offender does not have access to and/or contact with the alleged victim(s).
- Examine response time frames and technology mechanisms that will allow/support agencies to have discretion on response time frames, including initial face-to-face contact in which alleged victims do not have access to the alleged offender and/or immediate safety has been assured by other safety critical professionals such as hospital staff, law enforcement, etc., and other barriers to immediate access to the alleged victims exist. For example, 24-hour predatory offender response when the offender does not have contact with the alleged victim(s) and a child is hospitalized and law enforcement has placed the child on a hold; however, child protection staff are unable to make face-to-face contact with the child within 24 hours.
- Consider ways to reduce the overall number of required documentation tasks for frontline staff by eliminating any redundancies and any unnecessary requirements to be documented within SSIS. This may include the formation of a work group comprised of frontline staff and department staff to eliminate redundant and unnecessary documentation requirements. Secondary to the number of tasks consideration, the department may consider the frequency in which changes are made to the Intake, Screening, and Response Path guidelines. The frequency of

changes can pose challenges to staff and agencies to both learn and integrate them into daily practice when managing the daily work of caseload tasks.

- Consider the development of a work group comprised of local agency frontline staff in collaboration with department staff to discuss maltreatment determinations and guidance needs for unsafe sleep deaths and near deaths.
- Consider ways to enhance and support coordination and communication between child welfare agencies and law enforcement agencies. Specifically, as it relates to identifying and responding to child maltreatment.

Given the number of considerations listed above, staffing capacity, and the ability to impact systems outside of the department, the department was able to prioritize considerations 1, 2, and 3. The considerations were influenced by the following efforts:

- In 2015, the Legislature established a child protection allocation, appropriating additional funding to address child protection staffing and services (approximately \$50 million biennially to counties). The legislation included payments based on performance and required that 20% of each county agency's allocation be withheld from distribution of the funds. That 20% was reallocated to counties based on their performance on two indicators: timely face-to-face contact in response to reports of maltreatment and monthly face-to-face contacts with children in out-of-home placement. These Child Protection Allocation withholdings were cited in the illustrative examples related to considerations 1, 2 and 3. The withholdings were eliminated in the 2019 legislative session, effective July 1, 2019.
- 2021 legislative session: Pursuant to a bill proposed by counties/MACSSA, legislation was passed that impacts requirements for face-to-face contacts in reports of sexual abuse and/or egregious harm. Effective July 1, 2021, the statute allows agencies to postpone face-to-face contacts for reports for no more than five days when a child is residing in a location that is confirmed to restrict contact with the alleged offender (Minnesota Statutes 260E.20, subd. 2(b)).
- More recently, between summer 2019 and fall 2021, 85 child fatality and near-fatality cases were reviewed. Like 2019, the data was collected, coded, and put into systemic themes to support the development of considerations. Below are three considerations that were developed utilizing the data of the 85 cases, as well as ongoing efforts that are/were put in place related to each consideration:
 - Administrative burden
 - Child protection workloads were impacted by the number of administrative tasks required for each case. There are layers of documentation requirements embedded within Minnesota's Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS), known as the Social Service Information System (SSIS). Included in these layers of documentation requirements are federal law, state statutes, state/Tribal child welfare agency policy, and local child welfare agency policy and standards.
 - Each quarter, new SSIS versions are released statewide. In 2023, version 23.1 included several changes to the out-of-home placement plan (OHPP), which continues to be the top complaint of child protection SSIS users. Likewise, the Minnesota Legislative Auditor (OLA) found the OHPP to be complex and not user-friendly, particularly for parents. Legislative changes to documentation requirements are another approach the department has supported; specifically, partnering with the Minnesota Association of County Social Services Administrators (MACSSA) and Scott County on the integration into a larger legislative budget proposal to appropriate funds for a comprehensive assessment of existing administrative requirements and SSIS functionality, resulting in recommendations for modernization and simplification. Continuous improvement efforts include obtaining regular feedback from system users, SSIS Mentor Network who support

other users within their agency, monthly SSIS coffee talks for information sharing, biweekly meetings with MACSSA and county representatives to provide updates on critical changes to SSIS to reduce outages and improve performance, and open forums for county and Tribal staff and mentors. Additional work has continued to prepare and assist in the modernization of the current SSIS system.

- Coordination with County Attorneys: practice standards, statutory interpretation, and limited access disrupted child protection case activities.
 - Minnesota’s statewide, federally mandated multidisciplinary task force, the Children’s Justice Initiative (CJI) seeks to improve collaboration between judicial/legal systems and child welfare agencies. CJI has few projects targeting coordination with county attorneys, including the Emergency Protective Care (EPC) hearing training project, which seeks to improve the quality of these hearings by ensuring attorneys (and judges) ask questions that lead to a more detailed understanding of the child protection worker’s role and work. This project began in 2017 and continues today. Another CJI project involving county attorneys is the Reasonable Efforts Judicial Academy. The Judicial Academy training model uses an experiential learning approach and has similar objectives to the EPC hearing training project. As in the EPC project, the Judicial Academy training model incorporates role playing/simulations to practice, improve, and integrate best practice skills. Additionally, the rollout of the Minnesota Child Safety Practice Framework may help with improving coordination between county attorneys and child protection workers by setting forth shared principles and practice tools to support child welfare professionals, including guidelines, best practice guides, and other resources that further explain specific topics or stages of the child protection process, helping transform policy into culturally responsive, strengths-based practice. One recommendation for future action on this consideration is to pursue legislative proposal, amending paragraph (c) of Minnesota Statutes 388.19, subd. 4. Currently, paragraph (c) states that the council must “coordinate with law enforcement, courts, and corrections providing interdisciplinary seminars to augment effectiveness of the criminal justice system.” The proposal could amend the statute to read that the county attorneys council must “coordinate with law enforcement, courts, corrections, and social services, including child protection, in providing interdisciplinary seminars to augment effectiveness of the criminal justice system.”
- Coordination with Law Enforcement: law enforcement activities, requirements, and limited access disrupted child protection activities.
 - In 2023, the department, in partnership with the Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy (MNCWTA), convened a work group to generate training recommendations for law enforcement involved in child protection removals. This work directly targets coordination efforts between law enforcement and social services. The work group’s recommendations will be reported to the Legislature as part of the response to an evaluation report on child protection removals and reunifications published in summer 2022 by the Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA). The work group gathered a diverse array of perspectives to assist in developing the training recommendations, which will include collaboration and consultation with local social service agencies on child protection investigations, interviews, and cross-reporting; utilization of trauma-informed, child-centered, strengths-based practices and approaches; incorporation of cultural and linguistic considerations; awareness of bias and existing disparities; and information on protective factors, domestic violence, and substance use. This is currently an active work group.

Section 2. MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program (IV-B, subp.2)

Subsection A. 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 the following: 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 consist of the following: 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 Child Safety 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 Child Safety 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. In collaboration with 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 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.

Subsection B. Family reunification

The department completed a significant revision of the out-of-home placement plan (OHPP) in the fall of 2021, integrating changes required for FFPSA and QRTP placements. Smaller revisions were made in 2023 to address feedback provided after the rollout of the new plan. In late 2023, the department began working on larger revisions of the OHPP as a result of stakeholder feedback. The department completed another significant revision of the OHPP focusing on reunification that

reduces length, eliminates duplication, and creates a more user-friendly document. Department staff previously explored options to print shorter, easy-to-understand steps toward reunification for parents, pulling directly from the comprehensive OHPP; however, it was determined that this is unable to be implemented with the current Social Service Information System that is used in Minnesota. Department staff developed an OHPP summary that can be provided to parents that is shorter and focuses on the steps to reunification for parents.

Subsection C. Adoption promotion and support services

During fiscal years 2020 – 2024, the department has focused efforts on engagement and support of kinship families through Permanency Support Kinship Services Program (PSKS) and Permanency Support Services Program (PSS). PSS also focuses on targeted recruitment with partnership of Tribes, counties, and child-placing agencies. The department has also leveraged its work with community partners and organizations to recruit families.

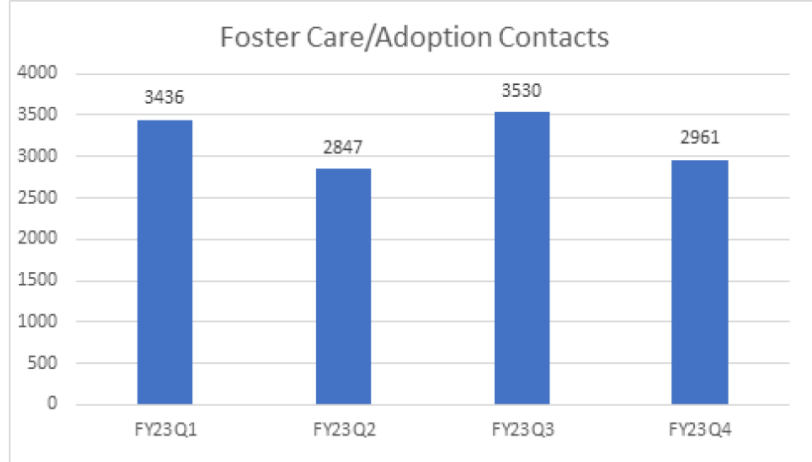
Ampersand Families was contracted with the state to provide Kin Link. Kin Link service array provides consultation, navigation support, and referrals for relatives and kin seeking guidance to become a placement or permanency resource for a relative child. The Kin Link services began through a pilot of 30 Days to Family. 30 Days to Family follows a child from an EPC hearing to identify 80+ relative and kin and, at minimum, two placement options will be provided to the county agency for placement consideration. Ampersand families also offers Hearty Gallery. Ampersand recruits and supports a pool of professional photographers to take photos of Minnesota's waiting children. The photographs are used to recruit adoptive families for specific youth and to increase awareness of the need for permanent families.

Another grantee, Foster Adopt Minnesota (FAM, formally MN Adopt), contracted with the state to provide information, support, and referral services.

The Zero Kids Waiting (ZKW) Program is a gateway to information about adoption, foster care, and kinship care in Minnesota. It provides statewide information about adoption, foster care, and kinship care based on individual needs. It raises public awareness and advocacy through community events, and partnerships with local news and print media. It creates online features of children in Minnesota who need an adoptive family immediately. [Fostering Network](#) families may complete a form to identify placement agencies in regions of the state. The form can act as a direct referral to a licensing agency or for FAM staff to provide phone-based support.

[Adoption 101](#) families may identify placement agencies in regions of the state. They can complete a form for a direct referral to a licensing agency or for FAM staff to provide phone-based support.

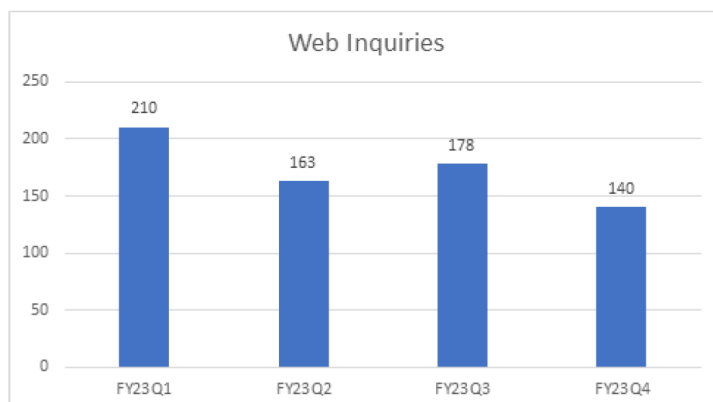
The following graph shows the number of foster care/adoption contacts for FY23 Q1 – FY23 Q4.



The following graph shows the number of kinship contacts for FY22 Q4 – FY23 Q4.



The following graph shows the number of web inquiries for FY22 Q4 – FY23 Q4.



The department and the contracted agencies hosted information tables at community-based events to raise awareness of the needs for families. A snapshot of the last six months of the Foster Adopt MN (FAM) tables includes, but was not limited to:

- Minnesota State Fair – Nonprofit Day
- Cinco de Mayo in St. Paul, Minnesota
- Minnesota Vikings back-to-school event
- Twin Cities Pride Festival in Loring Park, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- MN Supervisor Conference
- George Floyd Memorial.

In partnership with counties, FAM hosted library series. The library series is a targeted recruitment effort in communities where the highest populations of youth are entering care as identified by the local county agency. The event includes activities. The most recent series included [Fidgety Fairy Tales](#), a presentation of the need for foster and adoptive families, and attendance by local child licensing agencies. Each session has been attended by 20-30 families or individuals.

Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center (MIWRC), in conjunction with Metro Urban Indian Directors (MUID) hosted information and recruitment sessions. These sessions were focused on recruiting families by providing information and addressing issues that commonly prevented individuals from taking placements. Private and public child-placing agencies attended each session. Sessions occurred quarterly, at minimum, and were attended by 30-40 interested individuals. Meals were offered for sessions in the evenings and on weekends. The department tracked attendance at the event but not success outcomes. Families would be licensed through other agencies and licensing can take time. Examples of information session topics include:

- Question-and-answer session by professionals about the process
- Panels of experienced foster and adoptive parents
- Common barriers of families to becoming licensed, including those with criminal records, and the process to complete expungement of criminal records.

Childrens Home Society (CHLSS): Provides foster care and adoption training. Children’s Home provides centralized pre-service education to prepare families who are interested in parenting a child or children under guardianship in Minnesota. The training was offered in 2022 and 2023 in an online virtual platform.

The department has invested in permanency supports through both the PSKS and PSS programs retain and stabilize placements, and support youth and caregivers. Examples include:

- Buddy family services: Ampersand Families is piloting a buddy family program that will match volunteer families with families who will adopt or have adopted a child under state or Tribal guardianship. Buddy families make a commitment to provide an additional level of support to the adoptive family, including a couple of evenings and/or overnights a month to provide the parent and youth “respite” from the hard work of family-building. They complete training and background studies through Ampersand Families.
- Foster Adopt Minnesota (FAM) education for foster, adoptive, and kinship parents and professionals: Foster Adopt Minnesota supports families by providing trainings on mental health, the effects of trauma, and common challenges for adopted children and those in foster care and kinship placements. FAM is a strong resource for professionals who serve youth connected with the child welfare system. Trainings offered specifically to professionals include topics such as supporting birth family connections, working with LGBTQ+ youth, trauma, and the culture of poverty.
- HELP: Foster Adopt Minnesota offers a “warmline” for all adoptive, foster, and kinship families throughout Minnesota; it is staffed by HELP Specialists with advanced training in permanency support services. This free service connects families with adoption-, trauma-, and attachment-competent therapists in their area, as well as

parent consultation, training, and needed community resources. The HELP Program also assists eligible families with funding to help with the cost of therapy with vetted therapists and eligible supports.

- Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center (MIWRC): MIWRC's permanency support helps Native American families that are in the process of licensing for foster care; it assist with obtaining compliance items (beds, fire extinguishers, weather radios, and locks), and more. MIWRC also connect families to resources for housing, in-house resources, resources through other agencies, compliance, transportation, legal aid help, and resources for basic needs, food, and clothes. Referrals are made by Minnesota counties, child-placing agencies, and direct referral by individuals.
 - In 2023, 63 families received services.
 - In 2022, 55 families received services.
 - In 2021, 45 families received services.
- North Homes, Inc is contracted to provide a Peer Family Mentoring Pilot: Mentor families are identified by North Homes Children and Family Services staff to possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities to help newly licensed foster/adoptive providers navigate the system, access services for youth, and advocate for children placed in their care. Each family licensed through NHCFS has an assigned agency case manager who is there to help support the family; however, a peer mentor is an additional layer of support that will help providers reach their full potential in their foster/adoptive journey.

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, and 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 outlined below:

- Innovative family-finding services:
 - Ampersand Families provides innovative, intensive relative search and engagement efforts for a 45-day period that helps counties meet 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 addresses. 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.

As part of the Public Private Adoption Initiative (PPAI), each agency is required to engage in efforts to recruit resource families. Agencies provide the department 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 socioeconomic variations.

Section 3. Populations at greatest risk of maltreatment

The department implemented several efforts to better serve and support families who are at greatest risk for involvement in Minnesota's child protection system, which include Black, Indigenous, and children of color; families experiencing poverty and economic instability; and others. The department, in partnership with the Minnesota Departments of Education and Health, piloted Community Resource Hubs from 2021-2023. Approximately \$3 million per year for two years was spent to implement and fund Community Resource Hubs. Hubs supported expecting and parenting families with young children up to age 8 and focused on families and communities experiencing inequities due to race, ethnicity, wealth, and geography. Grantees worked to develop partnerships within their communities to facilitate relationship-based, culturally responsive service navigation and program referrals to ensure families got what they needed in a timely way. Overall, Hubs served Black, Indigenous, and individuals of color at higher rates than their population in the state and were successful at helping families access resources to support well-being. Hubs helped expand the network of community-based, culturally responsive service navigation across the state and better meet the needs of families, a critical strategy to prevent maltreatment and child protection system involvement. Funding for the Hubs ended in July 2023.

The Minnesota Legislature awarded the department \$7.1 million in one-time funding in 2023 to develop and implement a statewide network of community resource centers through 2027 ([Minnesota Laws 2023, chapter 70, article 14, section 42](#)). Community Resource Centers are an extension of the Preschool Development Grant Community Resource Hub pilot. The department also received funds for kinship navigator (KN) programming and plans to couple these funds with CRC funding. Community Resource Centers, and those centers implementing KN programs, will be community-based, coordinated points of entry that will provide culturally responsive, relationship-based service navigation and other supportive services for expecting and parenting families and youth. Services will include family navigation, concrete supports (flexible funds), and other voluntary supportive services that promote individual and community protective factors. Community Resource Centers, along with KN programs, are intended to serve communities or families that experience inequities in accessing supports and services due to the community's or family's circumstances, including but not limited to, racism, income, disability, language, gender, and geography. Like Hubs, Community Resource Centers and KN programs are a strategic effort to help make it easier for families to get what they need and increase access to services; Community Resource Centers are a significant strategy to prioritize prevention within family-serving systems. Community Resource Centers will help establish supportive alternatives to child protection reporting, support protective factors, and prevent child protection system involvement. Efforts to establish Community Resource Centers and KN programs began in 2023 and a request for proposals for Community Resource Centers was issued in April 2024.

The Parent Support Outreach Program exclusively serves families who are at risk of child maltreatment and are experiencing stress factors associated with maltreatment. These include, but are not limited to, low income/poverty, homelessness/housing concerns, chemical use concerns (parent or child), domestic violence concerns, child behavior challenges, etc. Families must be experiencing two or more stress factors to be eligible for the program and referrals often come from screened-out maltreatment reports, or community or self-referrals. The program also serves higher rates of Black, Indigenous, and children of families of color, and these families are more likely to experience the child protection system in Minnesota. Additionally, the Parent Support Outreach Program serves high rates of families with identified

disabilities. Nearly 1,000 parents/caregivers (18%) and approximately 500 children (6%) served by the program had an identified disability.

In January 2024, a new allocation began to support efforts related to the development and/or expansion of prevention services related to the implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). Funds will be allocated to counties and federally recognized Tribes in Minnesota to provide prevention and early intervention services. (Minnesota Statutes, section 260.014.) The Prevention Services allocation can be used to support local welfare agency activities to develop and implement prevention services identified in, or related to and within, Minnesota's Title IV-E Prevention Services five-year plan.

Funds are intended for children who remain with their families, or upon return to their family, including:

- Prevention of entry into the child welfare system
- Prevention of further involvement with the child welfare system
- Family preservation (supports necessary to maintain children within their families).

Funds may be used to:

- Implement or expand any service or program that is included in the state's prevention plan
 - Current services include Parents as Teachers (PAT) and Motivational Interviewing (MI)
 - Implement or expand any proposed prevention service or program outlined by the department. There are no current services proposed for future inclusion in the state's prevention plan.
- Implement or expand any existing prevention service, program, or activity.
 - Services or programs must be directed toward children who remain with their families or upon return to their family.
 - Services or programs do not need to be evidence-based but can be evidence- or culturally informed.
 - Services or programs may be directed towards children and families who have not entered the child welfare system to support wider prevention efforts.

At least 10% of the allocation must be used to provide services and supports directly to families. Family may include relatives or kin that the child may be residing with (does not include foster placements). This new allocation will support Minnesota's Prevention Plan and wider implementation of prevention.

Section 4. Kinship navigator funding

As kinship navigator models began to receive approval through the Title IV-E Clearinghouse in 2021 and 2022, the department reassessed plans to continue developing and evaluating the Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota model. The department convened work groups in January—March 2023 with county and Tribal agencies as well as other private agencies and advocates to help guide decision making on the path forward with kinship navigator implementation. Our stakeholders analyzed how the services under each approved kinship model compared to each other and the LSS model, as well as provided input on the priorities a model should address for kin caregiver supports.

Feedback received led to the selection of the Foster Kinship model for implementation in Minnesota. With the identification of a kinship navigator model, state staff, alongside external partners, began implementation planning, which included securing state funding for this program. The Minnesota state Legislature approved ongoing Kinship Navigator funds under [Minnesota Statutes 256.4794](#). Implementation of the Foster Kinship model will create grant opportunities between the department and three to five external partners to provide navigation services for relative caregivers regardless of child

welfare involvement. These grants will be administered through an RFP process in alignment with the implementation of Community Resource Centers. The RFP for these programs was posted on April 12, 2024. Future drawdown of Title IV-E dollars will allow the department to expand on the number of kinship navigator partnerships in the future.

Department staff will continue to identify gaps in services to kin families after implementation of the Foster Kinship model through the CQI process to determine if additional supports are needed. Ongoing review and use of a selection matrix tool will continue as new models are approved by the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse.

In addition to the implementation of an evidenced-based kinship navigator program, the department is seeking input from the 11 Tribal Nations on the needs of Tribal kin families. With use of the Title IV-B discretionary dollars, the department will engage in facilitated conversations with Tribes on the possible development of a Tribal specific kinship navigator model.

Section 5. Monthly caseworker visit formula grants

The objective was to improve caseworker visits with children in foster care. A Resource Family and Caseworker Visit Discussion Tool ([DHS-7889-ENG](#)) was developed for resource families to complete in preparation for meetings with a child's caseworker. It covers topics such as dates of medical, dental and/or mental health appointments; school meetings; parent/child and child/sibling visitation; court hearings; medications; needs of a family to care for children, etc. It is an optional tool for resource families as well as caseworkers for use to guide visits. In developing the tool, department staff elicited feedback from local social service agencies (child protection and licensing program staff), resource families, and the metro supervisors and licensors group. The feedback was incorporated into the tool. The tool was discussed and highlighted in a caseworker visit with children webinar in March 2019. The tool was shared by department Foundation training staff with new child protection trainees. It was also highlighted in the Caseworker and Child Visits Best Practice Guide ([DHS-7987](#)), published in January 2020.

A survey regarding what foster care pre-service trainings agencies offered to resources families (foster, adoptive, and kinship parents) and child welfare professionals was issued to a random sample of 50% of local agencies (N = 41), with 29 agencies responding. Of the responders, 14 use the department-provided curriculum, Foster Parent College. The rest use a mix of curricula. Of those that did not use Foster Parent College, 10 reported providing information on the number of training requirements in their own pre-service training. This information was shared with the Minnesota Child Welfare Training System and the department's Foster Care Unit to inform future planning and efforts. Guidance on caseworker and child visits was incorporated in Foundation training within the case management focused classroom.

The department provided technical assistance on engagement and communication between resource families and caseworkers through the following:

- Developing and providing "Difficult Conversations" training to county agency workers and other stakeholders to improve communication between agency workers and resource families
- Providing Social Medical History training to agency workers to ensure full disclosure is provided to resource families.

Caseworker and Child Visits Best Practice Guide (DHS-7987) was updated in 2022. It identified policy changes and best practices to support improved frequency and quality of caseworker visits with children, including visits being conducted with children alone and documentation requirement of visits in SSIS.

The department provides data on several key child welfare measures on the Child Welfare Data Dashboard. Caseworker visits with children in out-of-home placement is one of the state measures included on the dashboard. The caseworker

visits performance in 2020 was 80.8%; by 2023, it increased to 87.9%. Although the numbers have improved, Minnesota's performance on caseworker visits with children in out-of-home placement continues to be below the federal expectation of 95%.

Section 6. Adoptions

Subsection A. Adoption and legal guardianship incentive payments

The department provides services to foster, adoptive, and kinship families through the Permanency Support Services program. It consists of grants for 24 agencies to provide 63 services. Adoption incentive funding provides a continuum of services, from a family's first interest in becoming a foster, adoptive, or kinship parent through post-permanency support, including:

- A consulting group is working with CSP Division staff to increase permanency for teens. The consulting group is reviewing Minnesota's policies, holding stakeholder meetings, and making recommendations on policy and procedure modification. It will provide training on recruitment strategies and provide consultation to division staff, county agencies, and private placing agencies. The consulting group completed a survey and focus group interviews with professionals, adoptive families, and youth. The 220 Experience gave a presentation summarizing its findings and recommendations to increase permanency for teens. The 220 Experience also completed 11 child-specific recruitment consults with recommendations.
- Funding for the Center for Advanced Study in Child Welfare's Permanency and Adoption Competency Certificate (PACC). The program includes web-based and in-person training. Attendees are mental health professionals and child welfare workers in public and private agencies. One cohort is trained in the Twin Cities metro area and one in greater Minnesota each academic year. Due to COVID-19, in-person sessions were web-based in 2020 and 2021. Sessions were Hybrid for 2022 and 2023.
- The Center for Advanced Study in Child Welfare's Phoenix Learning Xchange (PLX) Adolescent Certificate program pilot was completed. It includes three core sessions and three electives; it is a web-based and in-person training. Attendees are mental health professionals, members of multidisciplinary teams, adoption resource, Tribal agency workers, and child welfare workers in public and private agencies. One cohort is trained in the Twin Cities metro and another is trained in greater Minnesota each academic year. Note that due to COVID-19, in-person sessions were web-based in 2020 and 2021; they were hybrid in 2022 and 2023.
- Comprehensive Child Well-being assessments for 610 youth (adoptive, foster, and kinship), which include medical, developmental, cognitive, and mental health needs through assessment of children's family; medical and developmental history; medical exam including labs, screening for toxic exposure/Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders; and an assessment of developmental skills.
- Contract with a private child-placing agency to provide peer support and retreats to adoptive, foster, and kinship families; peer support for youth; and piloting a relative recruitment and engagement program.
- Contract with one agency to provide 16 hours of pre-adoption education to comprehensively prepare families intending to parent children under guardianship.
- Funding for an agency to provide a neurosequential model of therapeutic assessments for youth, and inform and connect parents/caregivers with mind-body practitioners. These professionals help parents integrate strategies proven to help restore neglected neural pathways and assist families with purchasing equipment such as mini trampolines, pogo sticks, drums, relaxation applications, rocking chairs, etc., needed for therapy when items are not covered by Medical Assistance.
- One agency was contracted to offer camp services to transracial adoptive, foster, and kinship families.

- A contract with a private nonprofit agency to manage 50 regional support groups for adoptive parents who meet monthly throughout the state. The grantee also manages online support groups for adoptive parents and peer-to-peer support services. The peer-to-peer support services include information, resources, and emotional support. The grantee holds one annual retreat, three training workshops, support group meetings for adoptive parents, and activities for parents and children together. It also provides six monthly adoptee support groups. Peer-to-peer support allows foster, adoptive, and kinship families to build connections.
- A contract with a private nonprofit agency to coordinate training for adoptive parents and adoption professionals. Training topics include attachment, parenting adopted teens, parenting children with sexualized behaviors, trauma, and more. Training is offered both in-person and in webinar formats. Some trainings are offered as a series, including a support group component.
- A help line for adoptive families statewide. Clinical specialists trained in adoption provide individualized referrals to adoption-competent mental health professionals in their area. In cases where adoptive families are experiencing financial barriers in obtaining services, the grantee provides financial assistance, which can include in-home counseling.
- Funding for private child-placing agencies to provide child-specific recruitment and placement services. These services include relative search and intensive child-specific services. Placement support services include intensive efforts to support and stabilize families.
- Cultural agency to host two ICWA foster family and kinship placement education and training community events. These will be culturally meaningful and serve as an information and recruitment activity with a focus on recruiting families for qualifying ICWA children.
- A contract with a private agency in greater Minnesota to provide one-to-one family support, monthly support groups, and family activities.
- Grant contract with a private agency to provide web-based support groups, trainings, family activities, and activities that consist of honoring foster, adoptive, and kinship families.
- A contracted agency in greater Minnesota provides training, support groups, and family activities.

Department staff decided to amend the existing contracts for one year with an end date of June 30, 2023. A new Permanency Support Services Request for Proposals was issued January 2023, and the department is still negotiating future contracts. The new services are to begin July 1, 2023.

Subsection B. Adoption savings

Department staff decided to amend existing contracts; they will end June 30, 2023. An RFP was issued August 2022 for kinship services. A new Permanency Support Services Request for Proposals was issued January 2023 to provide services outlined in Minnesota Statutes 256N.261, with services to begin July 1, 2023. Current services include:

- Contract with a private child-placing agency to provide peer support and retreats to adoptive, foster, and kinship families; peer support for youth; and piloting a relative recruitment and engagement program.
- Contract with one agency to provide 16 hours of pre-adoption education to comprehensively prepare families intending to parent children under guardianship.
- Funding for an agency to provide neurosequential model of therapeutic assessments for youth, and inform and connect parents/caregivers with mind-body practitioners. These professionals help parents integrate strategies proven to help restore neglected neural pathways and assists families with purchasing equipment such as mini trampolines, pogo sticks, drums, relaxation applications, rocking chairs, etc., needed for therapy when items are not covered by Medical Assistance.
- One agency was contracted to offer camp services to transracial adoptive, foster, and kinship families.

- A contract with a private nonprofit agency to manage 50 regional support groups for adoptive parents who meet monthly throughout the state. The grantee also manages online support groups for adoptive parents and peer-to-peer support services. The peer-to-peer support services include information, resources, and emotional support. The grantee holds one annual retreat, three training workshops, support group meetings for adoptive parents, and activities for parents and children together. It also provides six monthly adoptee support groups. Peer-to-peer support allows foster, adoptive, and kinship families to build connections.
- A contract with a private nonprofit agency to coordinate training for adoptive parents and adoption professionals. Training topics include attachment, parenting adopted teens, parenting children with sexualized behaviors, trauma, and more. Training is offered both in-person and in webinar formats. Some trainings are offered as a series, including a support group component.
- A help line for adoptive families statewide. Clinical specialists trained in adoption provide individualized referrals to adoption-competent mental health professionals in their area. In cases where adoptive families are experiencing financial barriers in obtaining services, the grantee provides financial assistance, which can include in-home counseling.
- Funding for private child-placing agencies to provide child-specific recruitment and placement services. These services include relative search and intensive child-specific services. Placement support services include intensive efforts to support and stabilize families.
- Cultural agency to host two ICWA foster family and kinship placement education and training community events. These will be culturally meaningful and serve as an information and recruitment activity with a focus on recruiting families for qualifying ICWA children.
- A contract with a private agency in greater Minnesota to provide one-to-one family support, monthly support groups, and family activities.
- Grant contract with a private agency to provide web-based support groups, trainings, family activities, and activities that consist of honoring foster, adoptive, and kinship families.
- A contracted agency in greater Minnesota provides training, support groups, and family activities.
- In August 2022, contracts were entered into for five agencies to provide services that support and assist kinship families. Services include peer-to-peer support and activities for kinship families; non-recurring material support to kinship families; home study and placement support for kinship families; services that increase identification of potential kin families; and support activity to children and youth in kinship placements.
- Adult adoptee services support groups, online community, and openness consultation services. Openness consultation services provide guidance and support in navigating relationships among members of the “adoption triad”. Participants receive six sessions of applicable coaching.

Department staff created a plan to spend current year adoption savings and unused adoption savings from previous years in April 2018. In December 2019, adoption saving was estimated to be \$2,045,092, and unencumbered funds to be expended were estimated to be \$954,980, for a total of \$3 million. This amount was encumbered for July 1, 2019-June 30, 2023 contracts. In July 2021, department staff became aware that adoption savings were not calculated correctly. The formulas the department was using were corrected and adoption savings calculations were resubmitted to the Children’s Bureau.

The sudden increase in funding that should be allocated to adoption savings has created barriers. Discussions are ongoing regarding program funding. The most recent allocated funding projection from department leadership for adoption savings for Permanency Support Services programs for 2024 and 2025 has been \$6 million annually.

Section 7. FFPSA transition grants

Minnesota is using the \$7,890,161 Family First Transition Act allocation to fund one-time costs, cover funding gaps, and support implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act.

- Prevention services: \$4,761,161. Funds are being used for training and coaching on approved prevention services Motivational Interviewing and Parents as Teachers, kinship navigator models, and grants to Tribes for prevention services.
- Residential services: \$722,000. Funds have been used for one-time reimbursement for cost of national accreditation for qualified residential treatment program certification.
 - Cost to reimburse the Praed Foundation for development and on-going technical assistance and certification of the MN Brief Child and Adolescent Needs Assessment.
 - Covering on-going costs of providing statewide qualified individuals for counties and Tribes.
- Department staffing: \$1,862,000. Funds are being used to cover costs of staff necessary to implement Family First Prevention Services Act, section 10, Chafee and ETV.

Subsection A. Chafee Program

County and Tribal agency staff, and foster parents identify Chafee-eligible youth ages 14 and older. With the youth's input, they develop an independent living plan. Caseworkers are responsible for assuring that each youth accomplishes goals in their independent living plan. Youth can be referred to a Chafee-funded community-based agency, work with a foster parent, use web-based training materials, tap into existing community resources, or combine these and many other strategies.

Youth that remain in out-of-home placement after age 18 continue to work on an independent living plan with their social worker while working or attending school. Youth who leave placement remain eligible for Chafee-funded services up to age 23 but are much more likely to access services through a community-based agency rather than a county social service agency.

County, Tribal, and community-based agencies funded with Chafee and state dollars served 2,235 eligible youth so far in FFY2024 (approximately 27% of the eligible youth). Services received by youth and demographics will be reported through the NYTD system. There are slightly more females (51%) served than male youth. Approximately 79% are white, 23% are Black, 14% are American Indian, and 2% identify as other races. Approximately 12% of served youth identify as Hispanic. Youth may select more than one race or ethnicity category. Therefore, percentages add up to over 100%. Approximately 30% were still in care while being served. Academic support (over 80% of youth) and other financial assistance (about 40%) are the top services received.

Chafee Advisory Committee virtual meetings were held with county, Tribal, and community-based agencies funded with Chafee dollars. Being virtual allowed more agencies to attend and give feedback. This committee discussed issues related to youth needs and service provision as well as general policy and procedure discussions.

The Adolescent Services Unit offered technical assistance meetings to all county, Tribal and community-based agency staff who receive the quarterly Empowering Youth Update email to facilitate discussion on successfully transitioning youth to adulthood and utilizing available services. National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) data was shared at these meetings, showing the positive outcomes of youth who remained in care past age 18 versus youth who left care. Adolescent Services staff presented at an American Indian Youth Resources event.

All county and Tribal agencies that applied with a “Big Idea” were funded to provide that program. This is the fifth year of the Big Idea Program. One criterion for this programming is that all agencies agreed to participate in evaluative activities. The agency contracted to complete the NYTD follow-up surveys is working with these agencies to collect data similar to NYTD to evaluate the outcomes and service provisions of the “Big Idea” programs. This agency also works on other Chafee and STAY data collection for evaluation of the programs. They have converted some of the paper reporting to electronic documents to allow for easier data collection, monitoring, and evaluation.

Combined Chafee and state funds continued to be provided to 14 community-based agencies. These agencies provided services for either youth ages 14 or older in out-of-home placement referred by county caseworkers, or youth 18-22 who left placement and no longer receive county social services. Youth are taught life skills they need to make a successful transition to adulthood by working with staff one-to-one or in groups. Staff collaborated with county agencies, foster parents, and other community providers and resources to ensure that goals were met for each youth served. Community agency staff participate in training regarding contract requirements, policies, and procedures.

A requirement of “Big Idea” programming with counties and Tribes, and contracts with community-based agencies, is participation in a monthly trauma consultation (PYD Talks) facilitated by a trauma therapist. Each month, one county or Tribal agency present either a case of a youth that they are working with or a program implementation issue and receive feedback and suggestions from the trauma therapist as well as the county, Tribal, and community-based agencies and adolescent services staff. The community agency that provides services to the presenting county or Tribal agency also presents on their STAY in the Community services and how to access these services. Positive Youth Development philosophy is frequently part of the discussions. A staff retreat is held in the fall for county, Tribal, and community agency staff to learn facilitation of group independent living skills as well as networking and policy review.

The local YLCs work independently in their regions but come together as a statewide group as well. The statewide Minnesota Youth Leadership Council met at least monthly, either virtually or in person. The youth have engaged in education and training, policy review, and planning for future events. The youth are compensated for their time, typically through a meal and a gift card. During meetings, feedback is requested from youth on various topics, but specific to their service needs. That feedback is brought back to the department when planning to implement new programs or make changes to existing programs. The feedback loop is closed in the same way, with responses and outcomes being delivered back to youth during subsequent meetings. Youth were instrumental in designing brochures and notices that go to youth and/or workers.

The Adolescent Services Unit brought their legislative proposal to the Youth Leadership Council for their feedback. The youth were supportive of increasing transition services, especially financial support after foster care ends. They would like to see unconditional financial support to the mid-20s. A broader group of foster youth gathers at Foster Child and Youth Day on the Hill, where youth also rallied for increased independent living and transition supports.

One youth and one supportive adult attended the National Youth Leadership Conference, Leaders 4 Change, from Nov. 30, 2023 to Dec. 3, 2023, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, to learn about advocacy and campaign building. The annual Minnesota Youth Leadership Council summer retreat is being held again in June 2024. Youth will get to network with each other while learning about the system and engaging with nature. YLC staff meetings are also held monthly to work on consistency, recruitment, and policies.

The YLC youth reviewed the APSR and offered feedback. They stated that 1:1 services work better, but that they enjoy participating in groups. They reported receiving good resources and education. They liked the collaboration with other groups and community partners. They also enjoyed curricula like “Making Proud Choices,” “Not a Number,” and “Live It” (which is informed by Native American culture). They reported a sense of disconnection during the pandemic.

The Tomorrow's Leaders Today (TLT) Youth Leadership Conference was held in July 2023 for the delayed 25th Anniversary (the conference was canceled for three years during the pandemic). The conference is for current or former foster youth ages 16 to 20. Approximately 200 people attended in previous years; however, there were just under 100 in attendance in 2023. The conference returns in summer 2024 with a "throwback" theme to previous logos.

The purpose of the conference is threefold:

1. To celebrate and enhance the leadership capacity of youth
2. To teach leadership skills that can be used now and in the future to affect personal and community change
3. To strengthen the network of adults who value youth leadership.

The TLT conference empowers youth. It encourages them and gives them the tools they need to participate in their communities in meaningful and constructive ways. These youth have a great deal to say about how to improve the child welfare system because they have experienced it. The TLT conference changes young peoples' self-concept from disenfranchised to contributing, knowledgeable, and valued community members. The TLT conference is also intended to change adults' views. The conference is built on a foundation of positive youth development. Youth workers are encouraged to recognize each youth's talents, abilities, and knowledge, and to return home committed to involving youth in their community in a positive way.

[Bulletin 23-68-11 Extended Foster Care Best Practice Guide](#) was issued in October 2023 to provide policy and best practice for county and Tribal agencies.

[Bulletin 23-68-14 Youth Missing from Care](#) was issued in December 2023 to provide information about revised federal requirements for responding to children and youth missing from foster care.

[Bulletin 24-68-01 Consumer Credit Reports for Youth in Foster Care](#) was issued in January 2024 to inform county and Tribal agency staff of local obligations and procedures to comply with state and federal law regarding review of consumer credit reports for children and youth in foster care.

On March 1-3, 2024, the Youth Leadership Council participated in a weekend retreat focused on advocacy. On March 4, 2024, the Minnesota Youth Leadership Council facilitated the fifth annual "Day on the Hill" to advocate for foster child/youth rights. This event is designed by youth, for youth, to have a voice on the pressing issues they experience in the foster care system. Training is provided to prepare youth for the rally and meetings with legislators. The rally consists of youth speakers and the opportunity for attendees to address the crowd. Adults assist youth in finding their voice.

[Bulletin 24-68-07 Program information and allocations for adolescent independent living skills](#) was issued in April 2024 to provide information and budget application for the STAY program.

In August 2023, the Chafee Coordinator created an Independent Living Plan tutorial guide for county and Tribal workers. On April 16, 2024, the Chafee coordinator, a county youth services worker, and a youth leadership council member presented a webinar on Independent Living Plans and youth engagement for workers and caregivers; over 200 people registered.

Training conducted during 2023-2024:

- A three-day "Tomorrow's Leaders Today" conference for 100 Chafee eligible youth and their chaperones was held at the University of Minnesota, Duluth, in July 2023.
- Monthly virtual case or program-specific consultations were provided to county and Tribal agencies implementing "Big Idea" programs and community-based agencies providing STAY in the Community programs.

- Monthly technical assistance meetings were held with Youth Leadership Council and supportive adults to discuss recruitment, retention, and other membership issues.
- Presentations regarding Chafee and NYTD were held across the state for county, Tribal, and community agencies that requested it.
- The Chafee Advisory Committee held quarterly meetings with county, Tribal, and community agencies to discuss Chafee and ETV programs, as well as other adolescent services.
- Youth Leadership Councils convened for an annual summer retreat on networking, team building, and work plans.
- 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 convened for an annual spring training with this year’s theme of positive youth development.
- County, Tribal, and community agencies convened for an annual fall retreat on independent living skills facilitation and youth engagement.
- An Independent Living Plan and Youth Engagement webinar was provided for county and Tribal workers as well as foster care providers. This was recorded and will be available to view indefinitely.

Subsection B. Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program

The Education and Training Voucher (ETV) program eligibility criteria for the school year is that all students applying to the ETV program must be:

- Accepted into an accredited, federal Pell Grant-eligible institution of higher education, graduated from high school, or received a General Equivalency Diploma
- Eligible to receive financial aid, and one of the following:
 - In foster care for 30 consecutive days between their 17th and 18th birthdays
 - Youth who left foster care after age 16 for adoption or transfer of physical/legal custody to a relative, and
 - Youth under state or Tribal guardianship at age 18.

Criteria was amended in May 2018 to include the Family First Prevention Services Act that students can apply to the program for five years, up to their 26th birthday, if they are enrolled and making progress toward completing their post-secondary education. The determination of five years was updated in 2023. ETV funds are awarded up to \$2,500 per semester. Fall semester awards can be used July 1 and June 30. Spring semester awards can be used Dec. 15 to June 30. Five years is calculated as follows:

- Student who receives a fall award and a spring award:
 - One year when student uses any their fall award and any of their spring award
 - One year when student uses all their spring award and any of their unused fall award
 - Half-year when student uses any or all of fall award and none of spring award
 - Half-year when student uses none of their fall award and any or all of spring award.
- Student who receives only a fall award or spring award can be awarded up to \$5,000 for one semester if there are special circumstances and the award is within the student’s cost of attendance for that semester. Five years is calculated as follows:
 - Half-year when student uses up to \$2,500
 - One year when student is awarded over \$2,500 and uses over \$2,500 during the semester.

The process for making ETV awards changed significantly beginning 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 based on foster care experience for the Fostering Independence Grant program. The Minnesota Office of Higher Education generates a list of students who identify having been in foster care at age 13 or older on their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). 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. ETV funds supplement, not supplant, state funds available for the Fostering Independence Grant program.

The data-sharing agreement also allows the Minnesota Office of Higher Education to share with the ETV program cost of attendance and financial aid information for students eligible for ETV. Students for whom the Minnesota Office of Higher Education has requested foster care verification, and who are also ETV eligible, are now considered for ETV based upon their FAFSA. No separate ETV application is needed. The ETV program identified 1,156 unduplicated, ETV-eligible students who submitted FAFSAs for the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years.

How the department promotes the ETV program:

- Presentations
- Metropolitan Urban Indian Directors family preservation event
- Youth Leadership Council meeting
- Minnesota Social Services Association conference
- Minnesota Indian Education Association conference
- Journie: Open Road Workshop for Youth
- Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council meeting
- Extended Foster Care Social Worker meeting
- American Indian Family Center, Four Directions, Pathway to Success
- Resource tables promoting the ETV program
- Tomorrows Leaders Today foster care conference
- Minnesota Foster Child and Youth Day on the Hill
- Foster Adopt Minnesota 5K event.

Supporting students to continue in their post-secondary programs 2023-2024

The ETV program hosted orientation sessions with new ETV students:

- Number of sessions: 9
- Number of students participating: 43.

Staff talk individually with each student over the phone after orientation. During this call, staff ensure each student understands how to use their funds and discuss students' plan to budget their ETV funds. Staff also let students know what additional support is available through the ETV program. During this call, students are asked if there is any other information they would like to share with staff.

During fall semester, staff check in with students to see how school is going, talk about their classes, check to see if they need support, make sure they know where to get help on campus, listen to any barriers the students encounter, and answer questions.

Holiday letters with \$10 Starbucks gift cards were mailed to all ETV students. Adoption is Love donated the money for the gift cards and included holidays cards for the students. A sympathy card was sent to a student who lost their great grandma (he lived with her and did a lot of her care).

In the spring, ETV staff do check-in phone calls to talk with students about their classes, ask if they need additional support, and make sure they know where to get tutoring or counseling help on campus or online.

Staff check in with students who have academic plans in place to talk over how school is going and to see if they are meeting the goals they set for themselves.

Engaging youth in program planning and program evaluation

The ETV Advisory Committee is comprised of five ETV staff and three young adults with ETV experience. The ETV Advisory Committee has met three times since the 2024 submission of the Annual Progress and Services Report. Tasks completed by the committee included:

- Updated ETV expense guidelines
- Reviewed ETV student demographics
- Decided on priority scheme when making ETV awards
- Considered an end-of-year payout of remaining ETV funds for students who find it challenging to incur enough expenses to use their entire ETV award
- Discussed continued use of the ETV acronym
- Discussed what to include in the state's 2025-2029 CFSR.

Collaboration with University of Minnesota

The ETV program worked with Professor Matt Ladhoff, senior lecturer at the University of Minnesota. An ETV presentation was made to a class of social work students. The students worked on different marketing strategies for the ETV program and presented those strategies back to the ETV program.

Changes in how the ETV program is administered

An RFP was published Dec. 28, 2023. Three proposals were received. The contract with the vendor is currently being negotiated. Work pursuant to the contract will begin on July 1, 2024.

ETV program consultation with Tribes

ETV program staff consulted with social service directors of the 11 Tribes in Minnesota at the Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council meeting on April 18, 2024.

Chapter 5. Coordination with Tribes

Section 1. Process to gather input

The American Indian Wellbeing (AIW) staff met each Tribal program virtually and/or in person throughout the years to support, assess, and assist with any technical issues as well as discuss future programming supports needed for programming planning. Department staff also meet with the American Indian Child Welfare Advisory (ICWA) Council each quarter to discuss, consult, and garner feedback on policies and practices that impact American Indian children and families living in Minnesota. Additionally, department members meet annually with Tribal leadership and Tribal social service representatives through a Tribal legislative summit for Tribes to bring forth legislative proposals/ideas to collaborate with the department in furthering its efforts to collectively bring forth legislation to Minnesota Legislature. An example in 2023 involved language from the federal Indian Child Welfare Act being codified into state law to ensure and strengthen the ongoing requirements of federal law for American Indian and Alaskan Native (AI/AN) children and families. This was accomplished through a series of consultations, discussions, and department data/research reports as well as ongoing supports.

Section 2. ICWA compliance

The 2017 Minnesota Legislature authorized additional county aid funding to local social service agencies (county agencies) to offset the cost of foster care for Indian children. This legislation required department staff, in consultation with Tribal and county agency staff, to develop a system to review county agency compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA), and to issue a fiscal withhold when county agencies are not in substantial compliance with these laws. (See [Minnesota Statutes 477A.0126.](#))

In December 2017, a work group comprised of representatives from the ICWA Advisory Council, Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators, Children’s Justice Initiative, and the department was established to develop and guide implementation of a statewide ICWA Compliance Case Review System. Based on this consultation, the department implemented an ICWA/MIFPA case review that started in 2018 (2017 period under review).

Department ICWA staff identify all American Indian children in foster care placements in the calendar year before each annual review who qualify under Minnesota Statutes 477A.0126, subd. 6, for reimbursement of foster care costs. Data is collected from the Social Service Information System (SSIS) to identify foster care payments made by county agencies on behalf of American Indian children. Definitions for “Indian child” in Minnesota Statutes 260C.007, subd. 21, and “foster care” in Minnesota Statutes 260C.007, subd. 18, are applied to the sample. Criteria for case sample selection include:

- Child under age 18
- American Indian child – ICWA/MIFPA eligible
- Eligible foster care payments, based on BRASS (Budgeting, Report and Accounting for Social Services) codes that meet the definition of foster care, made in the previous calendar year
- County agency is identified as the lead servicing agency.

Twenty percent, or at least one child from each agency (whichever is greater), is randomly selected for a case file review. If a county agency did not have an American Indian child who entered placement during the period under review (PUR) but

did have an American Indian child who entered placement during a previous calendar year, 20%, or one of those children (whichever is greater) is randomly selected. If a child cannot be identified as meeting criteria for review, that county agency is not o reviewed for the PUR.

For the 2020 to 2024 period, the department saw an increase in statewide compliance with the ICWA/MIFPA requirements. The following were identified statewide compliance for cases reviewed:

- 2020 (2019 PUR): 79% compliance
- 2021 (2020 PUR): 84% compliance
- 2022 (2021 PUR): 85% compliance
- 2023 (2022 PUR): 88% compliance
- 2024 (2023 PUR): Currently in review; outcome published July 1, 2024.

The following practice areas were identified as needing the most improvement:

- Inquiry of a child's American Indian lineage, heritage, or Tribal affiliation
- MIFPA notification of American Indian child's Tribe(s)
- ICWA notification American Indian child's father 10 days prior to proceeding
- ICWA notification of American Indian child's mother 10 days prior to proceeding
- ICWA contacting Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) regional office for assistance to locate parent(s).

Chapter 6. CAPTA state plan updates

Section 1. Substantive law changes

No substantial changes have been made.

Section 2. Substantive plan changes

No substantial changes have been made.

Section 3. Usage of funds

The CAPTA state grant, as outlined in federal instruction, was primarily used to support Plan of Safe Care coordination and development. Additionally, funds support policy staff who oversee guidance related to CAPTA, including intake and screening, assessment and investigation, and case management practices. Staff regularly update policy guidance, and provide technical assistance and training related to CAPTA and state statute.

Section 4. Citizen review panel reports and response

With support from the department, the citizen review panels have implemented new structural procedures to increase effectiveness. Improvements include incorporation of operating procedures, open appointment procedures, creation of a webpage, addition of an open appointments webpage on the Minnesota Secretary of State's Boards and Commissions site, and recruitment of new members. The annual citizen review panel reports are available on the department webpage: [Citizen Review Panels / Minnesota Department of Human Services](#).

Section 5. Prenatal drug exposure / Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD)

The department continues to contract with four agencies to improve Plan of Safe Care (POSC) coordination as their contracts were extended through June 2024. Current grantees have focused on improving care coordination and referral processes. Grantees have developed multidisciplinary teams that meet regularly to increase communication and partnerships for the families that they serve. These multidisciplinary teams are comprised of medical professionals, community treatment providers, county social workers, and peer recovery specialists. Increased communication and understanding of each member's role on the team has made a positive impact on the referral process for Plan of Safe Care.

Community education and awareness surrounding families and infants impacted by substance use is underway. Grantees have held open educational events for professionals and community members to attend. These educational events have focused on addressing stigma and support for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, cognitive bias when working with individuals impacted by substance use, and trauma-informed care. Staff are dedicated to working directly with families who are impacted by prenatal substance use. Grantees have found success in building relationships with families by having specialized staff to work with this population.

Connecting families with peer recovery specialists and peer recovery services has been a focus of grantees to help build formal and informal supports for families.

Assisting families by reducing barriers through direct participant support is also ongoing. Grantees have been able to utilize grant funding to support families impacted by prenatal substance use. This includes assisting with transportation barriers for treatment, providing necessities (i.e., safe sleep spaces, diapers, bottles, etc.), and assisting with daycare costs. This has reduced everyday stressors that can impact substance use.

In anticipation of grants ending, department staff completed engagement sessions with Initiative Tribal Nations, county agencies, current grantees, medical providers, and community providers to continue discussions on best practices for supporting and reaching pregnant women and families impacted by substance use disorder. Two major themes were found through these engagement sessions:

- 1) Providing concrete supports for these families, such as housing assistance/funds, transportation/car repairs, food support, baby equipment, and other basic needs is essential to aide in their success.
- 2) A dedicated case worker is critical for supporting parents, preventing relapse, assisting in early identification, and creating trust with families.

The department has issued a new Request for Proposals (RFP) for up to four new grantees to implement a coordinated systemic response for POSC. The additional CAPTA funding will continue to be directed for this project. The new grant period will be July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2026, with the ability to extend the contract up to five years.

Additionally, the department is monitoring agencies' compliance of completing a Plan of Safe Care through data entered in the Social Service Information System. This information is available when requested from the Research Unit. Department staff developed a process to monitor agency compliance in real time regarding completion of the Plan of Safe Care on an ongoing basis. Staff will provide targeted technical assistance to agencies around Plans of Safe Care on prenatal exposure cases and will provide broad technical assistance to all agencies. The department will include information and requirements regarding the Plan of Safe Care in updates sent to county and Tribal agencies.

Section 6. American Rescue Plan Act funding use, planned use, and barriers

The department is utilizing funds to collaborate with Evident Change in completion of a comprehensive review of the Safety Assessment, Risk Assessment, Risk Reassessment, and Reunification Assessment Structured Decision-Making tools. These tools are utilized throughout the state in investigations, assessment, and case management. The review will include research reviews and engagement with stakeholders. The review and updates will specifically focus on decreasing subjectivity that can increase bias within the tools.

The barriers and challenges to using supplemental funds have been largely internal, such as contracting and legislative authority to use funds. A significant amount of time was needed for community engagement as well.

Chapter 7. Statistical and supporting information

Section 1. CAPTA annual state data report items

Subsection A. Information on child protection workforce

Minnesota's child protection system is administered at the county level. The Merit personnel system is utilized by 73 of 87 county agencies. The minimum qualifications for each job classification are defined by the Merit system at [Merit System Class Specifications](#).

The Merit system class specifications are often used as a general guideline by county agencies not in the system. The minimum qualifications of education and experience in the Merit system for a child protection caseworker include a bachelor's degree from an accredited:

- College/university with a major in social work, psychology, sociology, or closely related field, or
- Four-year college or university with a major in any field, and one year of experience as a caseworker in a public or private social services agency.

(Note: Incumbents must participate in a minimum of 15 hours per year of continuing education or in-service training, as outlined in Minnesota Statutes 626.559.)

New child protection workers are required to complete Foundation training provided by the Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy within six months of being hired.

There are no mandated caseload or workload requirements for child protection caseworkers or supervisors.

The Merit system minimum qualifications for social services supervisors are a:

- Master's degree in social work from an accredited college or university and one year of experience as a caseworker, or
- Master's degree from an accredited college or university in clinical psychology, counseling psychology, human services administration, or closely related field (i.e., applied behavioral sciences), and one year of experience as a caseworker, or
- Baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university and four years of experience as a caseworker.

For child protection personnel responsible for intake, screening, assessment, and investigation of child abuse and neglect reports in Minnesota, the following are demographics and data on the education, qualifications, and training of staff:

Age

20s	30s	40s	50s	60+
212	298	180	92	33

Gender

Male: 143

Female: 732

Ethnicity

American Indian	27
Asian	25
African American/Black	61
White/Caucasian	702
Hispanic	16
Other, including Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Hmong, Ethiopian, Korean, Russian, Somali, Vietnamese	17

Degrees

AA	BA/BS	BSW	MA	MSW	Ph.D.	DSW	Other Master
7	331	245	47	156	2	1	14

Education

Social work	Psychology	Sociology	Human services	Other social services	Other non-social services
420	126	41	54	102	49

Subsection B. Juvenile justice transfers

Throughout this CFSP cycle, we have reported this data by calendar year. In addition, 2023 is the first year where our system allows for detailed analysis of foster care case transfers to juvenile justice, specifically. In calendar year 2023, there were 34 instances where a child foster care case was transferred to the custody of a juvenile justice agency. This is 1.7% of eligible cases.

Section 2. Education and Training Vouchers

	Total ETVs Awarded	Number of New ETVs
2022-2023 School Year	228	135
2023-2024 School Year	175	80

Section 3. Intercountry adoptions

In 2023, there were two young people who were adopted from other countries that had TPRs and entered guardianship of the commissioner.

- Child 1: TPR was Sept. 12, 2023. Reason for TPR was child protection matters/sexual abuse. Goal for youth is adoption. Adoption agency is unknown.
- Child 2: TPR was June 8, 2023. Reason for TPR was child protection matters/physical/sexual abuse. Individual is now 18 and will be receiving adult services. Adoption agency unknown.

During the month of May 2023, the Permanency Unit completed a solicitation to have a vendor assist with reviewing adoption dissolutions and disruptions that have occurred in Minnesota. The goal is to identify themes related to the disruption or dissolution to better understand why these occur. This information will assist the Minnesota Permanency Unit to identify adjustments to current practice, and, ideally, to prevent future occurrences for any adoptive placement. Specifically, dissolutions include a high number of intercountry adoptions; the department aims for 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.

Section 4. Monthly caseworker visits data

Data for FY 2024 will be reported separately by Dec. 16, 2024, as required.

End of report.