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Child Well-Being in Minnesota:

A Primer for the
2013 - 2014 Legislative Session

A briefing on Minnesota's child welfare system, including child protection, foster care, and adoption service systems. Includes populations served, funding structures, and decision-making criteria for evidence-based policy solutions.

Center for Advanced Studies
in **Child Welfare**

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

What is the Field of Child Welfare?

The child welfare field includes human services in the areas of child protection, foster care, and adoption. This work is carried out in a state supervised, county administered system by government as well as non-profit agencies, and is supported by research and

evaluation from government, academic institutions, and non-profit organizations. The collective goal of child welfare is to promote the safety, permanency, and well-being of children, youth, and families.

Minnesota's Response to a Child Maltreatment Report

Child Welfare Agency receives call of concern

Report screened by intake/screening team

Report screened in.
Track of assessment determined.

Report screened out.
No action taken.

Family
Investigation Track

Family
Assessment
Track

Investigation completed
in 45 days

Assessment
completed
in 45 days

No
maltreatment
substantiated.
No services
needed.

No
maltreatment
substantiated
Services
needed.

Maltreatment
substantiated.
No services
needed.

Maltreatment
substantiated
Services
needed.

Determination of
need for services
Case
management
provided

Determination
services not
needed
No further
action.

No further
action.

Case
management
services
provided.

No further
action.

Case
management
services
provided.

*Adapted from "The Process of a Child Maltreatment Report"
by Isanti County Family Services, February 26, 2008*

As shown above, Minnesota responds in one of two ways when a call of concern requires action. This two-track system, known as differential response, is an evidence-based approach that leads to either a Family Investigation Response (FIR) or Family Assessment Response (FAR). Research has shown that differential response is cost-effective and has resulted in cost savings in the long term in Minnesota as well as in other states¹.

Perhaps more importantly, children of all races and ethnicities benefit from stability in their families' homes and decreased out-of-home placement. "Children's success is inextricably connected to the strength and resourcefulness of their families."² FAR provides supportive services to strengthen Minnesotan families by working to keep families of origin and kinship networks intact.

Family Investigation Response

- Serious reports of child abuse
- Child in imminent risk of harm
- Significant legal/court involvement

Family Assessment Response

- Strengths-based
- Responds to needs of struggling families
- Works in partnership with parents

FAR (formerly known as Alternative Response) does not result in a decision concerning maltreatment substantiation; rather, it encourages family engagement by providing families with interventions appropriate for their level of need and building on the inherent strengths of the family. The non-punitive nature of service creates a less adversarial and thus more productive relationship between parents and workers. FAR recognizes that stable family connections are critical to child well-being, and that families require support in order to maintain a healthy environment for children and avoid potential involvement in the more costly and intrusive FIR.

In FIR, professionals intervene more intensively for the safety of children who are in imminent risk of harm. In these cases, a substantiation of maltreatment can occur, which can lead to significant involvement with the court system.

Child Welfare Population (2011)³

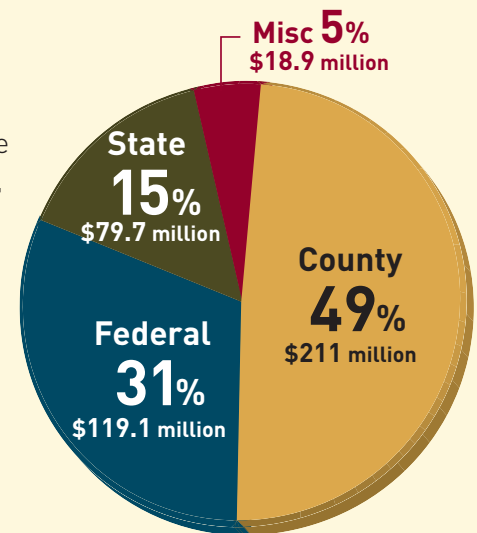
- 1,277,661** = All children in MN⁴.
- ???** = Number of calls of concern is unknown.
- 17,716** = Assessed reports of maltreatment (involving 24,962 children).
- 12,243** = Reports that received FAR.
- 5,473** = Reports that received FIR.
- 4,574** = FA & FI reports that required Child Protective Services.
- 11,368** = Children spent some time in out-of-home care, a decreasing number.
- 476** = Children came under state guardianship (became state wards).
- 980** = Children under state guardianship at the beginning of 2011, and
- 843** = Children under state guardianship at the end of the year, a decrease of 14 percent over the year.
- 540** = State wards adopted in 2011.
- 57** = Number of state wards aging out of out-of-home care at age 18 without a permanent home.

Please note: The numbers above describe unique children involved in child welfare, as opposed to numbers of reports. A report may involve more than one child.

Funding

Minnesota is one of 12 states operating a state-supervised, county-administered child welfare system. In this structure the state assumes the responsibility of federal compliance, sets program

requirements through the issuing of policy, and oversees county implementation of policy. Counties are responsible for implementation of day-to-day services, administering programs, and engaging the community in collaboration and integration of services. In Minnesota, counties also hold the primary funding responsibility for child welfare services. Of all the states that operate under the state-supervised, county-administered structure, Minnesota consistently ranks among the lowest in contribution of state funding and among the highest in county contribution.



**Current (2011) Funding:
\$428.7 million total⁵**

Issues of county funding dependence:

- Outcomes vary widely from county to county
- Funding levels are not stable over time
- Financial pressures on counties affect resources available for at-risk children
- State supervision is limited in its capacity to influence county outcomes and performance
- Early Intervention and Prevention services are often the first to be cut

¹ Loman, L. (2007, November). *Poverty, child neglect, and differential response*. Presentation at the American Humane Association Conference on Differential Response, Long Beach, CA.

² The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2012). *Strengthening families*. Retrieved from <http://www.aecf.org/OurApproach/StrengtheningFamilies.aspx>

³ Minnesota Department of Human Services. (2012). *Minnesota's child welfare report 2011: Report to the 2012 Minnesota Legislature* (MN DHS Publication No. DHS-5408D-ENG). St. Paul, MN: Author. Retrieved from <https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-5408D-ENG>

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). *Population under 18 years of age. 2011 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates*. Retrieved from http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_11_1YR_B09001&prodType=table

⁵ Minnesota Department of Human Services. (2012). *Minnesota county human service cost report for the calendar year 2011* (MN DHS Publication No. DHS-41791-ENG). St. Paul, MN: Author. Retrieved from <https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-41791-ENG>

Minnesota Child Welfare Practice Model⁶

In 2009, in an effort to guide child welfare reform efforts, the Minnesota Department of Human Services Child Safety and Permanency Division brought together key stakeholders from around the state to articulate a child welfare practice model. Minnesota's public child welfare practice model identifies the outcomes, values, principles and skills necessary to assure child safety, permanency and well-being.

Guiding values and principles of the Minnesota Child Welfare Practice Model

- Safety
- Permanency
- Well-Being
- Fostering Connections for Youth
- Family Focus
- Partnership
- Respectful Engagement
- Organizational Competence
- Professional Competence
- Cultural Competence
- Accountability

Performance Measurement

The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) is the federal effort to hold state child welfare systems accountable for outcomes for children. The CFSR assesses state performance on client outcomes related to safety, permanency, and well-being.

Minnesota's child welfare system has undergone two rounds of federal reviews, first in 2001 and again in 2007. Through these reviews the following were identified as areas needing the most improvement in Minnesota⁷:

- Timely response and quality assessment
- Father involvement
- Placement stability
- Timeliness of adoption
- Outcomes for older youth
- Family involvement in case planning
- Consistent practice

Evidence-Based Policy Solutions

CASCW urges your support of *evidence-based* policy solutions and promotes the following criteria as a guide to the selection of policies that will improve child safety and well-being⁸:

1. Demonstrate effectiveness in research, evaluation, or other studies;
2. Are supported by collective wisdom of practitioners from the field;
3. Address children and families with the poorest outcomes;
4. Possess sufficient scope and scale to address the outcome;
5. Are politically and administratively feasible; and
6. Are compatible with the values and assumptions of a family-strengthening perspective.

⁶ Minnesota Department of Human Services. (2009). Minnesota Child Welfare Practice Model. Retrieved from <https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Legacy/DHS-5881-ENG>

⁷ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2008, July). Final report: Minnesota Child and Family Services Review. Retrieved from http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/groups/children/documents/pub/dhs16_142185.pdf

⁸ Center for the Study of Social Policy. (2009, April). Policy matters: Setting and measuring benchmarks for state policies. Retrieved from http://www.policyforresults.org/topics/policy-areas/children-safe-supportive-successful-families/cw-policy-guide/1/article-content/13504_PM_Book_v4.pdf



More Policy Briefs Coming Soon

CASCW will continue to publish policy briefs to share research and evidence-based policy solutions on pressing issues for Minnesota's children and families. Look for new policy briefs coming soon.

Not finding what you need? Contact CASCW directly for information, research, & analysis on child welfare at 612-625-8121 or cascw@umn.edu.

The Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare (CASCW) is a nonpartisan research and training center at the University of Minnesota's School of Social Work.

CASCW's mission is to improve the well-being of children and families who are involved in the child welfare system by: educating human service professionals, fostering collaboration across systems and disciplines, informing policymakers and the public, and expanding the child welfare knowledge base.

CASCW does not take partisan positions nor do we advocate for or against specific bills. Instead, CASCW offers background data, theory, and evidence-based practices that may be helpful to you as you consider these issues. <http://z.umn.edu/cascw>

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