DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES

Minnesota Statewide Assessment

Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) – Round 4

08/02/2024

Minor formatting adjustments may have been made to this document for 508 compliance. Content is unaffected.

Department of Children, Youth, and Families Child Safety and Permanency Administration 444 Lafayette Road N.
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-539-7700
dcyf.mn.gov

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

Table of Contents

Minnesota Statewide Assessment 1

Section I. General Information 4

Part 1. Identifying information 4

Part 2. List of statewide assessment (SWA) participants 4

Part 3. Description of stakeholder involvement 5

Section II. State Context Affecting Overall Performance 6

Part 1. Vision and tenets 6

Part 2. Cross-system challenges 7

Part 3. Current initiatives 8

Section III. Assessment of Child and Family Outcomes 10

Part 1. Safety outcomes 1-2 11

Safety outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect. 11

Safety outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.. 11

Part 2. Permanency outcomes 1-2 13

Permanency outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations. 13

Permanency outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children. 14

Part 3. Well-being outcomes 1-3 14

Well-being outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs. 14

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). 15

Section IV. Assessment of Systemic Factors 15

Part 1. Statewide information system 15

Item 19: Statewide information system 15

Part 2. Case review system 19
Item 20: Written case plan 19
Item 21: Periodic reviews 22
Item 22: Permanency hearings 23
Item 23: Termination of parental rights 25
Item 24: Notice of hearings and reviews to caregivers 27
Part 3. Quality assurance system 29
Item 25: Quality assurance system 29
Part 4. Staff and provider training 40
Item 26: Initial staff training 40
Item 27: Ongoing staff training 46
Item 28: Foster and adoptive parent training 50
Part 5. Service array and resource development 54
Item 29: Array of services 54
Item 30: Individualizing services 56
Part 6. Agency responsiveness to community 58
Item 31: State engagement and consultation with stakeholders pursuant to CFSP and Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) 58
Item 32: Coordination of CFSP services with other federal programs 65
Part 7. Foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment and retention 68
Item 33: Standards applied equally 68
Item 34: Requirements for criminal background checks 75
Item 35: Diligent recruitment of foster and adoptive homes 80
Item 36: Cross-jurisdictional resources for permanent placements 83

Section I. General Information

Part 1. Identifying information

Name of State Child Welfare Agency: Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families

State Child Welfare Contact Persons(s) for the Statewide Assessment:

Name: Jennifer Droneck, MPA
Title: Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Section Manager
Address: 444 Lafayette Road N., St Paul, MN 55155
Phone: 612-703-6974
Email: jennifer.droneck@state.mn.us

Part 2. List of statewide assessment (SWA) participants

Name (*denotes lived experience)	Affiliation	Role in Statewide Assessment Process
71 children* (case-related interviews)	N/A	Child voice
120 parents/caregivers* (case-related interviews)	N/A	Parent voice
98 foster parents* (case-related interviews and focus groups)	N/A	Foster parent voice
198 caseworkers/supervisors (case-related interviews)	Social service agencies	Child welfare professionals – program staff
48 guardians ad litem (case-related interviews)	Courts	Legal/judicial professionals
62 community members* (St. Paul in-person events)	N/A	Community voice
51 community members* (Bemidji in-person events)	N/A	Community voice
Judges, attorneys, court-appointed special advocates (focus groups)	Courts	Legal/judicial professionals
County and Tribal directors (focus groups)	Social service agencies	Child welfare professionals – leadership
Amber Buckner and Marquita Borst	Department, IV-E Unit	Policy and practice expertise
Mical Peterson	Department, Adoptions	Policy and practice expertise
Diane Marshall	Department, Behavioral Health	Policy and practice expertise
Mary Kelsey, Cory Jelinek, April Grissom, Paula Halverson, and Katie Leuer	Department, Licensing	Policy and practice expertise
Peder Garnaas-Halvorson	Department, Licensing Data	Data expertise
Lauren Whaley, Jon Pedersen and Yer Chang	Department, Research	Data expertise
Michelle Chalmers and Jessica Brogger	Department, Foster Care	Policy and practice expertise
Kristi Strang and Teresa Smith	Department of Corrections, Inspections and Enforcement	Policy and practice expertise
Jane Fields	Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy (MNCWTA) – Data	Data expertise
Renee Armstrong and Tracy Crudo	Department/MNCWTA	Policy and practice expertise
Judy Peterson and Rebecca Vanden Hanen	Minnesota Judicial Branch (CJI)	Policy and practice expertise
Marissa Sanders	Department, Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)	Community engagement coordinator

Name (*denotes lived experience)	Affiliation	Role in Statewide Assessment Process
Nichola Hoglund and Wendy Woessner	Department, Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)	Community engagement and CFSR case review
Nicole Slattengren and Cerina Marlar	Department, Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)	SWA planning and CFSR case review
Alexandra Mentes and Cynthia Shypulski	Department, Business Integration	Policy and practice expertise
Rebecca Wilcox	Department, Safety and Promotion	Policy and practice expertise
Sarah Bello	Department, Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)	SWA planning and SWA writing (Section I and Items 26-36)
Janet Bowman	Department, Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)	SWA writing (Item 19)
Brittany Lochner	Department, Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)	Leadership
Jennifer Droneck	Department, Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)	Leadership, CFSR planning and SWA writing (Section II, Section III and Items 20-25)
Windy Ross, Yvonne Goodsky and Marvin Davis	Department, Child Safety and Permanency Administration	Leadership

Part 3. Description of stakeholder involvement

The Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families (department) conducted extensive internal and external engagement with a variety of partners across the child welfare continuum to better understand the strengths and challenges of Minnesota's child welfare system. The department facilitated:

- In-person discussions with community members
- Focus groups with parents/caregivers, caseworkers, foster parents, court partners and county and Tribal agency directors
- Surveys of foster parents and licensing agencies
- Discussion with the state's Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council
- Presentations with court partners (Minnesota's Court Improvement Program)
- Case-related interviews (CFSR) with children, youth, parents/caregivers, foster parents, caseworkers and supervisors and court-appointed special child advocates (known as guardians ad litem in Minnesota).

The department also engaged staff and leaders across the Child Safety and Permanency (CSP) Administration, Office of Inspector General Administration and Behavioral Health and Housing Administration. Over 100 staff from CSP participated in learning sessions to orient them to the CFSR. CSP leadership and staff met weekly to discuss progress and results for the CFSR statewide assessment. Leadership will continue to meet regularly to monitor, evaluate and support Program Improvement Plan (PIP) implementation efforts.

Section II. State Context Affecting Overall Performance

Part 1. Vision and tenets

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

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

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

On July 1, 2024, the state of Minnesota established the new Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), which includes the Child Safety and Permanency (CSP) Administration of the Children and Family Services Administration. This new cabinet-level agency will be fully staffed by July 2025. Under the new department structure, the CSP Administration will be its own administration.

The 2023 legislature included the governor's proposal to establish the new agency and funding for implementation in the Health and Human Services Omnibus bill signed into law. The statute appropriates funds for an Implementation Office, established on July 1, 2023, and housed at Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB). This office works in partnership with state agencies and through the Governor's Children's Cabinet on planning and transition efforts to coordinate and plan for the creation of the new agency centered on our most precious resources: our children, youth and families.

The law directs some programs currently run by the Minnesota Departments of Human Services, Education and Public Safety to come together to create the new Department of Children, Youth, and Families. Services will continue to be provided through current program structures in each department throughout the transition period. Bringing together supports for families, including core programs serving children from infancy to adolescence, the Departments of Human Services, Education, Health and Public Safety will transfer identified programs to DCYF by July 2025. Once the transition period

concludes, programs can still be considered for transfer as identified by the administration, legislature and advocates.

DCYF is taking a Whole Family Approach to the work it does to fulfill the department's goals by approaching practice, program and policy decision making in a way that simultaneously recognizes and addresses the needs of children and the adults in their lives. The Vision for Policy and Equity Workstream adapted the work of Ascend at the Aspen Institute into the following visual representation created for DCYF employees; it answers the question: "What do people need to thrive?" The gears represented reflect the work of programs at DCYF as well as what all people in Minnesota need to thrive. This visual is for use within state government, and work will continue throughout this year to create a public-facing version. Opportunities to learn more about this work, including an orientation and corresponding principals, will be available in the coming months.

Part 2. Cross-system challenges

As the Department of Children, Youth, and Families transitions over the next year, there will be continued challenges in the creation of a new agency. Several program areas will remain at the Department of Human Services that have worked closely with the Child Safety and Permanency Administration, including Behavioral Health, which includes adult mental health, children's mental health and alcohol, drug, and other addiction services. While relationships with these program areas are strong, there is ongoing concern from different administrations related to how DCYF partners with them going forward.

Minnesota is a state-supervised, county-administered child welfare system that creates both benefits and challenges to local and state agencies. The child welfare system is very complex, and children and families move through the system in many ways. Additionally, the system is highly decentralized, with county agencies retaining considerable autonomy in administering services. While all county agencies must meet state and federal requirements, their processes, expectations and structures vary a great deal. For example, some agencies assign workers to focus on a specific aspect of child welfare work, while workers in other agencies act as generalists. Community partners have identified concerns related to differences in interpretation of policy and different practice standards that create gaps in services and outcomes for families in the child welfare system. Concerns related to a decentralized maltreatment reporting process were highlighted in the 2024 legislative session and resulted in the requirement for the commissioner to review maltreatment reporting processes in other states and consult with stakeholders to develop and provide recommendations to the legislature.

Workforce retention and caseload sizes continue to create challenges across Minnesota. During the Child and Family Service Review case-related interviews, caseworkers often indicated workforce retention and caseload sizes as barriers to completing all their tasks daily, or that they prohibit them from providing child welfare services at the standard needed to ensure positive outcomes for children and families. More staff alone will not address the needs. For investments in workforce capacity to be effective, the following considerations will need to be addressed:

- Workforce availability across all sectors is at an all-time low, making it difficult to attract people to fill the existing vacancies in many county and Tribal child welfare agencies.
- The antiquated and cumbersome Social Service Information System (SSIS) makes caseworkers' required documentation burdensome. Caseworkers' data entry takes time away from families.
- Serving families with trauma can have a negative and cumulative emotional and mental impact on workers over time; stronger supports are needed to sustain the workforce to prevent turnover.
- Supervisor capacity and development are critical to recruiting and maintaining an effective workforce.
- Any increase in workforce requires a proportional increase in training and development capacity.

Defining, tracking and measuring average caseloads is complex and based on several locally specific factors, which makes it difficult to contextualize. Local agencies are often structured differently based on local need, infrastructure and resources available. Workers from urban and rural counties often have very different roles. Workers in less populous counties often have caseloads with a mix of child welfare and other program areas (mental health, adult services, etc.) whereas workers from larger, urban counties tend to have specialized roles. When considering caseloads, it's also important to also consider workload, which may not be reflected in quantitative data.

Part 3. Current initiatives

The following are a few examples of ongoing improvement initiatives aimed at achieving desired outcomes and systemic change, targeting areas needing improvement identified throughout the last CFSR and through continued self-assessment. Additional examples and multi-year updates can be found in the state's Annual Progress and Services Reports and Final Report on the 2020-2024 CFSP.

- **Safety Practice Profiles** – In collaboration with the Capacity Building Center for States, the Safety Framework Advisory Committee and local child welfare agencies, the department developed Safety Practice Profiles (SPP). SPP define the "what" of child welfare practice, meaning it describes practice at the level of "saying and doing" when working with a child, 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. Pilot phases were rolled out in 2020-2024 with multiple agencies and in collaboration with the Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy. The next phase is a statewide rollout of the SPP, during which four cohorts of 10-15 learners each per year are planned. SPP are being integrated into initial training required of new child protection workers, as well as incorporated into the development of new supervisor training.

- **Reentry project** – In collaboration with Minnesota's Court Improvement Program, called the Children's Justice Initiative (CJI), the department is working on a project to address the disparate reentry rate of African American children into the foster care system. Beginning in 2021 to

present, staff from CJI and the department have been meeting monthly to review data, engage those with lived experience, conduct root cause analysis, create a theory of change and propose solutions.

- **Reducing disparities for American Indian children** – Minnesota continues to strive to eliminate persistent child welfare disparities for American Indian children. The department created a disparities index dashboard containing 40 unique data points along the child welfare continuum to better understand where racial bias may exist. The department is supporting the efforts of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe in becoming the fourth American Indian Child Welfare Initiative Tribe. The department's American Indian Child Wellbeing Unit works with local child welfare agencies to ensure compliance with requirements set forth in the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA). The unit also provides technical assistance, education and consultation. The department regularly consults with the Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council on policy and practice. The department also collaborates with the Minnesota Tribal Training Certification Partnership with the University of Minnesota Duluth to provide training to staff and caseworkers on best practice standards.

- **Reducing disparities for African American children** – Minnesota continues to strive to eliminate persistent child welfare disparities for African American children. In 2020, the department established a pilot for the African American Well-being Unit, a new unit within the Child Safety and Permanency Administration. This pilot built on learnings of the African American Disparities Advisory Council, which was sponsored by the department from 2008 to 2018. A noteworthy result of this council was the amendment to Minnesota Statutes 260C.175, which now allows parents to recommend placement of their children with relatives. The primary components of the pilot were the creation of a supervisor position and several staff positions. One staff position focuses on reviewing policy and practice contributing to disproportionate involvement of African American children in the child welfare system. Other staff positions focus on the institutionalization of a currently existing advisory council, conducting case reviews and grant making within the context of currently known, local and culturally specific service providers. In the 2024 legislative session, the Minnesota Legislature passed a proposal, now known at the Minnesota African American Indian Family Preservation and Child Welfare Disproportionality Act (soon to be codified as Minnesota Statutes 260.61-260.93), brought forth by external advocates. The department provided technical assistance to the advocates and legislative authors for a period of seven years to support its eventual passage. The now-permanent African American Well-being Unit also provides training to local agency staff.

- **Service array and navigation** – In 2023, the Minnesota Legislature awarded the department $7.1 million in one-time funding to develop and implement a statewide network of Community Resource Centers (CRCs) through 2027. CRCs are an extension of the Preschool Development Grant (PDG) Community Resource Hub pilot. The department also received funds for Kinship Navigation (KN) programming and plans to couple these funds with CRC funding. CRCs 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. CRCs and KN programs are intended to serve communities and families that experience inequities in accessing supports and services due to systemic racism and inequalities based on disability, language, gender and geography. Like PDG hubs, CRCs and KN programs are a strategic effort to make it easier for families to get what they need, increase access to services and prioritize prevention within family-serving systems.

Section III. Assessment of Child and Family Outcomes

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

Following completion of the Round 3 PIP (May 2021), the department paused use of the Onsite Review Instrument to complete case reviews and engaged in efforts to increase the capacity of Minnesota's redesigned Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process. During this pause in the completion of CFSRs, the department used a variety of quantitative data measures (state, federal, Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) indicators and relative rate index) as well as qualitative data collected through a variety of processes including Systems Learning Reviews (SLR), Systems Learning Mapping (SLM), Systemic Critical Incident Reviews (SCIRs) and Screening Reviews to complete assessment of the state's performance. Additionally, department staff have completed a CFSR crosswalk, which aligns 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 review 11 cases, including in-home and out-of-home care cases. The findings of those case reviews have been provided to Hennepin County's Continuous Quality Improvement team, which presented the findings to their governance team; they will then use the preliminary data to explore barriers and facilitators to achieving strengths ratings and improving overall outcomes. In April 2023, the department began completing Child and Family Service Reviews on a statewide level. The department uses a statewide random sample of 65 cases (40 out-of-home placements and 25 in-home). It will review 65 cases over six months, beginning in April and October each year. The department is currently engaged in planning and coordinating all areas

related to the Round 4 CFSRs, which includes case reviews. The state is well-positioned to conduct a State-Led Review Process for Round 4 and future rounds.

Part 1. Safety outcomes 1-2

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

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

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

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

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

separate divisions within the state working to disentangle what is happening with state reentry performance, with a goal of reducing reinvolvement.

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

Minnesota's performance for Item 3 (Risk and Safety Assessment and Management) has steadily declined since completion of case reviews in 2021, reaching as high as 90% strengths in 2021 and averaging 75% strengths since April 2023. Additional efforts were needed to see all children in the home at a frequency and location that allowed the caseworker an opportunity to complete comprehensive safety and risk assessments. A barrier identified included policy guidance related to practice for children's mental health, juvenile justice, truancy, Parent Support Outreach Program and other non-child protection or placement cases and expectations for seeing all children in the family and/or any of the children in the family depending on services provided.

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

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

Part 2. Permanency outcomes 1-2

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

Stability in foster care: This measure examines the rate of foster care placement moves during a continuous period a child spends away from home. The state tracks this using administrative data and the information is based on the local calculations based on the Round 3 CFSR criteria. For the period under review, the state has seen modest improvement in this measure, despite overall declines in the raw number of days children are spending in care. The rate of placement moves was 3.9 moves per 1,000 days in care in 201; it 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 as 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 do not seem to be patterns emerging when cases rate as an area needing improvement, but note outliers including goals that did not meet child's needs, delays in identifying goals and not filing a termination of parental rights petition within required timelines.

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

Permanency for those in care between 12-23 months: This measure examines cases that are ongoing at the start of the calendar year and specifies the rate at which those cases achieve a permanency outcome by the end of the year. The state tracks this using administrative data, and the information is based on the local calculations based on the Round 3 CFSR criteria. For the period under review, the state has seen general improvement in the measure, with 55.5% of cases achieving a permanency

outcome within the time frames in 2019, compared to 58.3% in 2023. Hennepin County again plays a substantial role in determining overall state performance. The agency has increased performance on this measure from 48.9% in 2019 to 64.3% in 2023. Ramsey County, the second biggest county in the state, has also seen notable increases on this measure, moving from 43.8% in 2019 to 52.1% in 2023.

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

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

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

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

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

Part 3. Well-being outcomes 1-3

Well-being outcome 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.

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

Minnesota has maintained high performance for Items 16, 17 and 18 (Educational Needs of the Child, Physical Health of the Child, Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child). Since closing out the Round 3 PIP in 2021, strengths ratings in 2023 and 2024 have ranged from 90%-100% for each of these items.

Section IV. Assessment of Systemic Factors

Part 1. Statewide information system

Item 19: Statewide information system

How well is the statewide information system functioning statewide to ensure that, at a minimum, the state can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care?

State self-assessed rating and rationale: Strength – Minnesota's statewide comprehensive child welfare information system, the Social Service Information System (SSIS), can readily identify all federally required case components at an average rate of 98%. SSIS employs multiple data integrity features to

ensure that required information is timely, accurate and consistent. The state continues to invest heavily in SSIS modernization initiatives to improve usability, functionality and sustainability.

19.1 Overview

Minnesota's comprehensive child welfare information system is the Social Service Information System (SSIS). SSIS has been in operation statewide since 1999 and serves as a complete case management system for child welfare caseworkers in Minnesota's 87 counties and American Indian Child Welfare Initiative (AICWI) Tribal agencies to document client demographic information, work group activity including contacts and case notes, case plans and letters, and track timelines and financial responsibility. The system fully reports to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS) and the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS).

In addition to child welfare cases, SSIS supports other social services program areas, including adult protection, behavioral health and waivered services. State users of SSIS also include those doing licensing background studies, disability and financial eligibility determinations and case reviews and audits. There are more than 10,000 daily users.

19.2 Performance

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:

1. Status: whether the child is in foster care or no longer in care
2. Demographic characteristics: date of birth, sex, race, ethnicity
3. Location: child's physical location
4. 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).

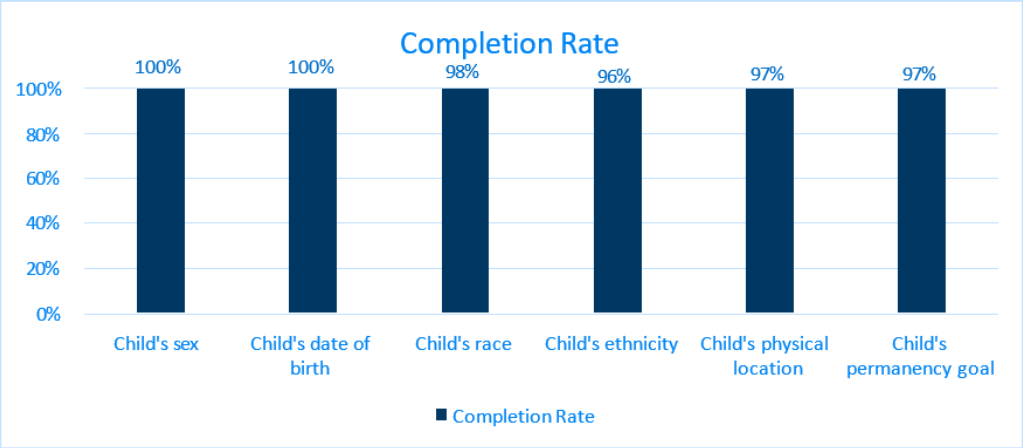


Figure 19.2 Completion Rate[1]

19.3 Data integrity

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.

[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

19.4 Continuous improvement

SSIS undergoes continuous improvement and modernization efforts. Department staff partner with SSIS users on a regular basis to build capacity, provide technical assistance, maintain open communication, and feedback loops.

- Quarterly system updates: The General SSIS Release Information page contains detailed information about each update. Prior to each statewide release, SSIS holds three to four meetings with county agencies who will be piloting the release. After a statewide rollout, training is provided to county and Tribal workers on new/updated features.

- New SSIS worker trainings: Department staff offer new worker trainings throughout the year, which focuses on using SSIS efficiently while ensuring data entry is complete and timely. Training emphasizes routine use of SSIS to ensure compliance with all statutory requirements, full documentation of important events and case progress and creation of a reliable source of information for reporting needs.

- Partnership with users: The department facilitates the SSIS Mentor Network of seasoned system users who support and assist other users within their local agency. The department also hosts monthly SSIS Coffee Talks for information sharing and connection building. Since May 2022, the department has held biweekly meetings with county leadership to provide updates on critical changes to SSIS that will reduce outages and improve performance. SSIS staff also facilitate quarterly partnership gatherings with local social service agency leadership to maintain open communication and coordination efforts.

- Minnesota Information Technology Services (MNIT) is Minnesota's central information and technology organization. It employs data integrity specialists to ensure data integrity in SSIS and other state data systems. MNIT compiles and distributes data discrepancy reports to local agencies twice a year. These reports identify errors or potential errors in data entry, as well as information that is required, but has not been entered into the system. Local agencies are responsible for reviewing potential errors and correcting identified errors. MNIT hosts biweekly open forums for county and Tribal SSIS mentors and IT staff to report ongoing performance and stability issues and discuss potential causes and known solutions.

At the conclusion of Minnesota's 2024 legislative session, nearly $10 million was appropriated for SSIS improvements specific to child welfare functions[2]. These funds will be utilized to start modernizing SSIS and aligning with federal standards for modularity, high data quality and excellent interface that support the specific needs of Minnesota. Specific direction for this work will be determined when the assessment for modernizing is complete (expected in spring 2025).

Part 2. Case review system

Item 20: Written case plan

How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that each child has a written case plan that is developed jointly with the child's parent(s) and includes the required provisions?

State self-assessed rating and rationale: Strength – 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.

20.1 Policy

Minnesota Statutes 260C.212 and Minnesota Rules 37, Rules of Juvenile Protection Procedure, establish requirements that:

- An out-of-home placement plan be prepared within 30 days of a child's placement in out-of-home care
- The out-of-home placement plan be prepared by the local social services agency jointly with the parent(s) or guardian of a child, and in consultation with the child (when appropriate) and the child's:
    - Guardian ad litem
    - Tribe, if the child is American Indian
    - Foster parent or representative of the foster care facility.
- The out-of-home placement plan be updated every six months
    - A plan for services be written within 30 days of the determination that child protective services are required (for children who receive child protection services while residing in their homes, including those who are subjects of a Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) petition per Minnesota Statutes 626.556, subd. 10m(a) and Minnesota Rules 9560.0228, subp. 2.

[2] Chapter 115, HF 5237, Article 22, section 2, subdivision 2(a)

Minnesota Rules 560.0228, subp. 2, establishes requirements for child protective service plans while children are living at home, including that children and families are involved in development of plans.

- For children who receive children's mental health case management services while residing in their home, Minnesota Statutes 245.4881, subd. 4(a) requires development of an Individual Family Community Support Plan (IFSCP) that incorporates a child's individual treatment plan within 30 days of determining eligibility for case management services. A child's case manager is required to involve the child, their family, advocates, service providers and significant others in all phases of development and implementation of the IFCSP.

Minnesota Rules 9525.0024 requires development of an Individual Service Plan (ISP) for children receiving developmental disabilities case management services. The ISP must include a person's preferences for services as stated by the person or a person's legal representative.

20.2 Practice

The out-of-home placement plan template in SSIS includes all statutory and Title IV-E required case plan elements, including Independent Living Skills plans. Templates are updated when federal regulations or state statutes change.

The department issues bulletins that provide instruction to agency caseworkers regarding case plan requirements and/or amendments.

Caseworkers meet with parents and children individually or as part of family meetings to develop case plans. To facilitate discussion, caseworkers may prepare drafts or outlines of case plans based on previous conversations with family members in advance and later incorporate additional family input. Drafts are based on a workers' previous conversations with families and screenings or tools (e.g., Structured Decision-Making tools) completed.

Local agencies utilize Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) and/or case planning conferences as a means for engaging parents and other family members in case plan development.

SSIS generates an alert to the assigned caseworker if a child has been in placement for 21 days and no placement plan has been created in the system. The alert will not be satisfied until an out-of-home placement plan has been created. Additional alerts to review an out-of-home placement plan are generated 60 days after the most recent out-of-home placement plan was opened.

20.3 Data

The table below shows the percent of children who had written case plans completed within 60 days of entering foster care in 2021, 2022, and 2023.[3]

Year	Number of children entering care in the year (includes only episodes extending 60 days or longer) (D)	Number of children with written case plans effective within 60 days of entering foster care (N)	Percentage of children with written case plans effective within 60 days of entering foster care
2021	3,783	3,178	84.0%
2022	3,651	3,071	84.1%
2023	3,518	3,097	88.0%

Figure 20.3a Cases with Case Plans Completed within 60 Days of Placement

The table below shows the percentages of strengths ratings for Case Planning Engagement for Children, Mothers, and Fathers from Child and Family Services Reviews completed.[4]

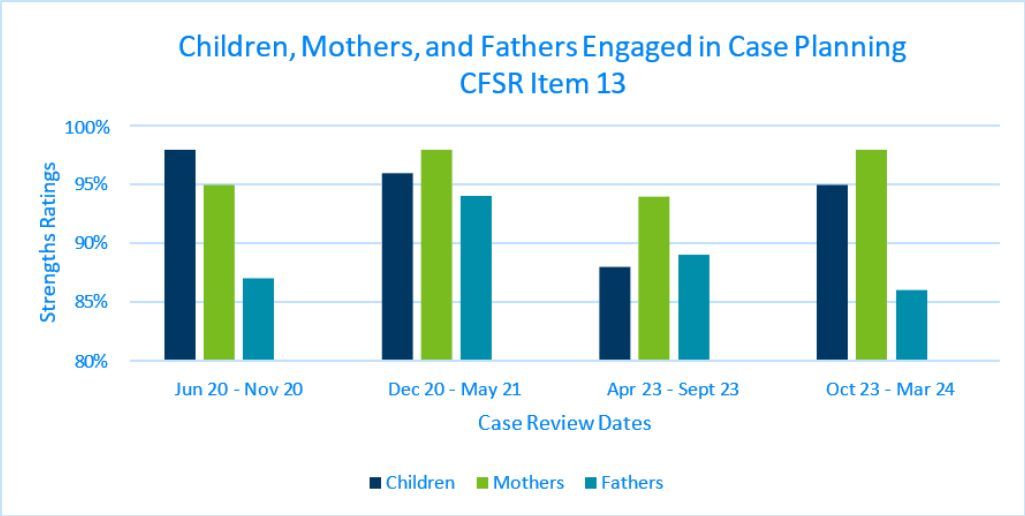


Figure 20.3b Case Planning Engagement (Item 13)

Feedback from focus groups conducted with caseworkers and Children's Justice Initiative members (judges, attorneys, Guardian ad Litems) indicated that parents are generally involved in the case planning process. Some pointed out that the plans can be long and confusing, and parents could benefit from a clearer, more concise explanation of what is expected of them.

[3] Source: Social Service Information System (SSIS)

[4] Source: Child and Family Service Reviews (CFSR) completed and documented in the CFSR Online Monitoring System (OMS) June 2020 – May 2021 and April 2023 - March 2024

Item 21: Periodic reviews

How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that a periodic review for each child occurs no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or by administrative review?

State self-assessed rating and rationale: Strength – 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 the majority of periodic reviews are completed every 90 days as statutorily required.

21.1 Policy

Minnesota Statues and Rules requires the following hearings for all CHIPS cases, pursuant to Minnesota Rules 51.03. When the disposition is an award of legal custody to the responsible social services agency, the court must review the disposition in court at least every 90 days following the disposition order. When the disposition is protective supervision, the court must review the disposition in court at least every six months.

Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 260C.204(a)(1- 4), when a child continues in placement out of the home of the parent or guardian from whom the child was removed, no later than six months after the child's placement the court must conduct a permanency progress hearing to review:

1. The parent's progress on the out-of-home placement plan or case plan
2. Whether the agency's efforts toward reunification were reasonable/active given the circumstances of the family
3. Whether the agency's efforts to finalize the child's permanent plan were reasonable/active given the circumstances of the family, including the agency's efforts to make a placement in a home that will commit to being the legally permanent family for the child in the event the child cannot return home according to the timelines, and
4. Whether, in the case of an Indian child, the agency's efforts to prevent the breakup of the family were active given the circumstances of the family.

21.2 Data

The table below provides the number of children in care for fewer than 180 days and the percentage of those children having a review hearing by the 180th day for years 2021, 2022 and 2023 [5]

	Filed in 2021	Filed in 2022	Filed in 2023
Total number of children	2699	2643	1323
Number of children in care fewer than 180 days	513	518	281
Children in care 180+ days	2186	2125	1042
Periodic review held within 180 days	1902 (87%)	1726 (81%)	835 (80%)
No periodic review held within 180 days	284 (15%)	399 (19%)	207 (20%)

Figure 21.2 Review Hearing

21.3 Analysis

Children did not have a review hearing by day 180 due to the following reasons:

- The case took more than 180 days to adjudicate. Court will not review the case prior to adjudication. In this case, it was regularly heard through admit/deny and pretrial hearings.
- The case was never adjudicated and closed, but only after 180 days had passed,
- Adjudication took more than 90 days, and the judge set the next hearing out 90 days which would exceed 180 days.

Item 22: Permanency hearings

How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that, for each child, a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body occurs no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter?

State self-assessed rating and rationale: Area Needing Improvement - 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.

22.1 Policy

[5] Source: Minnesota Court Information System

Minnesota Statutes 260C.503 covers permanency proceedings:

> Subdivision 1. Required permanency proceedings. (a) Except for children in foster care pursuant to chapter 260D, where the child is in foster care or in the care of a noncustodial or nonresident parent, the court shall commence proceedings to determine the permanency status of a child by holding the admit-deny hearing required under section 260C.507 not later than 12 months after the child is placed in foster care or in the care of a noncustodial or nonresident parent. Permanency proceedings for children in foster care pursuant to chapter 260d shall be according to section 260D.07.
>
> Minnesota Rules of Juvenile Protection Procedure (Minnesota Rules 51.03) state their case must continue to be reviewed at minimum every 90 days, including making reasonable efforts findings.

22.2 Data

The table below shows the number of children for 2021,2022, and 2023 who had a permanency hearing by day 365 in foster care[6].

Year	Children in care 365+ days	Permanency review hearing held by day 365
2021	1,357	922 (68%)
2022	1296	907 (70%)
2023	296	208 (70%)

Figure 22.2a Permanency Hearings by Month 12

The table below shows the number of children for 2021 and 2022 who had a review hearings every twelve months after two years in foster care.[7]

Yearly review hearing for children in care 730+ days	Number of children	Percent of children
Intermediate disposition hearing	129	77%
Pretrial	8	.05%
Admit/deny hearing – CHIPS or permanency	7	.04%
Hearing	7	.04%
Review hearing CHIPS or permanency	6	.04%
Permanency Progress Review hearing	4	.02%
Disposition hearing	4	.02%
Motion hearing	2	.01%

[6] Source: Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS)

[7] Source: Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS)

Scheduling conference	1	00
No hearing	0	00
Total children/hearings	168	100%

Figure 22.2b Yearly Review Hearing

Item 23: Termination of parental rights

How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that the filing of termination of parental rights (TPR) proceedings occurs in accordance with required provisions?

State self-assessed rating and rationale: Area Needing Improvement – 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.

23.1 Policy

- Minnesota Statutes 260C.505(a) and Juvenile Protection Rule 52 require a permanency petition or termination of parental rights petition be filed at or prior to the time a child has been in foster care, or in the care of a noncustodial or nonresident parent, for 11 months.
- Minnesota Statutes 260C.301, subd. 1 (b)(5)(i), specifies that the juvenile court may terminate all rights of a parent to a child when reasonable efforts under the direction of the court have failed to correct the conditions leading to a child's placement. It is presumed that reasonable efforts have failed upon a showing that "a child has resided out of the parental home under court order for a cumulative period of 12 months within the preceding 22 months."
- Minnesota Statutes 260C.301, subd. 4, and Juvenile Protection Rule 42, require the county attorney to file a termination of parent rights petition or a petition to transfer permanent legal and physical custody to a relative for children who have been in out-of-home care for 15 of the most recent 22 months.
- Minnesota Statutes 260C.503, subd. 2 outlines circumstances in which the responsible social service agency must ask the county attorney to immediately file a TPR petition, including: a child was subject to egregious harm, or a child is the sibling of a child who was subjected to egregious harm.

- Minnesota Statutes 260C.301 through 260C.317 specify the process for voluntary and involuntary termination of parental rights proceedings, consistent with federal law.

23.2 Practice

- Parents are advised about permanency timelines by caseworkers and the courts as soon as children enter foster care including the potential outcome if reunification is not achieved within timelines.
- Judges refer to the "Judges Juvenile Protection Benchbook" for guidance on high-quality judicial process related to termination of parental rights or other permanent placement proceedings.
- Local agencies have the capacity through the Social Service Information System (SSIS) and Tableau[8] Dashboards to track the length of time children have been in care, including those in care for 15 of the most recent 22 months.
- Statewide implementation of the Children's Justice Initiative supports ongoing improvement in juvenile court procedures and timely filing of termination of parental rights petitions, as required.

23.3 Data

The table below shows the number of children who had a termination of parental rights petition filed timely in from cases completed through Child and Family Service Reviews. [9]

Case Review Dates	Children in foster care for at least 15 of the most recent 22 months	In how many cases did the agency file or join a termination of parental rights petition before the period under review or timely during the period under review	In how many cases did an exception to the requirement to file or join a termination of parental rights petition exist?	Percent of children who had a timely termination of parental rights petition filed timely.
June 20 – Nov 20	26	20	6	100%
Dec 20 – May 21	28	19	3	82%
Apr 23 – Sept 23	16	11	6	100%
Oct 23 – Mar 24	17	8	4	71%

Figure 23.3a Timely TPR Petitions Filed

[8] Tableau is a visual analytics platform transforming the way the department uses data to solve problems, empowering people, and organizations to make the most of their data.

[9] Source: Child and Family Service Reviews (CFSR) completed and documented in the CFSR Online Monitoring System (OMS) June 2020 – May 2021 and April 2023 - March 2024

Item 24: Notice of hearings and reviews to caregivers

How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care (1) are receiving notification of any review or hearing held with respect to the child and (2) have a right to be heard in any review or hearing held with respect to the child?

State self-assessed rating and rationale: Area Needing Improvement - 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.

24.1 Policy

Minnesota RULE 33. PARTICIPANTS Rule 33.01. *Participant Status*:

Unless already a party pursuant to Rule 32, or unless otherwise specified, participants to a juvenile protection matter shall include:

a) the child;
b) any parent who is not a legal custodian and any alleged, adjudicated, or presumed father;
c) the responsible social services agency, when the responsible social services agency is not the petitioner;
d) any guardian ad litem for the child's legal custodian;
e) grandparents with whom the child has lived within the two years preceding the filing of the petition;
f) relatives or other persons providing care for the child and other relatives who request notice;
g) current foster parents, persons proposed as permanent foster care parents, and persons proposed as pre-adoptive parents;
h) the spouse of the child, if any; and
i) any other person who is deemed by the court to be important to a resolution that is in the best interests of the child.

Rule 33.02. Rights of Participants Subd. 1.*Generally*.

Unless a participant intervenes as a party pursuant to Rule 34, or is joined as a party pursuant to Rule 35, the rights of a participant shall be limited to:

a) notice and the petition pursuant to Rule 44 or 53;
b) legal representation pursuant to Rule 36;
c) being present at hearings unless excluded pursuant to Rule 38; and
d) offering information at the discretion of the court, except as provided in subdivision 2.

Subd. 2. Foster Parents, Pre-Adoptive Parents, and Relatives Providing Care.

> Notwithstanding subdivision 1, any foster parent, pre-adoptive parent, relative providing care for the child, or relative to whom the responsible social services agency recommends transfer of permanent legal and physical custody of the child shall have a right to be heard in any hearing regarding the child. Any other relative may request an opportunity to be heard. This subdivision does not require that a foster parent, pre-adoptive parent, or relative providing care for the child be made a party to the matter. Each party and the county attorney shall be provided an opportunity to respond to any presentation by a foster parent, pre-adoptive parent, or relative.

24.2 Practice

Court administration has two forms that support compliance with this measure. CHIPS Notice of Hearing – Foster Parent, which includes the right to be heard. Additionally, there is a form sent to all parties and participants advising them of their rights. It may be included with other documents and is therefore not trackable via traditional data entry.

Relevant Minnesota Statutes and Rules are listed above, but important points include:

- Minnesota Statute and Rule both require court staff to send notice of hearing and right to be heard to foster parents.
- Court Staff is not required to use the "service" tab in the Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS). [10]They are required to enter "Notice of Hearing to Foster Parent" which includes the right to be heard. Alternately, they can enter "Notice of Hearing" and select all to whom notice was send, including foster parents.
- Sending "Notice of Hearing" (which includes the right to be heard) directly to foster parents is not required if the next hearing date is contained in a previous court order and foster parents were given the order or heard the next hearing date announce in court. The current system does not allow for retrieval of this information in aggregate form.
- There may be instances where foster parents were given Notice of Hearing and Right to be Heard but our current system of documenting will not capture this.

[10] Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS) is an online computer system that holds information about individuals involved in the Minnesota court system.

24.3 Data

Year	Foster parents who were provided notice of hearing and their right to be heard[11]	No Notice provided or was entered into the system in a way that cannot be retrieved. [12]	Children who were subject of an Admit/Deny Hearing.
2021	1599 (47%)	1799	3398
2022	1536 (45%)	1870	3406
2023	791 (40%)	1203	1994

Feedback from focus groups conducted with foster parents indicated about half received notice but had mixed experiences with speaking to the court. Some foster parents reported being questioned by a judge as to why they wanted to speak; another foster parent reported that a judge would not allow them to speak. One foster parent had worked with several counties and said there was no consistency in receiving notice or being allowed to speak. One foster parent said that one county used a report form that foster parents could submit to the court. They felt that was a very effective way of sharing information with the court.

Feedback from focus groups conducted with Children's Justice Initiative (CJI) members indicated that judges ask foster parents if they want to speak and most say yes. Some did say they could be better about giving this opportunity to caregivers.

Part 3. Quality assurance system

Item 25: Quality assurance system

How well is the quality assurance system functioning statewide to ensure that it is (1) operating in the jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided, (2) has standards to evaluate the quality of services (including standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect their health and safety), (3) identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, (4) provides relevant reports, and (5) evaluates implemented program improvement measures?

[11] In Minnesota, the language in the Notice of Hearing for Foster Parents automatically includes the Right to be Heard.

[12] Staff can enter these one of two ways: a case event called "Notice of Hearing to Foster Parent" (which is represented in table above). However, staff can also choose a more generic "Notice of Hearing" and then select all the parties to whom the notice was sent (which would include foster parents.) This data point cannot be retrieved.

State self-assessed rating and rationale: Strength - Minnesota has demonstrated an ongoing commitment to the redesign of the Quality Assurance System since Round 3. The department has worked closely with the Capacity Building Center for States to develop and implement a highly functioning Continuous Quality Improvement process and has designated staff to each area of the work. Most recently, the department added a Community Engagement/Communications Specialist to the CQI team to ensure communication with external and internal partners occur on a regular basis and to integrate community voice into every stage of the CQI process. The department is fortunate to have a dedicated and highly skilled team of professionals implementing CQI efforts on behalf of Minnesota's children, youth and families.

25.1 Minnesota's child welfare system

Minnesota has a state-supervised, county administered child welfare system. Minnesota's children, youth and families receive child welfare services from Minnesota's three American Indian Child Welfare Initiative Tribes, 79 county social service agencies and three multi-agency social service agencies. Minnesota's quality assurance system functions across the state and can provide both qualitative and quantitative data on a state, regional and local level. Minnesota uses CFSR standards for safety, permanency and well-being outcomes. National data indicators are also used for standards regarding safety, permanency and placement stability.

Minnesota has documented policy and best practice guides that clearly outline expectations regarding foster care, services and child welfare practice and procedures. All policies align with federal and state mandates and law. These are distributed to local agencies through a variety of pathways including webinars, listservs, emails and the Department of Human Services Website. Administration staff provide updates to local agencies through monthly newsletters. Staff meet virtually once a month with the Minnesota Association of County Social Services Administrators (MACSSA) Children's Services Committee.

Department staff and local agencies have access to data using the Minnesota's Public Child Welfare Data Dashboard, annual reports and Tableau Server[13]. The department has been enhancing procedures throughout Minnesota to facilitate access to specialized administrative data. To promote the use of data-driven decision-making, the research staff provides ongoing technical assistance and coaching to local agencies and department staff. The team recently conducted a presentation emphasizing the significance of data literacy and facilitated data literacy exercises for the entire administration, encouraging practical application of data skills. 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. Dashboards include row-level data to identify which cases are or are not

[13] Tableau is a visual analytics platform transforming the way the department uses data to solve problems, empowering people and organizations to make the most of their data.

meeting performance measures, allowing local agencies to complete comprehensive reviews of cases to determine if there are data quality, practice challenges or service gaps.

While there are many dashboards available for review, the department would like to highlight four:

- The Screening Threshold Analysis dashboard is used to measure decisional outcomes of child maltreatment screening decisions.
- Relative Rate Index shows involvement of children by race relative to the experience of white children (e.g., "…are two times more likely than white children to experience child protection").
- The General Child Welfare Statistics dashboard was created for a broad audience, including (but not limited to) county and Tribal child welfare agencies, department staff members, other Minnesota governmental agencies, public and private agencies providing direct care to children and families and other child welfare partners.
- CQI Indicators Dashboard is published internally on Tableau Server and contains 13 high-level data indicators. At the highest level, the dashboard conveys process and outcome information taken from SSIS; it is designed to highlight both changes from the previous year as well as observed racial/ethnic disparities for each data point.

Along with the previously mentioned dashboards this past year, two key dashboards were developed. One is dedicated to review data related to child welfare cases used by the African American Well-being Unit; the other dashboard focused on critical incident reports on fatalities and near-fatalities.

The chart below illustrates Tableau Server usage since development in 2020; usage has nearly doubled in four years.

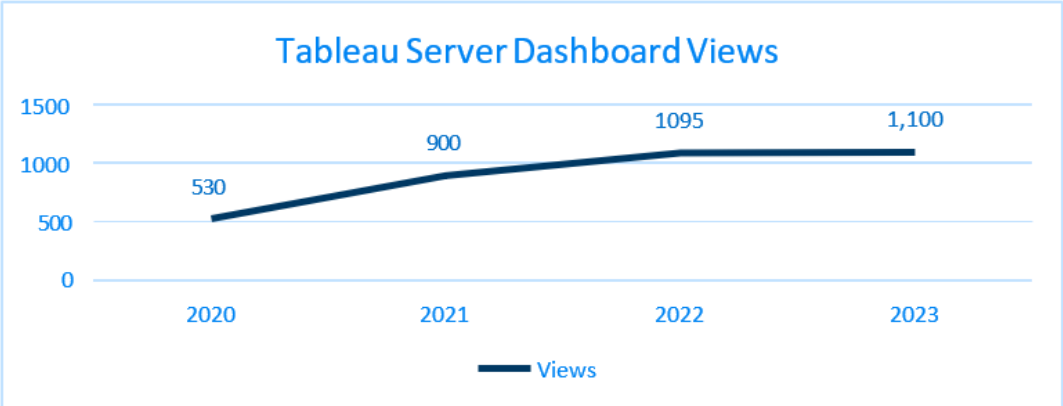


Figure 25.1 Dashboard Views

25.2 Minnesota's quality assurance Round 3 findings and PIP activities

Minnesota was found to not be in substantial conformity due to the following:

- The state's system collects data from multiple sources, but it lacks several required components that are necessary to demonstrate effective functioning across the state.
- The state agency provides the counties with information and data, including the results of Minnesota CFSRs, but follow-up is inconsistent and does not ensure that statewide challenges are addressed and adjustments to practice and policy are made.
- The state works with counties on improvement plans based on Minnesota CFSR results but often does not return to complete another Minnesota CFSR for several years, making continuous improvement difficult.
- There is no clear information on how the gathered data are applied to support statewide change.
- Stakeholders noted that the QA system has not become part of the agency culture, and that internal stakeholders, such as field staff, lack an understanding of, or involvement in, the QA system.

In response, Minnesota implemented the following Continuous Quality Improvement strategies:

- Redesign Minnesota's CQI system to be more comprehensive, including developing processes to better understand systemic influences on case work, then using that information to inform and improve practice at the state and local level to facilitate positive outcomes for children and families.
- Maintain a process for monitoring progress and improvement while undergoing the redesign of the CQI system.
- Department staff will provide ongoing support and customized technical assistance as needed/requested to local agencies.
- Adopt a statewide random sample for completed CFSR case reviews.

25.3 Minnesota's child welfare Continuous Quality Improvement process:

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

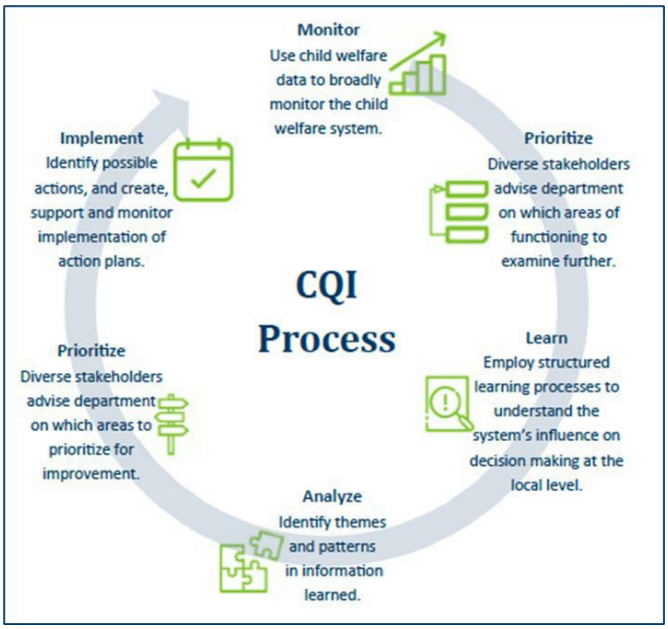


Figure 25.3 MN CQI Process

25.3.1 Monitoring phase

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

25.3.2 Learning phase

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

- **Child mortality reviews**: Department staff conducts Systemic Critical Incident Reviews (SCIRs) of all fatalities and near fatalities due to maltreatment, in addition to those occurring in licensed facilities (e.g., foster care). The review process utilizes Safety Science practices and principles, focusing on human factors, system influences and accountability. A team comprised of department and local agency supervisory staff completes case reviews. A regionally based

mapping team that includes local agency representatives from across the region, and other system stakeholders, map learning points identified in a review.

- **Screening reviews**: Since 2015, the department has had a process through which local agency screening decisions on reports of child maltreatment are reviewed. Decisions to screen in or screen out reports of maltreatment are reviewed by department staff. When decisions do not appear to meet statutory criteria, department staff consults with local agencies regarding a decision. Approximately 6% of each agency's screened-in and screened-out maltreatment reports are reviewed annually.

- **Child and Family Services reviews**: The department completes Child and Family Service Reviews using the federal Onsite Review Instrument and data available through the Online Monitoring System. In April 2023, the department began completing Child and Family Service Reviews in partnership with statewide peer reviewers using a statewide random sample of 65 cases (40 out-of-home placements and 25 in-home). Sixty-five cases are reviewed over six months, beginning in April and October each year. Through this process, department staff collect information through case-related interviews and case file reviews. Children, youth, parents, foster parents, caseworkers and other participants are provided an overview of the CFSR process and what the information they provide will be used for. Following each case review, department staff complete the Onsite Review Instrument. Several levels of Quality Assurance are completed for each case. Finalized instruments are provided to agency leadership and staff during a debriefing. This debriefing is an opportunity to discuss outcomes of each case review with staff and leadership, answer questions about ratings and discuss interventions for areas needing improvement. Five county agencies requested access to the CFSR Online Monitoring System and have been trained on the OSRI. These agencies use the CFSR review process for internal case reviews. Department staff provided the initial training and ongoing technical assistance as needed for these agencies.

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

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

25.3.3 Implementation phase

The final phase of Minnesota's CQI redesign is development of meaningful, equity-driven systems change to improve child welfare outcomes in Minnesota by collaborating with diverse partners to develop, implement and monitor strengths-based, data-informed strategies. This phase synthesizes and adapts equity-driven, evidence-informed approaches to organizational change, person-centered change

and process improvement, as depicted below and referenced throughout this manual. By drawing from a diverse, multidisciplinary set of theoretical frameworks, tools and professional networks, the implementation phase facilitates change in an innovative, strategic and sustainable way.

25.4 Additional CQI administration-wide teams

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

25.5 Current CQI projects

- The sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE) project explores disparities for LGBTQ+ children in foster care and how to complete data entry for these children to consistently track outcomes.
- The Parent Support Outreach Program (PSOP) project will evaluate outcomes for families receiving the service.

- The Educational Training Vouchers (ETV) project aims to better understand the barriers to youth using the funds.
- The Court Improvement Project (CIP) is completing problem exploration related to reentry of African American youth into out-of-home placement.
- The Social Service Information System (SSIS) is asking for feedback from local agencies using the system to identify pain points within the system to improve efficiencies for front-line staff.
- Implementation, evaluation and fidelity monitoring is underway for two prevention services related to the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), including Parents as Teachers and Motivational Interviewing.
- The Whole Family Systems project began in 2019. The Minnesota Department of Human Services issued Whole Family Systems Grants, totaling $17.2 million over five years, to eight organizations throughout the state and to the Future Services Institute to uncover and address the systemic influences related to racial, geographic and economic inequities, and to support coordination across the programs and systems that serve children and families. CQI staff support the work by providing expertise in development of theories of change, logic models, development of implementation plans, and evaluation of the work completed.

25.6 Community engagement

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

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

25.7 CQI values

- Shift from a culture of individual blame to one of system accountability.
- Seek to understand, without judgment and regardless of outcome.
- Consider the context in which decisions are made at the local level, recognizing that people make decisions that make sense to them at the time.
- Consider the systemic contribution to decisions.
- Acknowledge compliance as a starting point for further learning.
- Incorporate diverse perspectives and experiences in learning about the system.

- Utilize the skills and knowledge of diverse points of view and experiences, including from front line child welfare workers, local leaders, child welfare partners, communities, families, and youth.
- Use information learned about the system to proactively make improvements and resist pressure to make quick fixes.
- Build and maintain trusting relationships with partners and stakeholders.
- Be transparent about what is learned regarding the system, how it was learned and what is being done to make improvements.

25.8 Department oversight

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

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

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

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

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

Aid amounts are paid directly to individual counties and Tribes. The total amount of aid available is $5 million. For Tribes, the aid is 5% of the reimbursement amount received from the federal government for out-of-home placement costs or $200,000, whichever is greater. For counties, the aid is a proportional share of the remaining aid based on county out-of-home placement costs. Counties that are part of a multi-county agency are responsible for allocating the appropriate funds to the agency once the funds are received. The aid is paid to eligible Tribes and counties the year following certification. The first half payment is made on July 20 and the second half payment is made on Dec. 26.

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

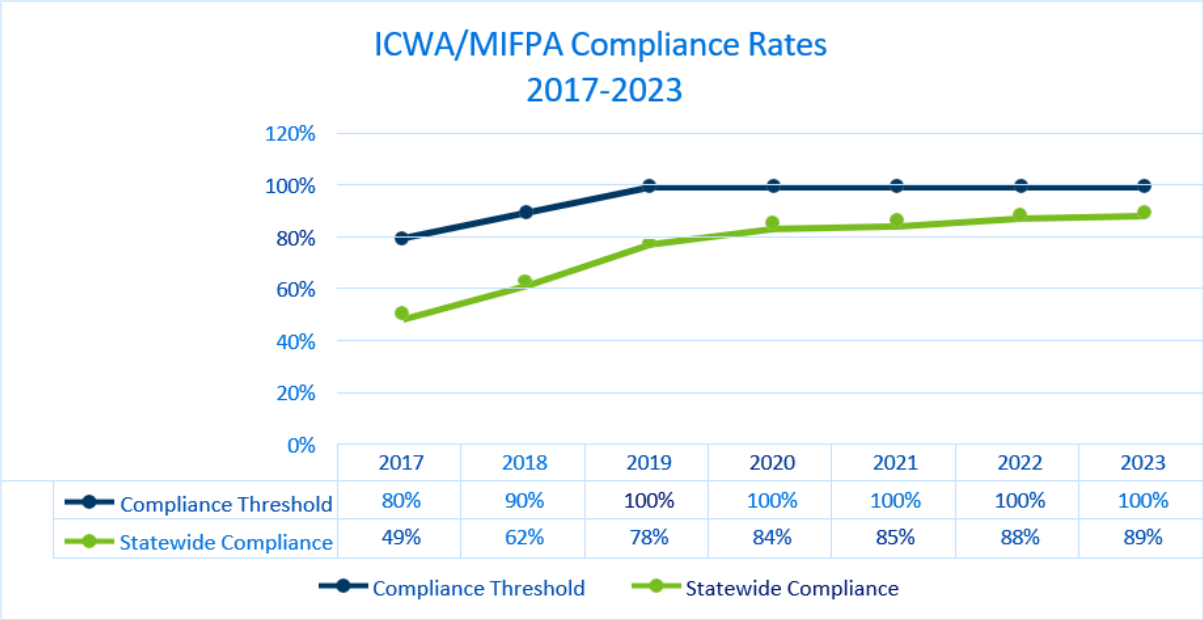


Figure 25.8a ICWA/MIFPA Compliance Rates

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

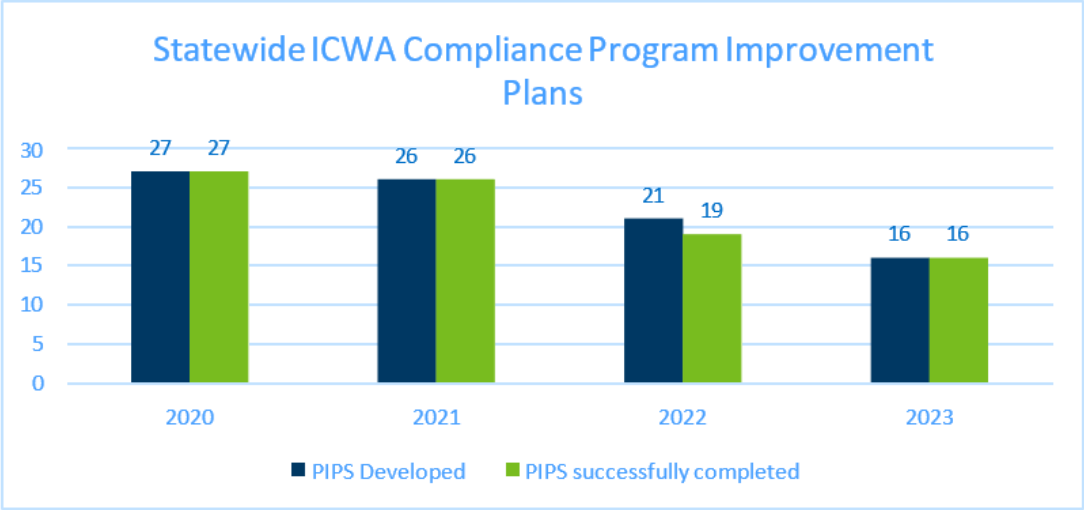


Figure 25.8b Statewide ICWA Compliance PIP

25.9 Additional continuous quality improvement efforts

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

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

- Of all children who were victims of a substantiated maltreatment report during a 12-month reporting period, the percent who were not victims of another substantiated maltreatment report within 12 months of their initial report.
- Of all children who enter foster care in a 12-month period, the percent who are discharged to permanency within 12 months of entering foster care. (Includes discharges from foster care to reunification with the child's parents or primary caregivers, living with a relative, guardianship or adoption.)
- Of all days those children spent in family foster care settings during a 12-month reporting period, the percentage of days spent with a relative.

The department partners with the Human Services Performance Management System[14] in relation to the three child welfare indicators by providing data, program expertise, development and review of Program Improvement Plans, and support to agencies in implementing strategies to improve outcomes. Annual reports providing detailed information on the work of the Human Services Performance Management System can be found on the Minnesota Legislative Reference Library website.

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

Minnesota's Quality Assurance System strengths are related to learning processes, data analytics and systemic analysis. The use of Tableau Server has increased the department's ability to disaggregate data in multiple ways providing the ability to better understand trends and patterns occurring across the state. CQI coding using NVivo[15] provides the CQI team the ability to analyze data from interviews, surveys, case notes, web pages and journal articles.

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

Part 4. Staff and provider training

Item 26: Initial staff training

How well is the staff* and provider training system functioning statewide to ensure that initial training is provided to all staff who deliver services pursuant to the CFSP so that:

- ***Staff receive training in accordance with the established curriculum and timeframes for the provision of initial training; and***

[14] Human Services Performance Management System

[15] NVivo is software developed for qualitative data analysis. NVivo allows qualitative researchers to organize, analyze and visualize their data, finding the patterns it contains.

- ***The system demonstrates how well the initial training addresses basic skills and knowledge needed by staff to carry out their duties?***

**"Staff," for purposes of assessing this item, includes all contracted and non-contracted staff who have case management responsibilities in the areas of child protection services, family preservation and support services, foster care services, adoption services and independent living services pursuant to the state's CFSP.*

State self-assessed rating and rationale: Area needing improvement – Minnesota has a robust statewide training system for onboarding new child protection workers in accordance with statutory requirements. Data indicate a high level of compliance and high ratings of satisfaction with the initial staff 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 training. This is an area for ongoing development.

Applicable Minnesota law:

- Minnesota Statutes 260E.36
- Minnesota Rules 9520.0912.

26.1 Child protection staff

In Minnesota, child welfare practice is guided by a shared framework called the Minnesota Child Welfare Practice Framework. It is comprised of outcomes, values, principles and skills necessary to promote child safety, permanency and well-being as well as a culturally responsive, trauma-informed and developmentally based approach to work with children, families, communities and Tribes across the state. This framework provides the structure for the initial training curriculum, which is statutorily required for all new child protection staff[16] to complete within their first six months of employment[17] (Minnesota Statutes 260E.36, subd. 2).

This statutorily required initial training is provided by the Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy, a collaboration between the Department of Human Services and the University of Minnesota that began in 2019 after the Minnesota Legislature authorized funding to develop and implement a statewide training academy. Since its founding, the training academy has expanded to five regional learning centers and hired additional trainers to improve accessibility and availability statewide. Additional information can be found in the training academy's annual reports. The initial training, called Child Welfare Foundations Training, is a comprehensive, blended-learning experience staggered over time[18]

[16] Minnesota does not contract out child welfare case management responsibilities.

[17] **Statute does not require workers to complete initial training prior to being assigned cases.** The initial training is structured such that workers can **integrate** their learnings into practice.

[18] Initial training includes self-paced orientation (five hours), instructor-led orientation (four hours) and foundations training (84 hours).

for workers to integrate knowledge and skills into practice. It provides knowledge-to-skills application, combining web-based modules and cohort-based facilitated classroom experience. The academy has greatly enhanced statewide consistency, availability and compliance with initial training of new child protection staff, as demonstrated in the figure below. A data limitation includes a less than 100% response rate. However, an average 90% response rate is an outstanding response rate for surveys.



Figure 26.1a Initial Staff Training – Child Protection: Compliance[19]

To assess the extent to which the initial training addresses basic skills and knowledge needed by child protection staff to carry out their duties, the training academy surveys each participant upon completion of each foundations training class using a Likert scale where 1 is "very low" and 5 is "very high." Survey responses are confidential and are used to support training delivery and curriculum improvement. A data limitation is that surveys are voluntary.

[19] Source: Annual child welfare workforce survey data housed by the Department of Human Services, Child Safety and Permanency (CSP) Research

Data	2021	2022	2023
New CP workers completed initial training within first six months of employment (N)	157	193	233
New CP workers beginning employment (D)	177	207	242
Number of county agencies that responded (N) of 80 (D) Surveys were sent to all 80 county agencies. While there are 87 counties in Minnesota, some counties have combined to form a single social service agency, totaling 80 in the state.	72	70	74
Survey completion rate	90%	88%	93%



Figure 26.1b Initial Staff Training – Child Protection: Content[20]

The training academy continually strives to improve its curriculum to best meet the needs of the child welfare workforce. Based on feedback received during extensive statewide stakeholder engagement 2020-2021 and in alignment with legislation, the training academy developed new initial staff orientation to be completed before the Child Welfare Foundations Training. The new worker orientation is scheduled to fully launch in summer 2024 after internal and external pilots are completed. The training academy is in the process of creating a frequently asked questions document that addresses the feedback provided and questions posed during the engagement sessions. Once fully launched statewide, post-training feedback surveys will be conducted to continuously evaluate the new curriculum.

26.2 Children's mental health staff

Due to funding and oversight structures, some in-home children's mental health targeted case management services (CMH-TCM) fall within the purview of the CFSR[21] (see figure below) and within the scope of this item, as staff have case management responsibilities in the areas of family support services. In Minnesota, these CMH-TCM services are provided by county staff and contracted community-based staff. There are no initial training requirements for CMH-TCM (contracted and non-contracted) with sufficient prior related work experience.

[20] Source: post-training median rating survey data housed by the Department of Human Services, Child Safety and Permanency Research Unit, aggregated across each Foundations cohort and courses that comprise the Foundations curriculum.
[21] In-home children's mental health targeted case management cases are included in the CFSR case sampling.

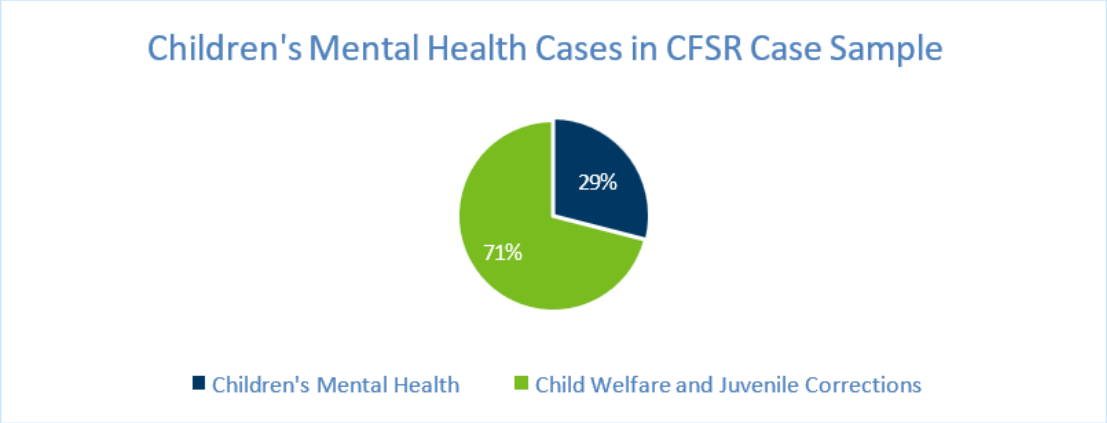


Figure 26.2a Proportion of Children's Mental Health Cases in CFSR Sample[22]

26.3 Juvenile justice staff

In Minnesota, 21 counties (purple below) have Title IV-E agreements with juvenile correction agencies, which allows the juvenile corrections agency with legal responsibility for a child's placement to pursue IV-E reimbursement. In addition, there are two "umbrella" counties (blue below, see footnote) in Minnesota in which the social services and juvenile corrections departments are under the same administration. Therefore, they are considered to be one entity (under the same "umbrella") and are not required to enter into a separate IV-E agreement. See figure below.

[22] Source: Social Service Information System (SSIS) where Children's Mental Health designation relies on either an out-of-home care target population of "Mental Health" or any program type (via associated work group) of "Children's Mental Health." Accessed January 2024.

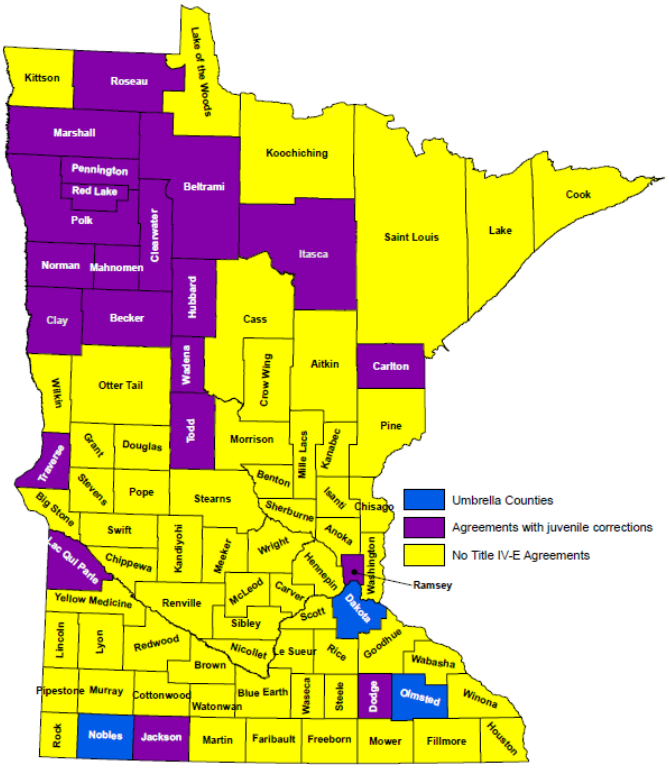


Figure 26.3a Regional Map of Umbrella Counties and IV-E Agreements[23]

Out-of-home placements in juvenile corrections facilities within these umbrella or IV-E agreement counties fall within the purview of the CFSR. Cases that meet these criteria are included in the CFRS case sample (see figure below) and are within scope of Item 26, as staff have case management responsibilities in the areas of child protection and foster care services.

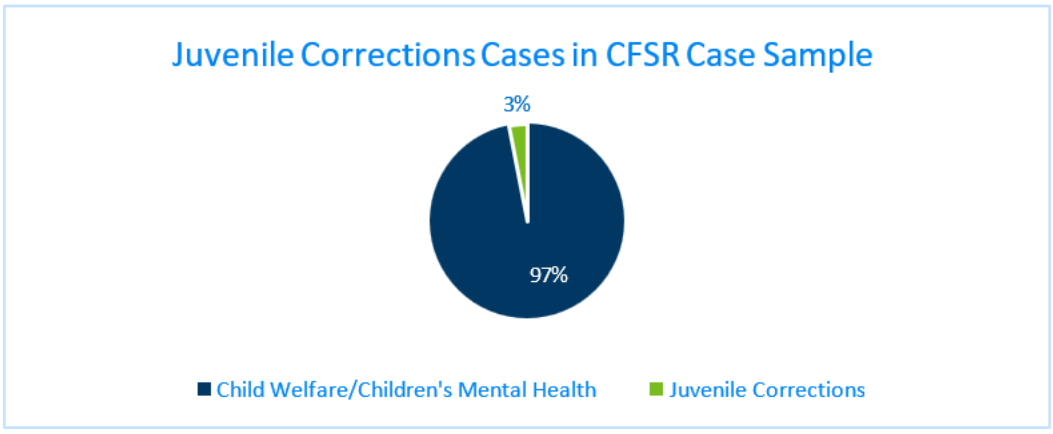


Figure 26.3b Proportion of Juvenile Corrections Cases in CFSR Sample[24]

[23] Source: DHS-287904. Note: Effective January 2024, Dodge County ended its IV-E umbrella agreement with Community Corrections, bringing the total number of umbrella counties in Minnesota to two.

[24] Source: Social Service Information System (SSIS) where Corrections is the designation that relies on either a supervising agency of "Corrections" or any placement location setting at a correctional facility.

While there are no statutory training requirements for these staff, they are encouraged (but not required) to complete the online on-demand 1.50 hour module, "TCM: Introduction to Child Welfare for CMH and Juvenile Justice Staff." This training was developed as part of Minnesota's Round 3 PIP to provide an overview of the state's child welfare system for staff working with children and families in the juvenile justice system. A statewide announcement about the newly developed training occurred April 2020. Since then, at least 70 staff have completed the course.[25]

Item 27: Ongoing staff training

How well is the staff* and provider training system functioning statewide to ensure that ongoing training is provided for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP so that:

- ***Staff receive ongoing training pursuant to the established curriculum and timeframes for the provision of ongoing training; and***
- ***The system demonstrates how well the ongoing training addresses basic skills and knowledge needed by staff to carry out their duties?***

**"Staff," for purposes of assessing this item, includes (1) all contracted and non-contracted staff who have case management responsibilities in the areas of child protection services, family preservation and support services, foster care services, adoption services and independent living services pursuant to the state's CFSP; and (2) direct supervisors of all the aforementioned staff.*

State self-assessed rating and rationale: Area needing improvement – Minnesota has a robust statewide training system for providing ongoing staff training for existing child protection workers in accordance with statutory requirements. Data indicate a high level of compliance and high ratings of satisfaction with ongoing staff 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 ongoing training. This is an area for ongoing development.

Applicable Minnesota law:

- Minnesota Statues 260E.36
- Minnesota Statutes 245I.04
- Minnesota Statutes 245.4871, subd. 4
- Minnesota Rules 9520.0912.

[25] Source: TrainLink (Pathlore) records for course "CSP8401 Introduction to Child Welfare for CMH and JJ Staff" and job descriptions of "case manager" and "county/tribal social worker" with job start date between 01/01/2021 and 12/31/2023 and course completion date between 01/01/2021 and 12/31/2023. 2021: 8. 2022: 26. 2023: 36

27.1 Child protection staff

Child protection staff are statutorily required to complete 15 hours annually of continuing education or in-service training that is relevant to providing child protective services. Local child welfare agencies are statutorily responsible for maintaining staff training records (Minnesota Statutes 260E.36, subd. 1) and have reported a high compliance rate (see figure below). A data limitation includes a less than 100% response rate. However, an average 90% response rate is an outstanding response rate for surveys. The Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy offers multiple advanced topic courses and self-paced modules, ranging from four to 16 hours each, that meet this requirement.

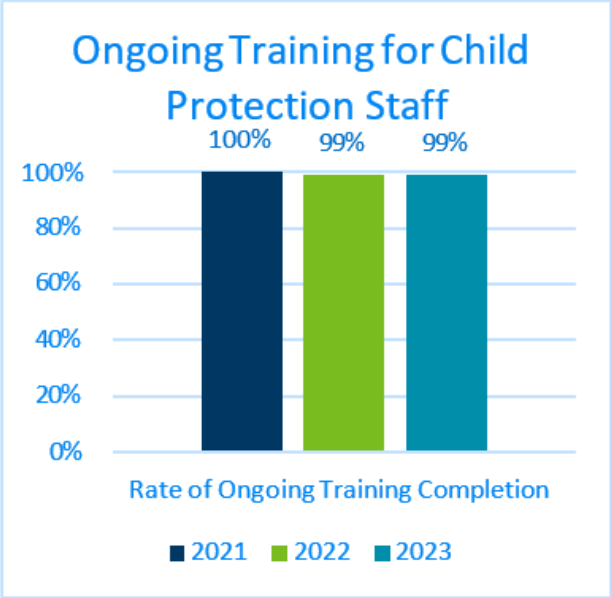


Figure 27.1a Ongoing Staff Training – Child Protection: Compliance[26]

In 2021 and 2022, the department collected post-training survey data to assess the extent to which the ongoing training continues to provide the skills and knowledge needed by child welfare staff to carry out their duties. Responses are on a Likert scale where 1 is "very low" and 5 is "very high." Survey responses are confidential and are used to support training delivery and curriculum improvement. A data limitation is that surveys are voluntary.

[26] Source: annual child welfare workforce survey data housed by Department of Human Services, Child Safety and Permanency Research Unit.

Data	2021	2022	2023
Existing child protection workers completed ongoing training (N) Includes workers who left employment after completing training	1028	764	810
Existing child protection workers (D)	1024	773	819
Number of county agencies that responded (N) of 80 (D)	72	70	74
Survey completion rate	90%	88%	93%



Figure 27.1b Ongoing Staff Training – Child Protection: Content (2021-2022)[27]

Starting in 2023, the training academy assumed management of post-training survey data from the department. Course participants rate their level of agreement to a series of questions using a four-point scale of strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree and strongly agree. As before, survey responses are voluntary, confidential and used to support training delivery and curriculum improvement.

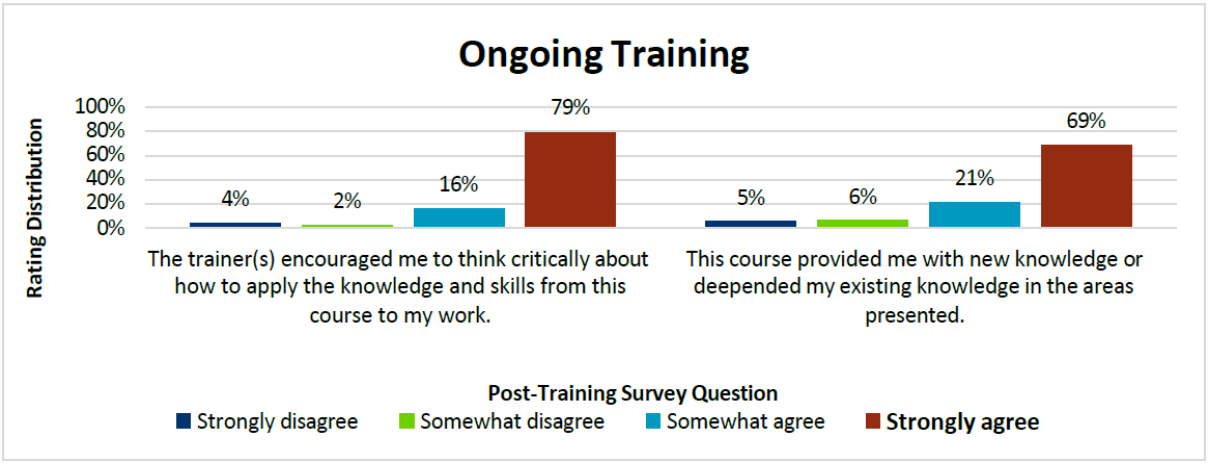


Figure 27.1c Ongoing Staff Training – Child Protection: Content (2023)[28]

There are no statutory training requirements for supervisory staff. However, the training academy[29] currently offers training for county supervisors on the history, basics and applications of the Indian Child Welfare Act and the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act. The training academy is in the process of developing and relaunching curriculum for supervisory training with an internal pilot targeted for mid-2024.

[27] Source: post-training median rating survey data housed by the Department of Human Services, Child Safety and Permanency Research Unit, aggregated across each class.

[28] Source: post-training median rating survey data housed by the academy, aggregated across each class.

[29] Via the University of Minnesota Duluth Tribal Training and Certification Partnership.

Between 2019 and 2022, Minnesota has built out extensive, state-of-the-art training infrastructure to better prepare the child welfare workforce for serving children and families. Nearly $10 million[30] has been invested in this effort and work is ongoing to continuously improve curriculum, delivery and availability statewide.

27.2 Children's mental health staff

Children's mental health targeted case managers (CMH-TCM) with 2,000 hours of qualifying supervised experience must complete at least 30 hours of ongoing training in a two-year period (Minnesota Rules 9520.0912, subpart 5). The training must be approved by the case management provider (i.e., the local agency providing case management services or an entity under contract with the local agency to provide case management services). While the department is not statutorily required to provide, approve or monitor ongoing training, the department does offer multiple seminars, webinars and various trainings throughout the year.

All CMH-TCM must receive ongoing clinical supervision by a qualified mental health professional (Minnesota Statutes 245.4871, subd. 4). To be a qualified mental health professional, an individual must be licensed as a clinical nurse specialist, nurse practitioner, independent clinical social worker, psychologist, physician, marriage and family therapist or clinical counselor (Minnesota Statutes 245I.04, subd. 2). Each of these state licensing boards monitors its licensees to ensure ongoing training requirements are completed.

A goal completed from Minnesota's Round 3 PIP was to develop and deploy web-based training for CMH-TCM to provide baseline knowledge on basic requirements in child welfare (5.3.3). The course, "TCM: Introduction to Child Welfare for CMH and Juvenile Justice Staff," was created and added to the CMH-TCM training landing page. A statewide announcement about the newly developed training was made in April 2020. Since then, at least 34 staff have completed the course[31].

27.3 Juvenile justice staff

There are no statutory ongoing training requirements for these staff. While the department is not statutorily required to provide, approve or monitor ongoing training, the department does offer, by way of the Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy, a host of both instructor-led courses and self-paced modules that juvenile corrections staff can access, but are not required to.

---

[30] Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy implementation report.

[31] Source: TrainLink (Pathlore) records for course "CSP8401 Introduction to Child Welfare for CMH and JJ Staff" and job descriptions of "mental health worker" and "any contracted staff" with job start date between 01/01/2021 and 12/31/2023 and course completion date between 01/01/2021 and 12/31/2023. 2021: 3. 2022: 15. 2023: 16.

Item 28: Foster and adoptive parent training

How well is the staff and provider training system functioning to ensure that training is occurring statewide for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of state licensed or approved facilities (who receive title IV-E funds to care for children) so that:

- ***Current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff receive training pursuant to the established annual/biannual hourly/continuing education requirement and timeframes for the provision of initial and ongoing training; and***
- ***The system demonstrates how well the initial and ongoing training addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children?***

State self-assessed rating and rationale: Area needing improvement – Minnesota has high standards for those who provide child foster care in home settings and facilities, as reflected by a complex array of training requirements. Statutory responsibility for providing and monitoring training lies at the local level, with local licensing agencies for family child foster care parents and with license holders for facility staff. Given statutory requirements and Minnesota's decentralized, county-administered structure, there is very limited to no quality statewide data on training compliance and quality.

Applicable Minnesota law:

- Minnesota Statutes 245A.144
- Minnesota Statutes 245A.1444
- Minnesota Statutes 245A.155
- Minnesota Statutes 245A.175
- Minnesota Statutes 245A.18
- Minnesota Rules 2960.0100
- Minnesota Rules 2960.3070
- Minnesota Rules 2960.3210.

28.1 Foster/adoptive parent training

Prior to a nonemergency placement[32], foster/adoptive parents must complete multiple initial trainings, including a minimum of six hours of orientation that covers emergency procedures, maltreatment reporting requirements, diversity, foster parent responsibilities and requirements of the licensing agency (Minnesota Rules 2960.3070, subpart 1). In addition, all foster/adoptive parents must complete prudent parenting training (ibid) and two hours of children's mental health training (Minnesota Statutes 245A.175). Depending on the age and needs of the children for whom individuals are seeking to be

[32] Emergency relative placement in an unlicensed home is permitted temporarily (Minnesota Statutes 245A.035). The home must work towards licensure, which means they must complete training as soon as is practicable and in order to obtain a license.

licensed, specialized training may be required to complete initial licensing (Minnesota Statutes 245A.18, 245A.144 and 245A.155).

Foster/adoptive parents who are licensed and wish to renew their license must complete 12 hours of ongoing training, in addition to other relicensing requirements (see Item 33). The content of two of the 12 hours are specified in statute, one being on children's mental health and the other hour being on fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (Minnesota Statutes 245A.175). Minnesota Rules 2960.3070, subpart 2 provides an inexhaustive list of topic examples of what annual training can cover. Depending on the age and needs of the children for whom the licensed foster/adoptive parents are seeking to be relicensed, specialized training may also be required (Minnesota Statutes 245A.18, 245A.144 and 245A.155).

Foster/adoptive parents are ineligible for placement until all applicable training requirements have been met and documented by the licensing agency[33]. The department will not issue a new license until the licensing agency has attested[34] that the foster/adoptive parents have completed all licensing requirements, including training.

Content requirements for initial and ongoing training, beyond what is specified above, are flexible and allow for foster/adoptive parents to build their skills and knowledge around topics most pertinent to their situation. Licensing agencies are also able to tailor their trainings to reflect the needs of children in care and the learning needs of their providers. There are, however, online training resources the department offers and funds, and those publicly available, that have standardized content that can be counted towards the completion of initial and ongoing training. As web-based training platforms, they are accessible to all providers statewide and eliminate travel.

One example of virtual training is Foster Parent College, which provides self-paced training accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week with content developed by experts, approved by CASA, and endorsed by the National Foster Parent Association. Minnesota foster/adoptive parents have access to Foster Parent College through the Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy. Initial training includes both instructor-led virtual meetings and self-paced modules. Ongoing training offerings include parenting workshops and behavior management courses. As part of Minnesota's Round 3 PIP (2.4.3), the department surveyed local licensing agencies statewide and found that about half of the agencies utilized Foster Parent College, while the other half used their own training resources.

Through extensive engagement with foster/adoptive parents in 2022 and 2023, the department received feedback on training requirements from surveys[35] and focus groups[36].

---

[33] Described in further detail for Item 33, Minnesota utilizes a delegated authority system for licensing where local public and private agencies carry out licensing activities, including compliance monitoring.

[34] The following agency attestation is signed with each new/renewal license request: "*I have completed the necessary reviews and recommend that the applicant be licensed pursuant to the laws and rules of the State of Minnesota."*

[35] In February 2023, the department received 1,132 completed surveys, which represented a 9% response rate based on successfully delivered emails from department lists.

[36] In January 2023, the department convened three focus groups of relative and non-relative foster/adoptive parents (n=50) about their experience with the licensing process.

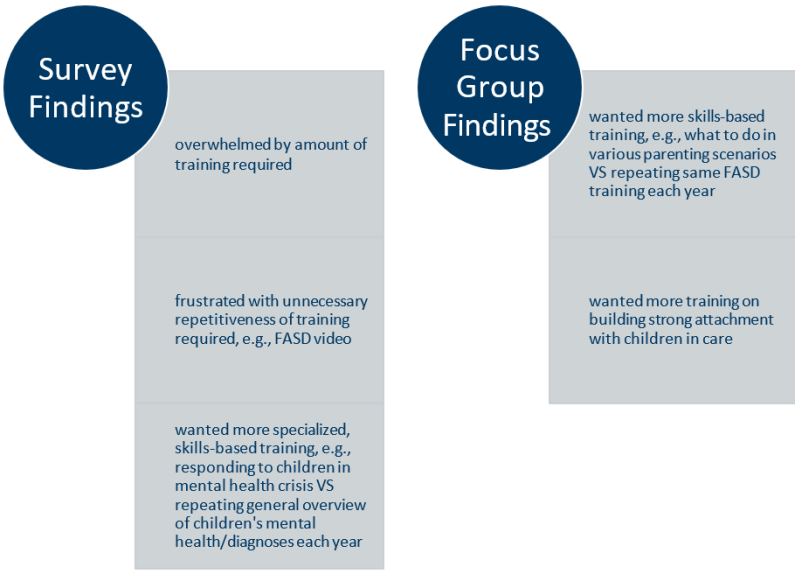


Figure 28.1c Foster Parent Training: Feedback

As stated above, content requirements for training are fairly flexible and allow for foster/adoptive parents to participate in trainings most pertinent to their situation. In addition, individual licensing agencies are allowed to approve trainings that meet statutory requirements, so parents do not need to view the exact same material to fulfill their annual training requirements. The department has provided guidance for licensing agencies on this and has also provided a list of preapproved trainings, which includes several different resources for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) training and specific topics on children's mental health (e.g., attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), autism spectrum disorder (ASD)) that include treatment and interventions. A list of high-quality training resources provided by Minnesota and nationally recognized organizations was included in the licensing guidelines published in December 2023. The department has engaged licensing agencies extensively around the development and dissemination of these licensing guidelines. Department staff will continue to provide ongoing support and technical assistance to orient agencies to the guidelines.

The department continues to explore ways to improve data collection statewide to track training compliance and quality more precisely and consistently. Efforts include stakeholder feedback sessions, training surveys and discussions between policy areas from the department and training academy leadership.

28.2 Facility staff training

Staff of licensed facilities[37] that receive Title IV-E funding to care for children must complete initial orientation training before having unsupervised contact with foster children. This initial training must cover, at minimum, emergency procedures, reporting requirements, diversity, operational policies, data practices and general and specific needs of children and families served (Minnesota Rules 2960.0100, subpart 3 and 2960.3210, subpart 1). Staff must also complete ongoing training. Full-time staff[38] who have direct contact with children must complete at least 18 hours of ongoing training each year, with half of those hours being skill development. Each licensed facility (i.e., license holder) is responsible for providing ongoing training that is modified annually to meet the current needs of individual staff persons (Minnesota Rules, parts 2960.0100, subpart 3 and 2960.3210, subpart 2). In addition to a facility's licensing training requirements, there may be specialized training requirements due to a facility's Family First Prevention Services Act certification (Minnesota Rules 2960.0100, subpart 4). For all staff training requirements, each license holder is responsible for documenting the date, hours and topic for each staff person, as well as the entity that provided the training (Minnesota Rules 2960.0100, subpart 5 and 2960.3210, subpart 3).

The state licensing authority monitors license holder compliance with initial and ongoing facility staff training requirements through regular licensing reviews during which license holder training policies and a sampling of all personnel files are reviewed (see Item 33 for more information). The results of these licensing reviews, including training violations, are tracked manually. The state does maintain aggregate data around licensing reviews conducted and licensing sanctions issued by license type (see Item 33) but does not currently have the means to electronically monitor data on a more granular level. As noted in Item 33, the department is working to improve its licensing records infrastructure, so that data can be captured in a way that can be more readily analyzed and reported.

[37] In Minnesota, child-caring institutions are licensed either by the Department of Human Services or by the Department of Corrections. See Item 33 for further details.

[38] Ongoing training hours for part-time direct care staff are adjusted at a minimum ratio of one hour of training for every 60 hours worked, up to 18 hours of training per part-time employee per year (Minnesota Rules 2960.3210, subpart 2, paragraph C).

Part 5. Service array and resource development

Item 29: Array of services

How well is the service array and resource development system functioning to ensure that the range of services specified below is available and accessible in all political jurisdictions covered by the CFSP?

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

State self-assessed rating and rationale: Strength – Minnesota offers many services and programs statewide to identify and meet children's and families' needs, which is reflected in Minnesota's performance on related CFSR items and statewide data indicators. Despite ongoing complexities in operating a county-administered, state-supervised system, the state demonstrates positive results overall in its service array. Minnesota is committed to continuous improvement in this area and has identified "Service Array" as one of its overarching goals in its Child and Family Services Plan 2025-2029.

29.1 Assessing strengths and needs

Minnesota's performance in assessing risk and safety needs (CFSR Item 3) reached a high of 90% strengths in 2021 and an average of 75% since April 2023. The decline can be attributed to the need for additional efforts 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. Barriers 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, as well as unclear expectations for seeing all children in the family and/or any of the children in the family depending on services provided.

Minnesota has maintained a high-performance rate for assessing service needs of children, parents and foster parents (CFSR Item 12) with **90-100% strengths** for cases reviewed in 2021 and 2023, and an average of 80% strengths for cases (Items 12b and 12c) reviewed in 2024. See Section III, Part 3 for additional analysis of this item. See Section II, Part 3 for a brief description of Minnesota's Safety Practice Profiles, which provides a practice framework and concrete skills, including safety and risk assessment, for child welfare workers.

29.2 Addressing safety needs

The state has consistently rated strongly in providing services to families to address safety needs (CFSR Item 2). Performance hovers at **100% strengths** for cases reviewed in 2021 through 2024.

A key approach the state has used to support families in addressing safety needs is Family Group Decision Making (FGDM). This was a specific area of focus for the CFSP 2020-2024 (Strategy 2.3.3). Over the past five years, Minnesota has promoted FGDM practices through grants to local county and Tribal agencies. In 2022, the department released a new grant application, prioritizing FGDM approaches and services related to reducing racial disparities in child protection programs, preventing placement and reducing length of stay. One of the agencies awarded, Red Lake Nation, has created its first FGDM program. During the first and second quarters of state fiscal year 2024, Minnesota's FGDM grantees served 389 white families and 217 families of color. Several of the grantees contract with local culturally specific community agencies. Grantees are asked to dedicate at least 25% of their funded FGDM meetings to occur within the first 45 days a child protection case is opened.

29.3 Family preservation and support services

Minnesota services that support children remaining with their parents whenever possible include: child welfare assessment; court-related services; family-based crisis and counseling services, and life management skills; services for Family Assessment Response; Family Group Decision Making; Parent Support Outreach Program; respite care; general case management; children's mental health (see example below); family and community support services; child general case management; children's mental health case management; family-based services and therapeutic support of foster care.

One example of statewide support services for children's mental health is the wide distribution of early childhood mental health grants. The department issues these important grants to many communities across the state to create comprehensive mental health systems and services to meet the needs of children ages birth to 5 and their families; see the Minnesota map of these far-reaching mental health services.

In addition, the state has demonstrated strong performance in providing for children's educational, physical and mental/behavioral needs, which are crucial means by which families are set up for success. Since closing out the Round 3 PIP in 2021, strengths ratings in 2023 and 2024 for Items 16-18 (Educational Needs of the Child, Physical Health of the Child, Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child) have ranged from **90%-100%** for each of these items.

29.4 Permanency support services

The state supports permanency efforts largely through grants. The Public Private Permanency Collaboration (PPPC - formerly the Public Private Adoption Initiative) 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 Permanency Support Services (PSS) program supports 21 contracts that provide a range of supports to kin, foster and adoptive families. An example of PSS is the State Adoption Exchange, which includes matching functions and a responsive team to support inquiring prospective parents. Another use of PSS grants is funding relative search, engagement, support and financial assistance to remove barriers to licensing.

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. 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.

Item 30: Individualizing services

How well is the service array and resource development system functioning statewide to ensure that the services in Item 29 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency?

Services that are developmentally and/or culturally appropriate (including linguistically competent), responsive to disability and special needs, or accessed through flexible funding are examples of how the unique needs of children and families are met by the agency.

State self-assessed rating and rationale: Area needing improvement – Minnesota has invested considerable resources into targeted services responsive to the needs of the diverse communities it serves. However, there is currently not a robust way to demonstrate statewide performance on this item beyond describing some of the infrastructure the department has created to provide ongoing funding and support to local agencies, highlighting progress made 2020-2024 and identifying plans to address this important need 2025-2029.

Note: Minnesota maintains a state-supervised, county-administered structure. As such, the state child welfare agency generally does not directly provide services to children and families, but oversees, funds and supports local agencies that deliver services. (For the purposes of Item 30, the term "local agency" includes county social service agencies, community-based non-profit agencies and Tribal social service agencies.) This narrative highlights ways in which the department actively supports and enables the individualization of services at the local level.

Minnesota is home to 11 federally recognized Tribal Nations, including three Child Welfare Initiative Tribes. The American Indian Child Wellbeing Unit at the department monitors compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA), responds to public complaints of non-compliance with ICWA/MIFPA, funds local ICWA/MIFPA implementation initiatives and provides technical assistance and guidance to local agencies. In the state's 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP), one strategy (2.2.3) focused on providing extra support (training and technical assistance) to county agencies that were in non-compliance with ICWA/MIFPA. Extensive information about progress made on this strategy, as well as multiple initiatives involving Tribes and urban Indian communities, are found on **pages 50-55** in **Minnesota's Final Report on the 2020-2024 CFSP** (submitted June 202) and is not duplicated here.

In 2020, the department created the African American Well-being Unit to specifically target and address the needs of African American children statewide. This team conducts community engagement, funds

community-based services that promote family preservation, assesses and creates legislative proposals and supports local agencies in meeting the individualized needs of African American children and families. In the state's 2020-2024 CFSP, one strategy (3.2.1) focused on developing culturally specific guidance and technical assistance to local child welfare agencies to meet the needs of African American children and families. Extensive information about progress made on this strategy is found on **pages 77-83** in **Minnesota's Final Report on the 2020-2024 CFSP** (submitted June 2024) and is not duplicated here.

In terms of the local workforce, the racial/ethnic composition of child protection workers at county agencies generally follows the breakdown of the general adult population in the state, as illustrated below.

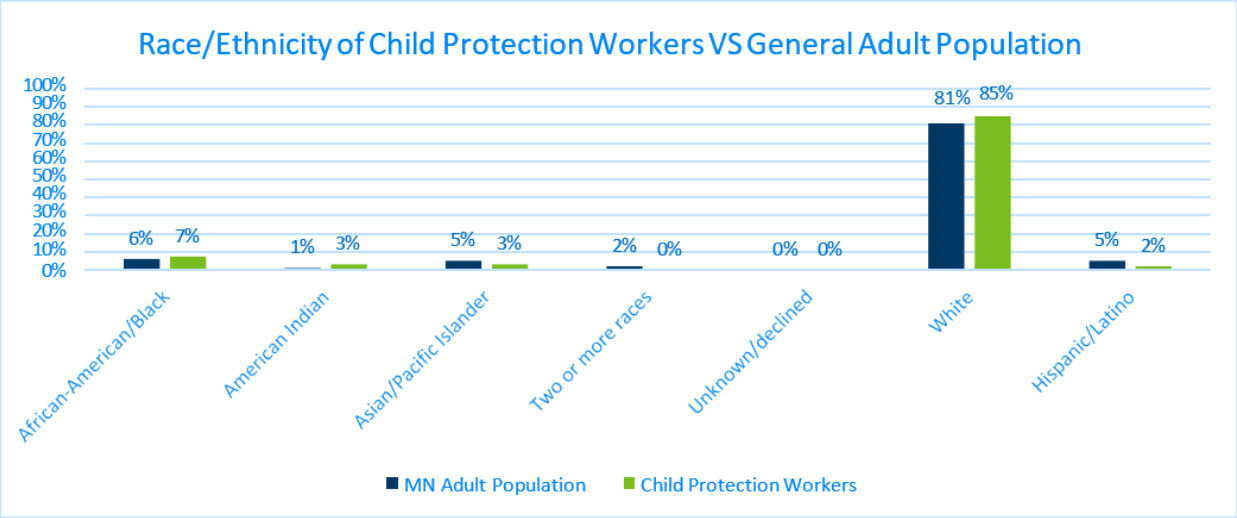


Figure 30. Race/Ethnicity of Child Protection Workers vs. General Adult Population[39]

[39] Minnesota adult (18+) population data source: Kids Count Data Center. (2023) Minnesota child protection worker data source: Department of Human Services annual workforce survey (2024):

Race/ethnicity of child protection workers	Numerator	Denominator
African American/Black	61	831
American Indian	27	
Asian/Pacific Islander	25	
Two or more races	0	
Unknown/declined	0	
White	702	
Hispanic/Latino	16	

Because disproportionality in Minnesota's child welfare system is an issue that needs continued attention, the department has included several objectives focused on expanding access to culturally responsive services in its 2025-2029 Child and Family Services Plan. This includes advocating for increased funding for early intervention services for American Indian communities through contracts with Tribal agencies and American Indian urban agencies. Similarly, the department hopes to secure additional funding for community-based providers serving African American and African heritage communities.

Individualization of services extends beyond racial/ethnic considerations. The needs of children and families may also be targeted based on geographic needs. The department is in the process of implementing more geographically and culturally targeted services to support families at greatest risk of maltreatment and involvement in the child protection system. In 2024, Minnesota issued a request for proposals for establishing a network of Community Resource Centers and coupling them with kinship navigator programs to increase access to programs, services and economic supports for families. The department will prioritize applicant agencies that support families experiencing inequities due to race, wealth, geography, gender, etc. To help ensure that Community Resource Centers and kinship navigator programs meet the individualized needs of families, the department created a statewide advisory council made of families and those with lived experience to guide the department's work. Community Resource Centers will also be required to implement local parent advisory councils to help ensure that services are effectively supporting and engaging families.

To address individualization of services by geography, the department included this objective in their Child and Family Services Plan for 2025-2029: expand access to services in Greater Minnesota, as well as in areas with existing services gaps and in communities with the highest rate of disparate outcomes. This may be accomplished through plotting out services on a map of Minnesota, developing an investment strategy and piloting targeted investments. The department will submit updates on these endeavors in subsequent Annual Progress and Services Reports.

Part 6. Agency responsiveness to community

Item 31: State engagement and consultation with stakeholders pursuant to CFSP and Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR)

How well is the agency responsiveness to the community system functioning statewide to ensure that in implementing the provisions of the CFSP and developing related APSRs, the state engages in ongoing consultation with Tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals, objectives, and annual updates of the CFSP?

State self-assessed rating and rationale: Strength - Minnesota has made considerable effort and experienced encouraging success in developing collaborative, ongoing partnerships with communities, organizations and individuals with lived experience, as highlighted in brief below. The department has hired a permanent full-time community engagement coordinator and contracted with a community-

based agency to help support these ongoing efforts and to further cultivate these important relationships.

31.1 Overview

The department seeks to cultivate ongoing, meaningful and authentic partnerships with a diverse array of internal and external collaborators and contributors across the spectrum of the statewide child and family service delivery system. Through ongoing consultation and engagement with community, the department identifies and modifies goals and strategies to improve equitable outcomes for children and families in the child welfare system, monitor progress and barriers, and reports out and celebrates shared achievements.

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

- Center for States
- Center for Courts
- Center for Health Equity
- Child development services
- Child Mortality Review Panel
- Children's Justice Act Task Force
- Children's Justice Initiative
- Children's Trust Fund
- Citizen Review Panels
- Community service providers
- Community-based organizations
- County agency staff and administration
- Foster care survivors
- Indian Child Welfare Act Advisory Council
- Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy
- Minnesota Judicial Branch
- Minnesota Department of Education
- Minnesota Department of Health
- Minnesota Information Technology
- Parent leaders
- Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota
- Quality Parenting Initiative
- Regional supervisor groups
- Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators
- State ombudspersons for families and foster youth
- Trafficking survivors
- Tribal representatives
- University of Minnesota
- Youth leadership councils.

The following sections provide summaries of how the department engages in ongoing consultation with specific partners and how the major concerns or themes from this engagement informs the department's goals and is implemented in the department's ongoing work.

31.2 Tribal representatives

There are 11 federally recognized Tribal Nations in Minnesota, four of which have Title IV-E agreements in place; they are called Child Welfare Initiative Tribes and include Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, White Earth Nation and Red Lake Nation. There are also urban Indian communities, including Minneapolis, St. Paul and Duluth. The department regularly engages with Tribal representatives on child welfare matters through the following:

- American Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council – This statutorily mandated body consists of publicly appointed members representing each Tribal Nation and urban Indian community in Minnesota. The council advises department leadership in formulating policies and procedures related to Indian child welfare services and makes recommendations regarding approval of grants provided under Minnesota Statutes 260.785, which allows the department to fund primary and special focus grants that support family preservation and reunification services to local social service agencies, Indian organizations, Tribes and other entities. Department and Tribal representatives develop meeting agendas collaboratively. Department staff attend all council meetings to provide updates and information and to discuss policies, practices and current issues. Through these ongoing discussions, the council assists the department with identifying goals, priorities and barriers, and provides crucial input in the evaluation of programs and services.

- Tribal-State Agreement (TSA) – This agreement requires parties to meet annually to discuss how the department and Tribes can work together to improve outcomes and provide services for Indian children and families. A work group meets to discuss and implement updates to the TSA to better reflect current federal/state requirements and best practice. To garner feedback, department staff intend to meet individually with each Tribal social services program to support expansion of culturally appropriate services, specifically around early intervention and culturally appropriate prevention services, as well as address other items identified by the Tribe.

- Tribal legislative summit – Department members meet annually with Tribal leadership and Tribal social service representatives to present and discuss legislative proposals to improve collaboration between the department and Tribes. An example in 2023 involved language from the federal Indian Child Welfare Act being codified into Minnesota state law to ensure and strengthen the ongoing requirements of federal law for American Indian and Alaskan Native children and families in Minnesota. This was accomplished through a series of consultations, discussions and department data reports. These efforts were part of a 10-year plan developed in 2018 by Tribal leadership in partnership with the department to strengthen and improve child welfare practice with American Indian children and families.

- In 2020, the Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy (Training Academy) began a collaboration with Aabinoojiiyag-Wakhanheza Un Thantanhanpi - “For All the Children” Sacred Being: Tribal Training and Certification Partnership (TTCP). The TTCP is a training and technical assistance center in partnership with the Center for Regional and Tribal Child Welfare Studies at the University of Minnesota Duluth. This collaboration works on development and delivery of Indian child welfare training, in partnership with Tribes. A two-day training on ICWA and MIFPA is now a regular component of training for new child protection workers and new department staff. Additional trainings have also been developed by the TTCP and Tribal partners and offered through the training academy.

31.3 Consumers (lived experience)

The department strives to center those with lived experience. While there will always be room for improvement, there have been considerable effort and success in developing collaborative partnerships with communities and individuals served, as highlighted in brief below.

- Youth (e.g., 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. In 2024, a total of 16 community agencies and two county agencies currently facilitate local councils. The department's independent living coordinator, along with local council members, work to increase youth engagement and actively promote youth members' involvement in child welfare policy and decision-making activities at the local, state and national levels. The councils meet monthly, either in person or virtually. They continue to hold summer and winter retreats, as well as their "Day on the Hill" at the Minnesota State Capitol. Council members 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 council member representatives attend their "Leaders 4 Change" conference annually.

- Families (e.g., Thriving Families Safer Children (TFSC) BUILD Initiative): In 2021, Minnesota was selected as one of the jurisdictions to receive technical assistance through the TFSC initiative. From 2022 to 2023, TFSC initiative partnered with the BUILD Initiative to conduct focus groups with families previously involved in the child protection system. Findings from the focus groups were summarized and disseminated via the TFCS Family Voice Summary. This report captured and closed feedback loops by showing that the department listened and made recommendations based on family voice. Feedback is informing the implementation of multiple programs, including Community Resource Centers, Kinship Navigator, parent and family leadership infrastructure development, and parent participation in improving Parent Support Outreach Program.

- Parents (e.g., Preschool Development Grant (PDG)): The PDG community-based needs assessment engagement process included 134 events within 56 communities and 11 Tribal Nations. Out of 1,372 participants, 73% were parents. Feedback from parents indicated that families need help navigating programs and services. In response, the department will collaborate with the Minnesota Departments of Education and Health to leverage PDG funds ($6 million over two years) and Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) funds to offer community-based grants to develop Implementation hubs, which will help families navigate services.

- Multidisciplinary advisory groups, including consumers (e.g., Children's Justice Act (CJA) Task Force and Citizen Review Panels (CRPs)): The department provides staffing and grant

management to support and elevate the work of the CJA Task Force and CRPs, which each ensure community voice, including those with lived experience, is part of the evaluation process and improvement efforts for county and state child welfare policies and procedures. Persons with lived experience are important members of these federally required advisory bodies. Each year, the CRPs submit reports to the department with recommendations for improving services and systems, and the department provides a written response for how those recommendations are or can be implemented. Similarly, each year, the department coordinator compiles a report that summarizes the recommendations and activities of the CJA Task Force and how the department is incorporating those into practice, policy and training activities.

- Consumers (e.g., African American communities): In 2022, the department's African American Well-being Unit formed the African American Advisory Council, comprised of 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. In preparation for creating this council, department staff held several forums in community spaces to provide people with information about the council, and conducted a collaborative application and selection process in partnership with community members to review applications and recommend council selections. Staff 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.

31.4 Service providers

The department views service providers as integral partners and engages them to improve policy, practice and training. Some examples include:

- Interagency Leadership Team (ILT) – This interdepartmental team met to develop and implement a coordinated engagement strategy involving partnerships with community-based organizations that have established relationships with families. In 2020, the team sponsored and participated in two site visits to gather and analyze input on how to address inequities. In 2023, the ILT met monthly and participated in two in-person, cross-state collaborative meetings, and continued work on the Story Pact, a shared story collecting and sensemaking project. The department has hired staff to fully develop this project with a full cycle of story collection, a sensemaking session and an action lab planned for the first year.

- Housing coalition – The department has continued coordinating discussions between public housing authorities, child welfare agencies, supportive service providers in the non-profit sector and the continuum of care coordinators in efforts to provide Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) vouchers to as many communities as possible. Department staff participated in webinars to support use of the vouchers, and assisted in education, collaboration and creation of partnerships. There are currently 16 known public housing authorities with signed agreements

to provide the vouchers. One barrier to this work is finding service providers that can commit to five years, as youth often age out of the range providers can serve (up to age 23 under Chafee/Successful Transition to Adulthood for Youth (STAY) and under age 24 for most youth homeless programs), after which they are referred to other service providers who can serve adults. In response to this barrier, the department was able to change some language in the Memorandum of Understanding with the service providers so that if they are unable to provide the services for five years, they can make a referral to a different agency that is able to do so.

- One of Minnesota's 2025-2029 CFSP objectives is to "Expand access to services in Greater Minnesota, as well as in areas with existing service gaps and in communities with the highest disparate outcomes." To accomplish this objective, it will be important for the state to engage service providers to identify barriers and gaps, and to collaboratively determine solutions.

31.5 Foster care providers

The department regularly engages foster parents and their licensing agencies through a variety of means. For example:

- The department conducted extensive engagement with foster parents in the development of the Child Foster Care Licensing Guidelines, as is discussed further in Item 33. Over 1,000 survey responses were received from foster parents and three focus groups conducted with foster parents. This feedback informed the guidelines and was also utilized in the completion of this statewide assessment.

- The department conducted focus groups with foster parents in preparation for CFSR Round 4. Their feedback has informed the state's self-assessment for pertinent items.

- The department is reconvening a Foster Care Recruitment and Retention Advisory Council comprised of foster parents.

31.6 Court representatives

The department collaborates with court partners through the federally funded court improvement program, implemented in Minnesota as the Children's Justice Initiative (CJI). Through effective collaboration, shared goals and activities include:

- Partnering with CJI on trainings to improve the time to permanency for children in foster care placement, including Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) Parent Attorney Core Skills and Emergency Protective Care Hearing training.

- Partnering with the CJI Advisory Committee, which meets quarterly and is co-chaired by the commissioner of the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) and the chief justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court. Advisory committee members include the department's Child

Safety and Permanency Administration leadership. The CJI Advisory Committee sets priorities and directs annual activities.

- Participating in CJI regional trainings, which occur statewide every two years for local CJI teams. These trainings reach more than 1,000 participants and address priority areas in best practices in child welfare and the courts. In addition, every two years a fall conference brings together CJI teams in a central location.
- Partnering in preparing and conducting the Round 4 Child and Family Services Review (CFSR).
- Partnering in court improvement projects (e.g., reentry project) to improve outcomes for children and families receiving services from the child welfare system.

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

31.7 Public agencies

As a county-administered, state-supervised jurisdiction, Minnesota is particularly dependent on excellent collaboration with public agencies. Examples of this important, ongoing partnership include:

- Department staff meet frequently with local agency staff, such as consulting through Rapid Consultations (case consults).
- Department and public agency staff participate in monthly supervisor meetings and various communities of practice.
- In rolling out the Safety Practice Profiles framework and resources, the department collaborated extensively with public agencies through pilots. In 2021, there were 46 participants from three public agencies serving six counties. In 2022, there were 39 participants from four public agencies serving four counties.
- 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.

31.8 Private agencies

Minnesota maintains close partnerships with a variety of private agencies. For example:

- Quality Parenting Initiative-Minnesota (QPI-MN): Launched in Minnesota in 2017, QPI-MN is an approach to strengthening foster care that now receives legislative funding. It was driven largely by the private foster care agency coalition AspireMN. In 2020, department staff worked closely with QPI to design and implement trainings, which are now available to the public on the QPI

website. In 2023, Minnesota passed the QPI Grant Program to provide training and technical assistance to county and Tribal agencies, community-based agencies and other stakeholders. In 2024, department staff continue to participate in QPI work group meetings, including the statewide Oversight Council.

- Public Private Permanency Collaborative (formerly the Public Private Adoption Initiative): Since 1998, the department has partnered with private child-placing agencies to provide adoption and adoption-related services to children under state guardianship or Tribal jurisdiction through the contract program formerly known as the Public Private Adoption Initiative (PPAI). After public engagement, the program is now called the Public Private Permanency Collaborative (PPPC). The department actively engages its contract partners through site visits, quarterly updates and check-in meetings to share successes and challenges.

- Contract management is one area identified in the state's 2025-2029 CFSP for ongoing improvement and development. Enhanced internal operational processes will in turn improve the experience for contracted private agencies, as well as increase transparency, consistency and accountability.

Item 32: Coordination of CFSP services with other federal programs

How well is the agency responsiveness to the community system functioning statewide to ensure that the state's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population?

State self-assessed rating and rationale: Strength – Minnesota boasts several interdisciplinary collaboratives and many cross-system initiatives that coordinate federally funded services and programs for children and families. In July 2024, the state launched the new Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), which will further bolster coordination, collaboration and communication among those who administer federal programs that serve children, youth and families.

32.1 Overview

The newly created cabinet-level Minnesota state agency, the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), was established to center the needs of children and to advance equitable outcomes through improved and increased collaboration and coordination. Bringing together supports for families, including core programs serving children from infancy to adolescence, the Departments of Human Services, Education, Health and Public Safety will transfer identified programs to DCYF by July 2025. For more information about these services, please visit:

- Department of Education Division of Early Learning
- Department of Health Help Me Connect
- Department of Human Services Children and Family Services
- Department of Human Services Office of Inspector General

- Department of Public Safety Office of Justice Programs

As the new department becomes fully operational and fully staffed, there will be additional opportunities to coordinate the administration of federally funded programs and services, enhancing the collaboration already in place as summarized below.

32.2 Examples

Multidisciplinary, cross-system collaboration is essential for providing comprehensive, effective and unduplicated services, and for maximizing limited resources and staff. The following are some examples of how Minnesota coordinated CFSP services with other federally funded programs serving similar populations.

- Housing: The Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness (Council) is a cabinet-level body led by Lt. Gov. Flanagan and is comprised of the commissioners of 14 state agencies and the chair of the Metropolitan Council. It is accountable for leading the state's efforts to move towards housing, health and racial justice for people experiencing homelessness. The council has also coordinated a public-private partnership to end homelessness in Minnesota.

- Education: Beginning with the 2022-2023 school year, the Minnesota Office of Higher Education (MOHE) began to administer the Fostering Independence Grant program. The Education Training Voucher (ETV) program entered into a data sharing agreement with MOHE to determine student eligibility for the Fostering Independence Grant program. MOHE generates a list of students who identify on their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) they have been in foster care at age 13 or older. The ETV program uses the Minnesota State and Tribal Information System to verify foster care experience of students on the list. Concurrently, the ETV program identifies students whose foster care experience makes them eligible for the ETV program. The ETV program identified 1,156 unduplicated ETV-eligible students who submitted FAFSAs for the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years. ETV funds supplement (rather than supplant) state funds available for the Fostering Independence Grant program.

- Medicaid services: Minnesota's Child Welfare Targeted Case Management (CW-TCM) is a Medicaid-reimbursable service for children under the age of 21 who are at risk of maltreatment or experiencing maltreatment; at risk of out-of-home placement or in out-of-home placement; or in need of protection and services. CW-TCM services involve contacts with children and their families when county and Tribal case managers are assessing, coordinating, referring and monitoring services, and help children and their families gain needed social services. CW-TCM is a significant Child Welfare funding source for agencies, used by all counties and nine Tribal Nations in Minnesota. The Child Safety and Permanency Administration within the department provides policy guidance on this benefit and ensures primary service plans; In-Home Family Support Plan and the Out of Home Placement Plan are CW-TCM compliant for eligible children.

- Early childhood: Help Me Grow is an interagency initiative of the State of Minnesota's Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, in partnership with local organizations and social service agencies. The initiative offers many resources about the development of young children for parents and professionals. This helps families take the lead in seeking additional support or referring their child for a comprehensive, confidential screening or evaluation at no cost. Child protection agencies are required to refer all children ages birth to 3 who are determined victims of maltreatment to Help Me Grow for a developmental assessment.

- Data-sharing: Since 2014, the state Departments of Education, Human Services and Health have participated in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Data System (ECLDS). This innovative tool combines data collected by these three departments into one online, interactive database. (The system protects the privacy of children by not showing data for individual children; it shows population results only.) It shows children's growth and achievement in relation to their participation in a variety of educational and social programs over time. Minnesota was able to build this tool because of funding from the federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant and grow it with funding from a federal IES Statewide Longitudinal Data System grant. The system continues through state funding as part of the P-20 Education Partnership. ECLDS is the early childhood companion site to Minnesota's Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDS). SLEDS is managed jointly by the Minnesota Office of Higher Education, the Minnesota Department of Education and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. Together, ECLDS and SLEDS form a P-20 education data system, which captures, analyzes and uses student data from preschool to high school, college and the workforce.

- Whole Family Systems: The Interagency Leadership Team, convened by the governor's Children's Cabinet, works to foster long-lasting connections among leaders from core state agencies serving children and families. The team uses a results-oriented, Whole Family Systems (WFS) approach to coordinating and aligning programs and strategies. The team serves to promote 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. Current membership includes the Minnesota Departments of Human Services, Education, Health, Employment and Economic Development, and Minnesota Budget and Management. WFS Initiative leaders attend meetings to share learnings from the initiative with other state agency leaders. The 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 2-Gen Policy Network and the Early Childhood Systems Reform Project. The WFS Initiative blends funding to award five-year grants to community sites chosen from across Minnesota. The blending of funding allows the Initiative to serve families more holistically across programs.

- Courts: As previously described in 31.6, the department collaborates extensively with federally funded court partners who are also serving children, youth and families in the child welfare system. Staff from the Minnesota's Children's Justice Initiative (CJI) regularly work with

department staff on joint projects and initiatives, including the Children's Justice Act (CJA) Task Force. There is CJI representation on the CJA Task Force. Similarly, there is department representation on the CJI Advisory Council. There is regular communication between the Minnesota coordinator of Citizen Review Panels (Panels) and the CJA Task Force, Minnesota's CIP (CJI) Director and department staff who coordinate the CFSR, CFSP and APSR.

- Community resources: The department is establishing a network of Community Resource Centers (CRCs) coupled with kinship navigator programs to increase access to programs and services for families. These CRC-kinship navigator programs will utilize the following navigation, eligibility and application tools:
    - Help Me Connect is an online navigation tool for providers and families to understand what programs and services are available within their geographic area.
    - Bridge to Benefits is an online tool developed through the Minnesota Children's Defense Fund that helps determine eligibility for cash assistance, child tax credit and childcare programs.
    - MNbenefits is a singular application for nine different cash assistance programs in Minnesota, including TANF, housing, SNAP, childcare assistance, childcare scholarships and more.
    - Minnesota is developing a Resource Locator Tool specific to kinship supports for kin families with both formal and informal arrangements.
    - Permanency Hub is an online resource that describes multiple permanency and kinship options for families.

  These tools help connect navigators, providers and families to multiple programs and services that help increase protective factors and increase health and well-being.

Part 7. Foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment and retention

Item 33: Standards applied equally

How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning statewide to ensure that state standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or childcare institutions receiving title IV-B or IV-E funds?

State self-assessed rating and rationale: Strength – Minnesota has a robust system and high standards for licensing family child foster care homes and child-caring institutions. The state monitors compliance through regular review of public (county) licensing agencies, private licensing agencies and residential license holders (see Figure 33.2a), and enforces compliance through licensing sanctions (see Figure 33.3). A majority (85%) of foster parents completed the licensing process within 12 months of applying and nearly all (95%) foster parents stated they understood the health and safety requirements for licensure (Figure 33.2b). In December 2023, the department published the 209-page Child and Foster

Care Licensing Guidelines (DHS-8517) to guide, clarify and support consistency and quality of child foster care licensing practice statewide.

Applicable Minnesota law:

- Minnesota Statutes 245A: Human Services Licensing
- Minnesota Statutes 245D: Home and Community-Based Services Standards
- Minnesota Statutes 260C: Juvenile Safety and Placement
- Minnesota Rules 2960: Licensure and Certification of Programs for Children – Department of Corrections and Department of Human Services
- Minnesota Rules 9543: Licensure of Programs
- Minnesota Rules 9545: Private Child-Caring or Placing Agencies.

33.1 Overview

As the figure below depicts, Title IV-E eligible family child foster care homes (CFC) in Minnesota are under the licensing authority of either a Tribal Nation[40] with an IV-E agreement in place ("Initiative Tribe") or the Department of Human Services. The department has delegated licensing authority to local county agencies and private agencies, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 245A.02, subd. 5. There are 80 county agencies[41] and 23 private agencies in Minnesota. (These private agencies are directly licensed by the department.) The department provides regulatory oversight of these local licensing agencies, as described below, and also offers technical assistance and training to licensing agencies and licensors statewide to support their work.

The figure below depicts the licensing authorities for IV-E eligible child-caring institutions in Minnesota ("DOC" indicates the Department of Corrections and "DHS" indicates the Department of Human Services). Both state agencies share Minnesota Rules 2960 for the licensing and certification of programs for children and directly license child residential facilities (CRF). The Department of Human Services delegates licensing authority to local county and private agencies for child foster residence settings (CFRS) while providing regulatory oversight and ongoing technical assistance.

[40] Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 245A.04, subd. 7(m), the department cannot issue/reissue a license that is under the jurisdiction of a Tribal licensing authority.

[41] While there are 87 counties in Minnesota, there are a total of 80 county agencies, as some counties have combined to form a single social service agency (e.g., Minnesota Prairie County Alliance consists of Dodge, Steele and Waseca Counties).

As the figure below illustrates, the majority (93%) of IV-E eligible licenses are family child foster care.

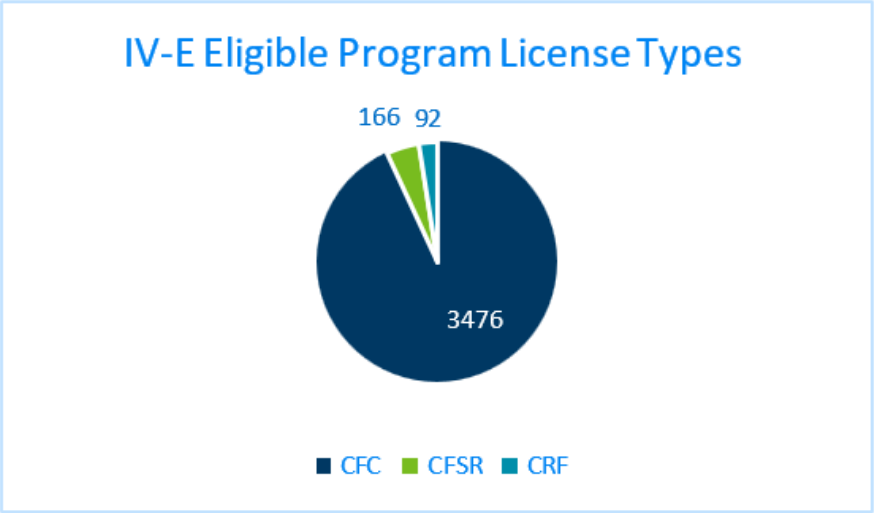


Figure 33.1b Distribution of License Types[42]

33.2 Family Child Foster Care (CFC)

Minnesota's licensing standards are substantively in accord[43] with the National Model Foster Family Home Licensing Standards and the state works diligently to assure these standards are applied equitably statewide. Minnesota law requires all relative/kin and non-relative foster homes to meet licensing requirements, which are outlined on the public CFC licensing checklist. Unlicensed relative/kin home

[42] Source: Licensing Information Lookup - includes Departments of Human Services and Corrections-licensed programs. Accessed January 2024.

[43] Cf. Title IV-E Plan State of Minnesota Attachment X – FFPSA: Deviation from Model Licensing Standards and Waivers for Foster Family Homes, dated July 1, 2019, to satisfy requirements at sections 471(a)(10) and (36) of the Act, as described in ACF IM 19-01.

accepting emergency placements must work towards and obtain licensure[44], pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 245A.035. Relatives/kin must be given additional consideration when determining whether or not to set aside or grant a variance for a background study disqualification, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 245A.035, subd. 5 (cf. Item 34). Variances to Minnesota Rules can be requested and are assessed on a case-by-case basis, provided that the variances do not compromise the health or safety of children served. A list of common variances and who is authorized to approve them are also outlined and available publicly.

As noted above, the department delegates authority for licensing CFC homes to local counties and private agencies. These local agencies carry out licensing functions in their jurisdictions[45] and are responsible for monitoring families' compliance with licensing requirements. Prior to a licensing agency submitting a recommendation to the department for a family to be licensed/relicensed, the agency's licensing supervisor reviews and signs each home study assessment/update to attest to its appropriate completion. In addition, when a licensing agency submits a licensing/relicensing recommendation to the department, the agency licensor attests to the fulfillment of licensing laws and rules of the state.

The department conducts routine monitoring of each licensing agency and its licensing activities to assure compliance with requirements and alignment with best practice. The department completes full licensing reviews of county agencies at least once every four years, and of private agencies at least once every three years. These in-depth licensing reviews include thorough examination of agency policy, personnel files and licensing files. The department provides daily technical assistance and consultation to support license holder compliance, as described further below.

Between 2021 and 2023, the department conducted reviews of all licensing agencies as required.

Year	Number of licensing reviews completed	Number of reviews overdue
2021	17	0
2022	65	0
2023	64	0

Figure 33.2a Licensing Reviews[46]

The department will not certify or renew the license of an agency or a provider unless they are in substantial conformity with all applicable licensing requirements. When the department determines non-compliance, it considers the nature, chronicity and severity of the violation of law or rule and its

[44] There are no statutory timeframes to complete licensing. However, adoption finalization and transfer of permanent legal and physical custody are contingent on having a license in good standing.

[45] Unlike county agencies that can only license families that reside within their county, private agencies can license families statewide.

[46] Source: Department of Human Services Licensing – service classes of "county licensing agency" (excluding entities with adult foster care in title) and "child caring-placing agency."

effect on the health, safety and rights of children served (Minnesota Statutes 245A.07, subd. 1) and issues a licensing sanction accordingly.

Of the nearly 3,500 active CFC licenses, including private agency licenses, less than 2% (a maximum of 82 of 3,500) received licensing sanctions[47]. (Licensing sanction notices include instructions and timelines for appealing the sanction.)

A statewide survey of foster parents received February 2023 showed the following:



Figure 33.2b Foster Parent Survey Highlights[48]

In addition to statewide regulatory oversight, the department provides ongoing technical assistance, training and support to 400 foster care licensors across the state. The department fields daily calls and emails from licensors for guidance, case consultation, etc. The department facilitates quarterly training for licensors on child foster care licensing requirements, best practice and conducting licensing investigations. The department provides licensors with an extensive "library" of standardized tools, guidance documents and templates/forms to support consistent practice statewide. In December 2023, the department published the 209-page Child Foster Care Licensing Guidelines (DHS-8517) to guide, clarify and support consistency and quality of child foster care licensing practice statewide.

The licensing guidelines were the culmination of extensive internal and external stakeholder engagement, including child advocates, community organizations, state ethnic council representatives, ombudspersons, family foster setting providers, youth with lived experience, child protection staff and county and private licensing agencies. The figure below depicts a summary of engagement used to develop the licensing guidelines:

[47] Source: Department of Human Services Licensing – licensing actions by year by placing agency and CFC licenses.

Year	Conditional	Fine	Revocation	Suspension	Temporary immediate suspension
2021	5	10	82	0	17
2022	1	11	48	0	13
2023	2	16	43	1	8

[48] Source: Foster Parent and Caregiver Licensing Survey Findings Summary 2023.

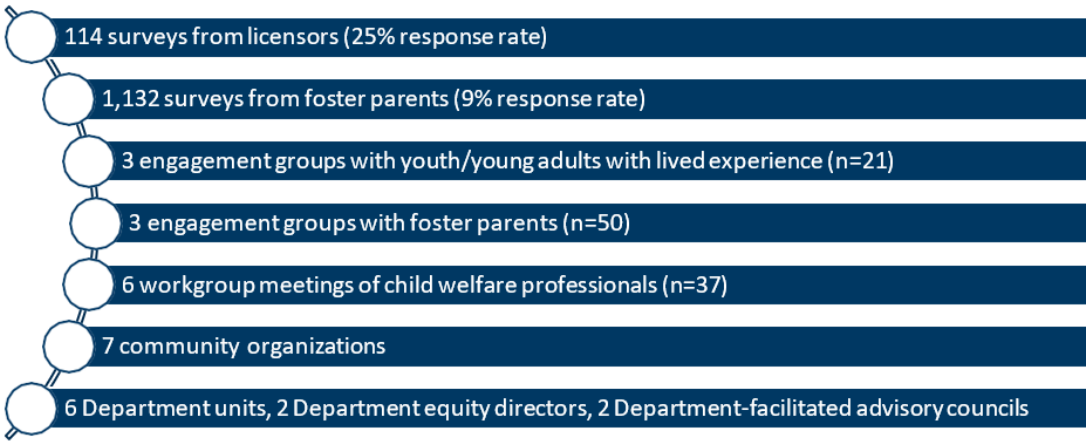


Figure 33.2c Partner Engagement[49]

33.3 Child-caring institutions (CFRS and CRF)

As previously noted, there are two types of IV-E eligible child-caring institution license types in Minnesota, child foster residence settings (CFRS)[50] and child residential facilities (CRF)[51], and two licensing authorities, the Departments of Corrections and Human Services, which share Minnesota Rules 2960 for licensing requirements. In order to be IV-E eligible, child-caring institutions must obtain at least one of four specialized setting certifications, which are administered by the Department of Human Services:

- Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTPs) for youth with serious emotional or behavioral disorders or disturbances
- Residential settings for youth who have been or are at risk of becoming victims of sex trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation
- Residential settings specializing in providing prenatal, postpartum or parenting supports for youth
- Supervised independent living settings for youth 18 years of age or older (SILS).

All child-caring institutions receiving IV-E funds are monitored for ongoing compliance with licensing and background check requirements (see Item 34). CFRS programs licensed by the Department of Human Services complete relicensing documentation, available publicly online, and on-site reviews every other year. CRF programs are continually licensed and pay a renewal fee each year, but the department maintains discretion in determining regulatory frequency, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 245A.09, subd. 7(e). CRF and CFRS programs licensed by the Department of Corrections complete relicensing documentation and onsite reviews every other year. If programs are found to be out of compliance with requirements, a plan of correction may be developed and, depending on the nature, chronicity and/or severity of the infraction, a licensing sanction may be issued. The figure below shows the percentage of licensed residential programs that received a sanction (excluding correction orders) by year.

---

[49] Source: Child Foster Care Licensing Guidelines.

[50] The Department of Human Services Foster Care Unit oversees the statewide monitoring of CFRS programs under the licensing authority of the department, delegated to local counties and private agencies.

[51] The Department of Human Services Mental Health Substance Use Disorder and Children's Residential Facilities Unit (MHSUDCRF) oversees the statewide monitoring and direct licensing of CRF programs under the licensing authority of the department. More information: Children's residential facilities.

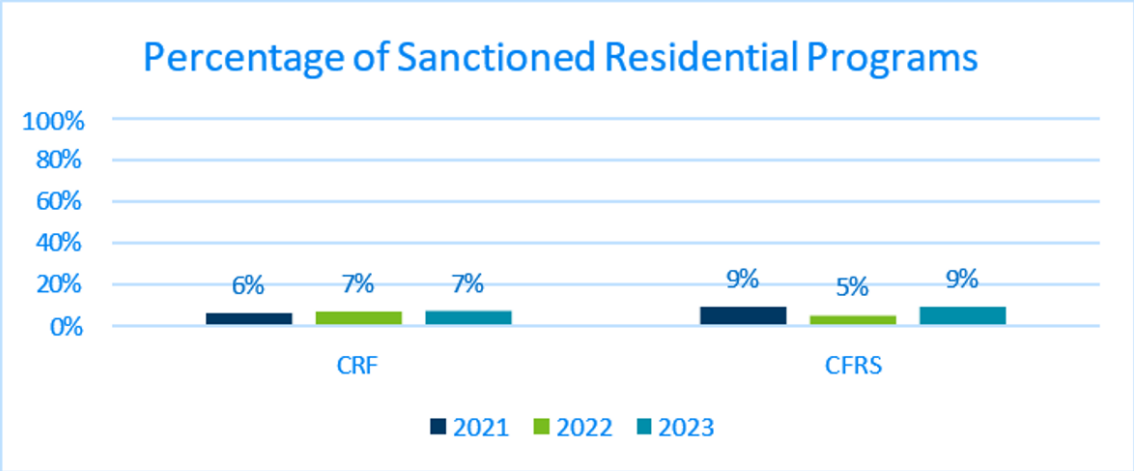


Figure 33.3 Licensing Sanctions[52]

The Department of Human Services is working on upgrading and onboarding its licensing records and documentation through two platforms: Salesforce Licensing Hub and the Electronic Licensing Inspection Checklist Information tool (ELICI). These efforts seek to improve consistency in statewide regulatory oversight, transparency for license holders and more effective support for licensors. The systems will also enable the state to capture data in a way that can be more readily analyzed and reported than what is currently in place. The department will onboard family and residential child foster care licenses once development is complete.

[52] Source: Department of Human Services Licensing – data table below:

Data	2021	2022	2023
Total number of CRF sanctions (N), including: conditional, fine, revocation, suspension, temporary immediate suspension Source: Department of Human Services Licensing Division	7	9	3
Percentage of sanctioned CRF (N/D)	6%	7%	7%
Total number of CFRS sanctions (N), including: conditional, fine, revocation, suspension, temporary immediate suspension Source: Department of Human Services Licensing Division	11	6	4
Percentage of sanctioned CFRS (N/D)	9%	5%	9%
Total number of licensed programs (D) Includes CRF + CFRS, excludes out-of-state facilities. Source: Title IV-E Foster Care Per Diem Rates & Percentages Report Q4 2021-2023	127	123	46

Item 34: Requirements for criminal background checks

How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning statewide to ensure that the state complies with federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements, and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children?

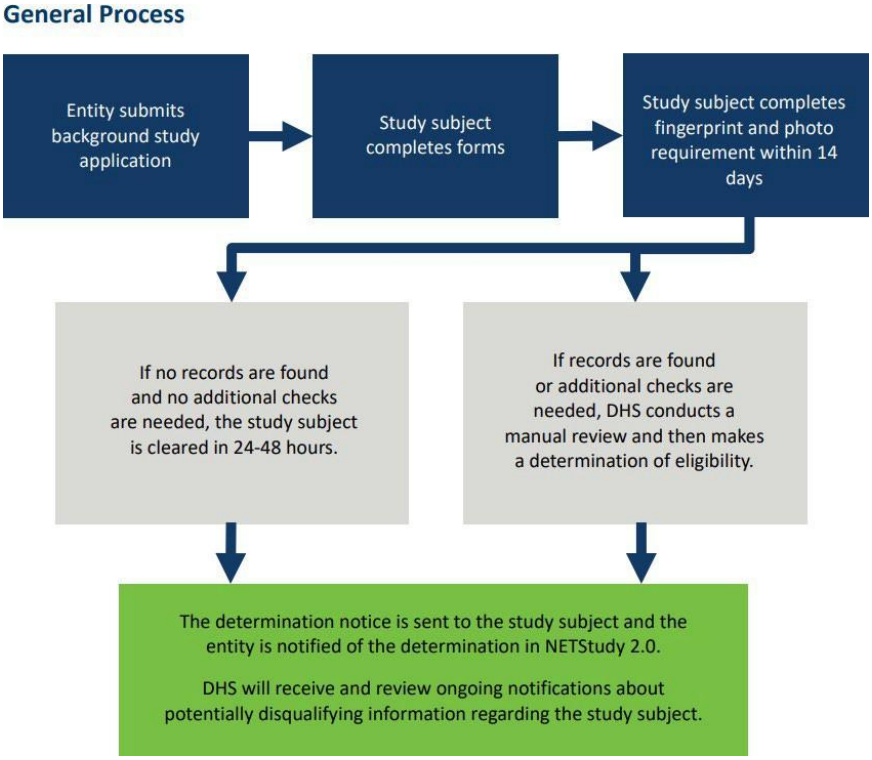
State self-assessed rating and rationale: Strength – Minnesota has well-established processes for completing federally compliant background clearances for foster/adoptive placements and for addressing the safety of such placements. In Minnesota's most recent federal IV-E review, the Children's Bureau determined that 99% of sample cases met all requirements, including compliance with background check requirements for licensure. Additionally, the federal review found zero ineligible Title IV-E payments attributed to safety checks for staff of child-caring institutions.

Applicable Minnesota law:

- Minnesota Statutes 245C
- Minnesota Statutes 241.021, subd. 6.

34.1 Overview

People who have direct contact with or access to foster children (including adult household members, volunteers, interns, employees, controlling individuals, caretakers) must have a Department of Human Services background check that complies with state and federal requirements. The figures below show a general overview of the process, applicable to both family CFC and facility (CFRS and CRF) settings.



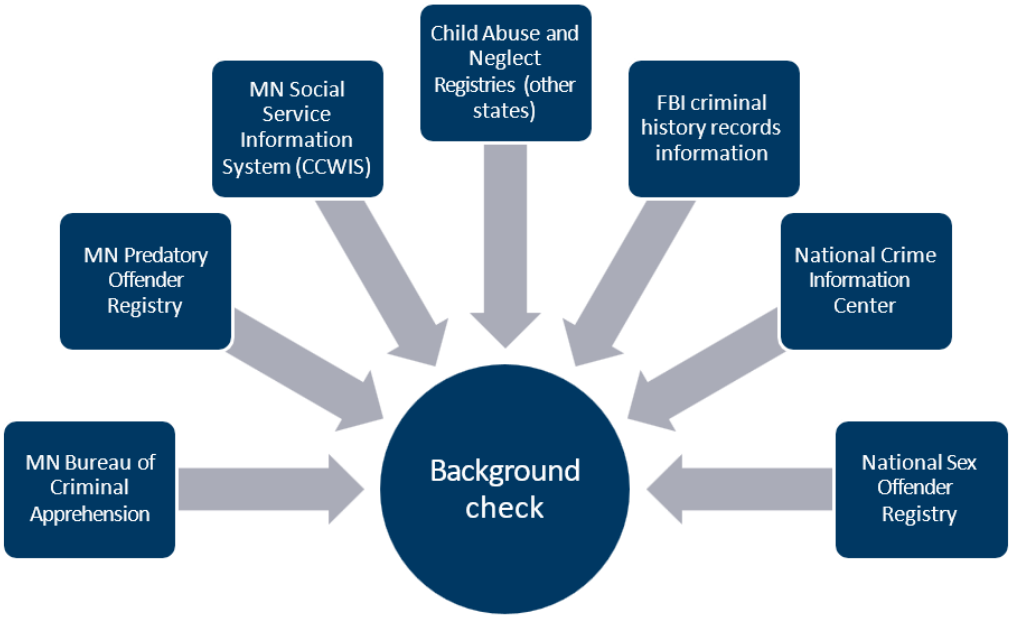


Figure 34.1a Background Check Overview[53]

Individuals with certain criminal or maltreatment histories are disqualified by law from working in various settings that serve children, which includes providing foster care. In 2021, the Minnesota Legislature passed background check reform to reduce barriers to licensing by bringing Minnesota's foster care licensing background check standards into closer alignment with federal adoption standards. This reform created a new disqualification structure and went into effect July 1, 2022. A full list of disqualifications are listed in Minnesota Statutes 245C.14 and 245C.15. Individuals who are disqualified have the right to request reconsideration. By law, the department may grant variances or may set aside certain disqualifications.

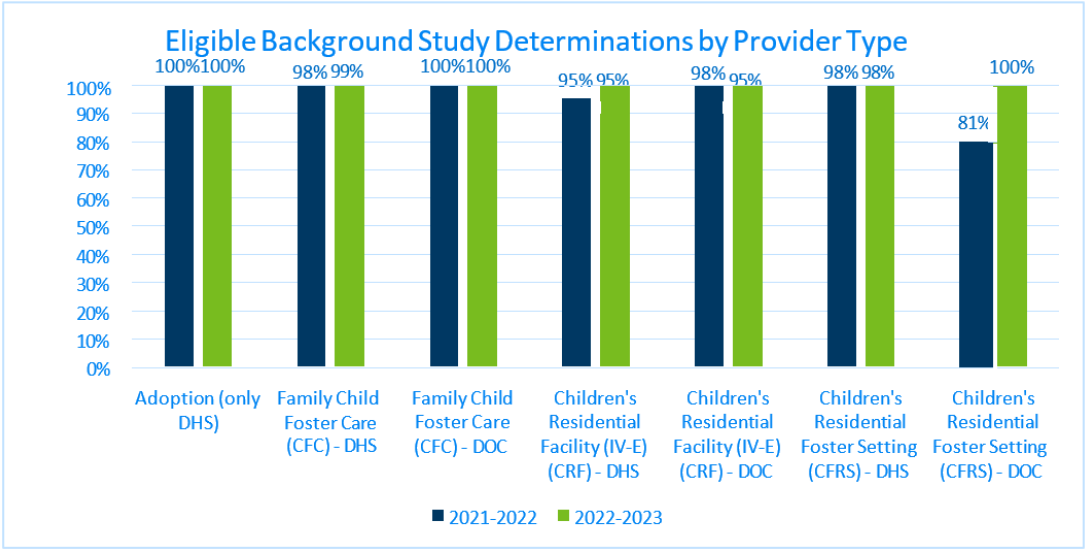


Figure 34.1b Background Check Determinations and Outcomes[54]

All background check requests are entered in NETStudy 2.0 (NS2), a secure web-based system that licensors and study subjects securely access to submit and monitor background checks. Licensors can

[53] Source: Background Studies Overview (DHS-8484).

[54] Source: Department of Human Services Licensing Division.

Date range	Provider type	Eligible determinations (N)	Completed determinations (D)	Percent eligible
01/01/2021-06/30/2022	Adoption	3	3	100%
07/01/2022-12/31/2023		372	372	100%
01/01/2021-06/30/2022	Family Child Foster Care – Department of Human Services	11,148	11,356	98%
07/01/2022-12/31/2023		7,471	7,534	99%
01/01/2021-06/30/2022	Family Child Foster Care - DOC	1	1	100%
07/01/2022-12/31/2023		0	0	100%
01/01/2021-06/30/2022	Children's Residential Facility IV-E - DHS	1,342	1,412	95%
07/01/2022-12/31/2023		1,088	1,143	95%
01/01/2021-06/30/2022	Children's Residential Facility IV-E - DOC	502	514	98%
07/01/2022-12/31/2023		500	525	95%
01/01/2021-06/30/2022	Children's Foster Residential Settings - DHS	3,825	3,917	98%
07/01/2022-12/31/2023		2,734	2,794	98%
01/01/2021-06/30/2022	Children's Foster Residential Settings - DOC	13	16	81%
07/01/2022-12/31/2023		1	1	100%

view rosters in NS2 of all homes/facilities on their caseload. NS2 also runs automated daily reports of any new criminal and maltreatment findings on existing individuals in NS2. The department and the licensing agency are notified immediately of any new findings. In addition, during the license renewal process, licensors complete onsite inspections, which include verification that all those who are statutorily subject to a background check have completed one. The department will not issue/renew a license until background check requirements are completed.

34.2 Family child foster care

All applicants, including relative/kin, must complete and have approved[55] fingerprint-based federally compliant background checks, including child abuse and neglect registry checks from each state of residence within the past five years, in order to be licensed. All household members over age 13 (excluding foster children) must also complete fingerprint-based background checks.

As noted in Item 33, Minnesota law does allow for emergency placement with relatives/kin in an unlicensed home. However, the relatives/kin must pursue and obtain a license[56]. Agencies cannot claim IV-E reimbursement until a license has been issued and all background check requirements have been

[55] That is, either (1) cleared with no disqualification or (2) completed with a disqualification that is set aside or a variance granted.

[56] There are no statutory timeframes to complete licensing. However, adoption finalization and transfer of permanent legal and physical custody are contingent on having a license in good standing.

met. To assure the safety of foster children placed through an emergency relative/kin placement, the following requirements must be met[57]:

- Records review of household members and certain individuals who will have access to children. The placing agency may obtain household members' delinquency (including juvenile delinquency proceedings), criminal (charges and convictions) and maltreatment (child or vulnerable adult) histories. In addition, agency or county attorney staff may request a name-based check of the National Criminal Records Repository and review social service and local records based on availability. Information from this preliminary background review must be assessed to determine if the emergency relative placement is safe and will meet the child's needs. All adult individuals subject to a background check must still complete the Adam Walsh fingerprint-based background checks during the licensing process.

- Home visit for initial safety inspection. The placing agency completes an initial safety inspection of the relative's home using the state's home safety checklist tool. Most relative/kin homes will not immediately meet the requirements on the home safety checklist (e.g., not meeting space requirements detailed in Minnesota Rules 2960.3040). Plans can be made for short-term flexibilities and long-term variances. However, emergency placements should not be made in homes where there are immediate safety hazards (e.g., exposed live wiring, lack of access to running water, hoarding that interferes with ability to exit in an emergency).

- Foster care license application submitted to licensing agency within 10 days of the placement. The placing agency assists the relative/kin with completing the foster care license application and submitting it, along with the preliminary home safety checklist, to the identified licensing agency.

In addition, the department's IV-E Quality Assurance Unit reviews child foster care cases for IV-E compliance, which includes compliance with background check requirements for licensure. The IV-E Quality Assurance Unit is separate from the department's Foster Care Licensing Unit and provides a concurrent layer of compliance monitoring statewide. In Minnesota's most recent IV-E review[58] by the Children's Bureau, a computerized statistical sample of foster care providers' records were reviewed to ensure safety and compliance with all licensing requirements, including background checks. The Children's Bureau determined that **99%** (79 of 80) of the sample cases met all requirements and that Minnesota's IV-E foster care program was in substantial compliance.

[57] See Minnesota Emergency Relative Placement Practice Guide.

[58] The Children's Bureau postponed Title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Reviews in 2020 due to COVID-19, but reviews are now resuming.

34.3 Child-caring institutions

As with family child foster care settings, CRF and CFRS settings cannot be issued a license – and therefore cannot claim IV-E reimbursement – until all background check requirements are completed. In addition to the individuals previously noted in 34.1 Overview, any adult working in a CRF/CFRS, whether or not they will have direct contact with children served, must also complete a background check (Minnesota Statutes 245C.03, subd. 1(9)). Effective Sept. 30, 2021, staff of IV-E eligible CRF/CFRS settings cannot begin working on-site while a background check is pending or during the reconsideration process[59]. They must wait until they receive a notice from the department specifically clearing them to work.[60] (Prior to 2021, staff were permitted to work under direct supervision while their background check was pending.) For CRF/CFRS settings under the licensing authority of the Department of Corrections, Minnesota Statutes 241.021, subd. 6 authorizes the Department of Corrections to contract with the Department of Human Services to conduct background checks in compliance with the provisions of Minnesota Statutes 245C. All background checks performed by the Department of Human Services are housed in NS2, as previously discussed.

In Minnesota's most recent federal IV-E review, the Children's Bureau completed on-site reviews of safety check records for CRF/CFRS sites. The Children's Bureau found that background checks on staff were conducted in a timely manner and as required by Minnesota law. In addition, the federal reviewers found evidence of the automated daily background checks on existing staff, a process referenced in 33.1 Overview. As this was pre-2021, **100%** of sites (11 of 11) were able to provide dates of direct supervision for each staff who worked while background checks were being completed until they were cleared to work independently per Minnesota law at the time. The federal review found **no** ineligible Title IV-E payments attributed to safety checks for staff of child-caring institutions. These findings indicate that the state's systems and processes are functioning appropriately to ensure the safety of children served.

Item 35: Diligent recruitment of foster and adoptive homes

How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning to ensure that the process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the state for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed is occurring statewide?

State self-assessed rating and rationale: Strength – Minnesota population data and child welfare data indicate successful diligent recruitment efforts (Figures 35a and 35c), despite persistent disparities that

[59] See DHS-8512.

[60] New legislation was passed by the 2023 legislature that requires CFRS license holders to document the date that each background check subject first has direct contact with children served and provide the dates to the department upon request. This requirement went into effect Jan. 1, 2024, and should serve to enhance the ability of the department and licensing agency to track background check compliance and ensure the safety of children served.

the state continues to target (Figure 35b). There is close alignment in licensed foster families reflecting the racial/ethnic diversity of children in care who identified as African American/Black, Asian/Pacific Islander and white (as well as those whose race/ethnicity was listed as unknown/declined). Ongoing targeted recruitment efforts are needed statewide for American Indian and Hispanic/Latine families. The state recently developed a new diligent recruitment plan, included in the 2025-2029 CFSP, and looks forward to seeing ongoing improvement with its implementation.

Applicable Minnesota law:

- Minnesota Statutes 260C.212, subd. 2.

Efforts to eliminate persistent disparities in Minnesota's child welfare system continue, along with diligent recruitment of foster/adoptive families who reflect the ethnic/racial diversity of children in care.

As shown in the figure below, the racial/ethnic composition of family child foster care (CFC) license holders in Minnesota are compared to the general population of adults in the state. CFC license holders who identified as African American/Black represent over twice the percentage of Minnesotan adults who identified as African American/Black. CFC license holders who identified as American Indian represent six times the percentage of Minnesotan adults who identified as American Indian. These data may reflect the increased emphasis on the importance of relative/kin placement and the successful licensing of relative/kin.

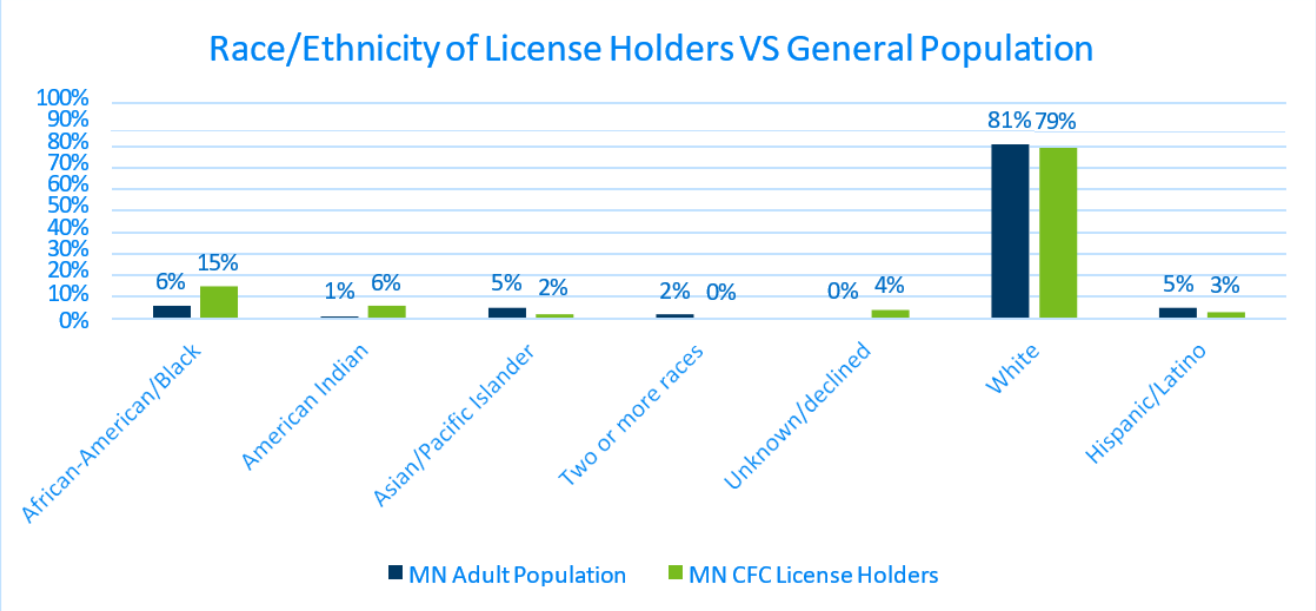


Figure 35a. Race/Ethnicity of License Holders vs. General Population[61]

As the figure below shows, disparities exist and are most pronounced for children in care who identify as American Indian and of two or more races. Children in care who identified as American Indian represent 20 times the percentage of Minnesotan minors who identified as American Indian. Children in care who identified as two or more races represent over five times the percentage of Minnesotan minors who identified as two or more races.

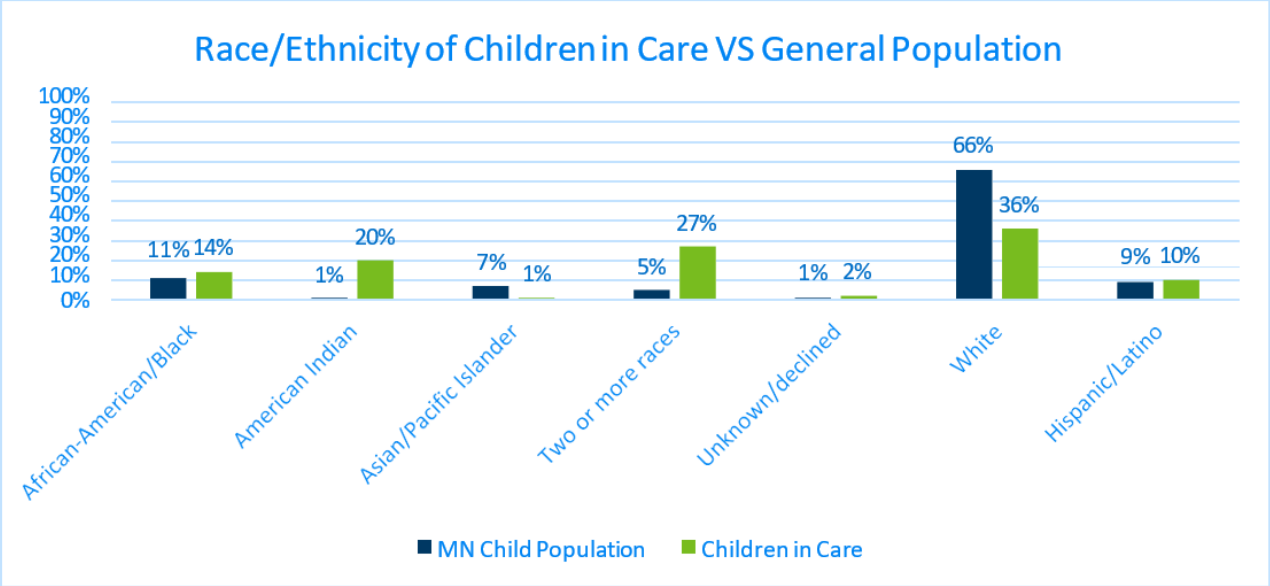


Figure 35b. Race/Ethnicity of Children in Care vs. General Population[62]

The figure below compares race/ethnicity of CFC license holders with race/ethnicity of children in family foster care, indicating both promising results of diligent recruitment efforts and areas for continuous improvement. There is close alignment in licensed foster families reflecting the racial/ethnic diversity of children in care who identified as African American/Black, Asian/Pacific Islander and white (as well as those whose race/ethnicity was listed as unknown/declined). Ongoing targeted recruitment efforts are needed statewide for American Indian and Hispanic/Latine families.

[61] Minnesota adult (18 years and older) population data source: Kids Count Data Center. (2023) Minnesota CFC license holder data source: Department of Human Services Licensing Division (2024). CFC license holder percentages sum to more than 100% due to some licenses having multiple license holders that fall into different racial/ethnic categories.

[62] Minnesota child (0-17 years) population data source: Kids Count Data Center. (2023) Children in care data source: Department of Human Services Child Safety and Permanency Research Unit. (2024)

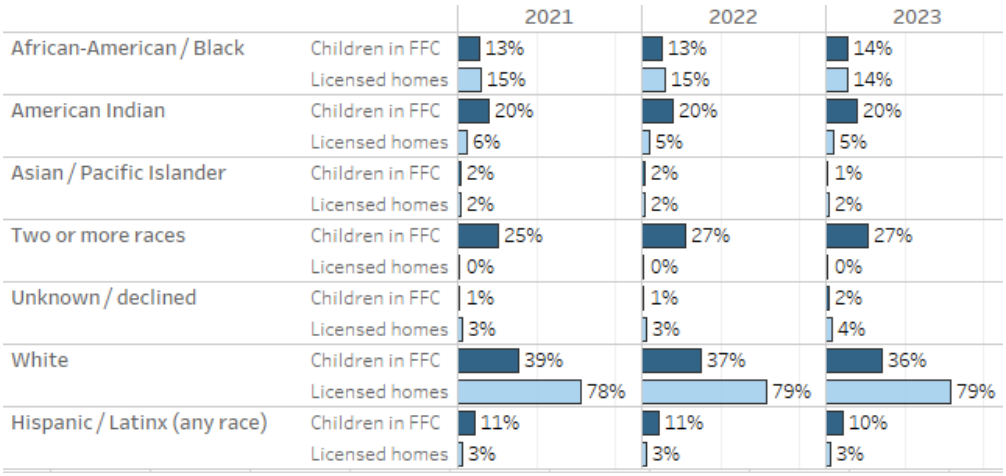


Figure 35c. Race/Ethnicity of CFC License Holder vs. Children in Care[63]

In addition to local recruitment efforts that county and Tribal agencies conduct, the department contracts with a nonprofit agency called Foster Adopt Minnesota (FAM) to provide foster care recruitment services. One example of statewide targeted recruitment efforts is a foster care social media campaign FAM conducted from June through September 2021. The campaign focused on diverse populations, including African American/Black, American Indian and Spanish-speaking families. As a result of the campaign, the website saw a 40% increase in inquiries and over 42,000 page views[64]. Efforts will continue.

In May 2024, the department created a new diligent recruitment plan as part of the federal Child and Family Services Plan 2025-2029. This was developed in partnership with the National Center for Diligent Recruitment (NCDR). In April 2024, staff attended a training hosted by the NCDR to learn more about how Minnesota can recruit diverse foster parents.

Item 36: Cross-jurisdictional resources for permanent placements

How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning to ensure that the process for ensuring the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children is occurring statewide?

Please provide relevant quantitative/qualitative data or information that show the state's process for ensuring the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children is occurring statewide. Please include quantitative data that specify the percentage of all home study requests received to facilitate a permanent foster or adoptive care placement that are completed within 60 days.

---

[63] Data sources: Department of Human Services Licensing and Child Safety and Permanency Research Unit.

[64] Source: Minnesota's APSR submitted June 30, 2023.

State self-assessed rating and rationale: Strength – Minnesota completes about 63% of all state-to-state home study requests within 60 days of receipt. However, the department considers receipt as the date the minimum information needed to begin processing a request is received, which means additional time is often taken in corresponding with the sending state to obtain or clarify information. Even with these high standards, during the period under review, Minnesota made an impressive 11% increase in the rate of timely home study assessment completions (Figure 36).

Applicable Minnesota law:

- Minnesota Statutes 257.05
- Minnesota Statutes 257.06
- Minnesota Statutes 260.851 through 260.92.

The department employs three full-time staff who serve as deputy compact administrators and manage caseloads of agencies. New requests are assigned to these staff depending on what agency to which the request will be sent. Staff typically process requests within one to two business days. However, when requests are incomplete or unclear, the department messages the sending state through the National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise (NEICE) or via email (if the sending state is not on NEICE) to obtain the missing information. When the requests are ready to be sent to the local Minnesota agency, staff include a transmittal that informs them of the sending state's request, what information is needed, and instructions to provide the completed home study assessment or status update within 60 days of receipt. Minnesota home study assessments are completed using the department's designated format.

As shown in the figure below, the department has made substantive improvements in its performance on this measure. The "received date" the department uses is the date that Minnesota receives a request, even if it is incomplete or unclear. The department considers receipt as the date the minimum information needed to begin processing a request is received. This means that the time it takes in corresponding with the sending state to obtain or clarify information is included in Minnesota's 60-day time frame. The "completed date" the department uses is the date the local agency has made their home study assessment determination (e.g., home study approval). A data collection constraint is that the state's CCWIS (SSIS) does not have specific fields that reliably capture this event, resulting in labor- and time-intensive manual checks for department staff. Minnesota onboarded to NEICE 2.0 in spring 2024 and anticipates seeing improved tracking mechanisms.

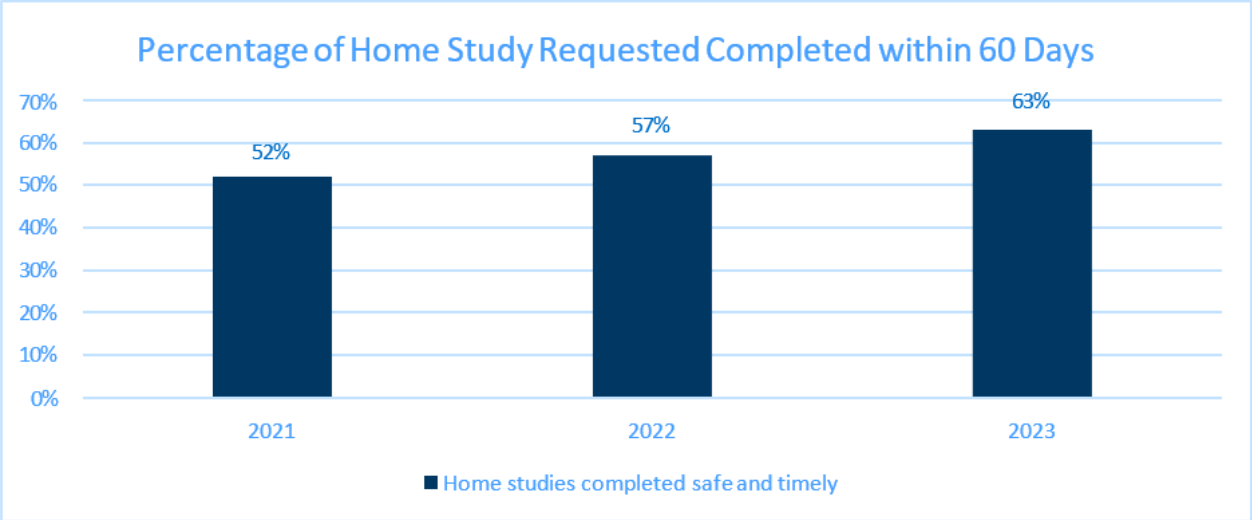


Figure 36. ICPC Home Study Requests[65]

[65] Source: Department of Human Services Interstate Compact on Placement of Children Team

Year	Numerator	Denominator	Resulting percentage
2021	269	521	52%
2022	269	468	57%
2023	240	380	63%