

# Ramsey County Child Protection Workload Study Overview

## Comprehensive Family Assessment Project

Ramsey County Community Human Services & University of Minnesota School of Social Work  
St. Paul, Minnesota  
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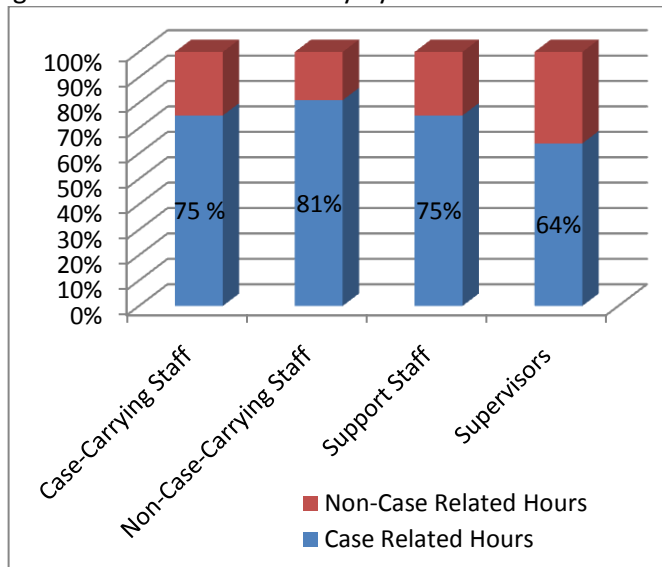
### The Study

In 2008, Ramsey County child protection staff participated in a week-long study designed to better understand the tasks that occupy staff time and the context in which these tasks occur, as well as the time and tasks each case receives. Information for this study was based on self-reports from staff documenting time spent on various tasks during the week of July 26th through August 1st. A total of 80 (out of 83 possible) staff participated, indicating excellent participation (a 96% response rate). This group was composed of 57 case-carrying workers, 10 support staff (case aides), five non-case-carrying workers (screeners), and eight supervisors, who together were working on a total of 539 cases during the week studied.

### Staff Hours

Ramsey County child protection staff reported working an average of 40 hours a week over four days. Of those 40 hours, case-carrying social workers and support staff reported spending 75% of their time on case-related tasks, such as contact with clients, travel, documentation, and other case-related tasks. Non-case-carrying staff spent slightly more time on case-related work (81%), while supervisors spent less time on case-related work (64%). (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1. Case-Related Activity by Position



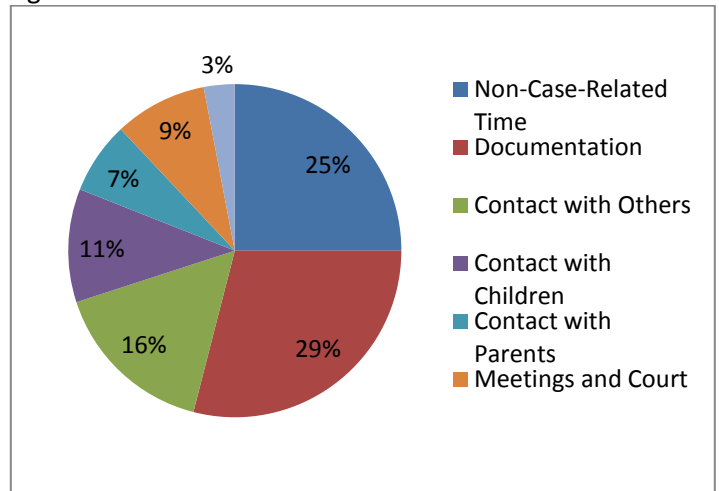
This report uses results from workload studies recently conducted in other states as context in which to compare findings of the current study.

As a group, Ramsey County child protection staff spend slightly more time on case-related activities as compared to workers in other states, who tend to spend approximately one third of their time on non-case-related activities. (Non-case-related tasks in the current study included attending training or conferences, performing clerical administrative activities, performing managerial supervisory functions, attending non-case-related meetings, and taking leaves or breaks.)

### Staff Tasks

The workload study provided information on the specific tasks staff performed, as well as an estimate of how much of reported staff time was spent on these specific tasks. Staff reported spending most of their time in contact with clients (children, parents, and others); followed by documentation; attending meetings and court; and finally, traveling. (See Figure 2.) All statistics reported hereafter are based on the percent of total staff time the task requires; 2%, 5%, and 10% requirements of total staff time reflect a dedication of approximately one, two, and four hours per week, respectively.

Figure 2. Percent of Total Staff Time Allocated to Tasks



Noteworthy findings indicate the following:

### Contact (34% of time/14 hours):

- 18% of staff time is spent in contact with families (11% with children and 7% with parents); 16% of staff time is spent in contact with others, including placement providers and collateral sources. Most contact time is spent in face-to-face meetings.
- Ramsey County child protection staff spend slightly more time in client contact than workers in Florida or New York.

### Documentation (29% of time/12 hours):

- 16% of staff time is spent searching for and retrieving information; 9% is spent recording information; and 5% is spent on public disclosure and discovery.
- Ramsey County child protection staff spend slightly more time in documentation-related activities than workers in Florida, New York, or Washington.

### Meetings and Court (9% of time/4 hours):

- Staff time dedicated to meetings and court includes face-to-face supervision and consulting with supervisors (1%), peer consultation (1%), work to maintain licensure (2%), case staffing (1%), case assignment and transfer (1%), case review (<1%), court and waiting (<1%), and supervisee training (<1%).
- Ramsey County staff spend less time in court and meetings than workers in California, New York, or Washington.

### Travel (3% of time/1 hour):

- Transporting clients accounts for 1% of staff time; the remainder of travelling time is spent on work-related travel for investigations, court, or other case-related duties.
- Ramsey County staff spend significantly less time travelling than workers in Florida or New York, but only slightly less time travelling than workers in Washington.

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## Task Context

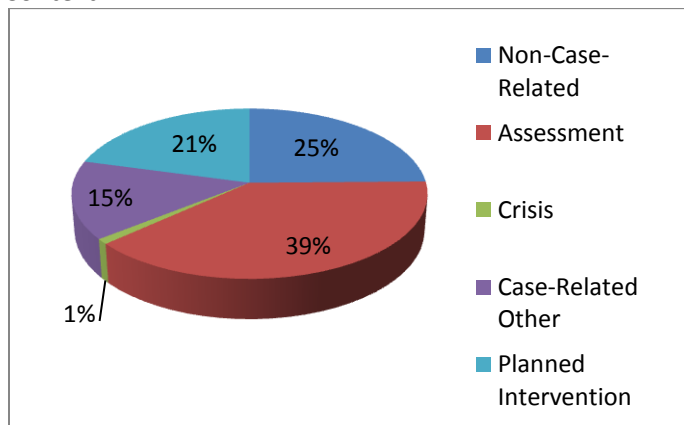
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Although it is informative to note the particular tasks staff complete on a day-to-day basis, it is also important to assess the context in which these tasks occur. Like Figure 2, Figure 3 demonstrates how staff, on average, reported spending their time over the week studied. However, Figure 3 depicts the amount of time staff reported spending on task *by context*, including assessment, assessment with crisis intervention, assessment with planned intervention, crisis intervention, planned intervention, or not applicable (case-related

other). Collapsing these tasks reveals that the tasks staff are engaged in mostly include assessment, followed by planned intervention, other case-related activities, and crisis:

- 1) Staff spend 39% of their time performing assessment-related tasks; 76% of all cases involved assessment of some sort.
- 2) Staff spend 21% of their time performing tasks related to planned interventions; 72 % of all cases involved a planned intervention.
- 3) Staff spend 1% of their time on tasks involving a crisis; 11% of all cases involved a crisis. However, this average is could be underreported, because the majority of staff did not document experiencing a crisis. The 24 staff who did code work time as crisis intervention spent on average 4% of their total hours in this context.

Figure 3. Percent of Staff Time Allocated to Tasks by Context



The purpose of the Ramsey County child protection workload study was to better understand the tasks that occupy staff time, the context in which these tasks occur, and the types of activities and time different cases receive. Overall, it appears that Ramsey County child protection staff are generally in close alignment with other child welfare workers across the country on the tasks that occupy staff time. However, Ramsey County child protection staff report spending more time on case-related activities than workers in other states. Additionally, it appears that Ramsey County staff spend slightly more time in contact with clients and working on documentation than workers in other states, but less time attending court and meetings, and travelling than workers in other states.

An important limitation to consider when reviewing findings in the report is that information was only captured for one week in the month of July. Thus, the results of this study may not be generalizable to other times of year.