



Child Welfare System: Workforce Engagement

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Recent County & Tribal Engagement

On January 5, 2024, the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) in partnership with Casey Family Programs hosted a virtual event for County and Tribal human service directors and child protection managers and leaders.

- This was the first of many conversations to be held across the state to capture voices of those involved in the child welfare workforce.
- Commissioner Jodi Harpstead and Assistant Commissioner Tikki Brown discussed efforts to connect across Minnesota's child protection system and answered questions.
- A total of 147 participants provided thoughtful ideas and shared challenges.

Top Themes: 1. Workforce

Recruitment and retention challenges:

- Labor shifts due to pandemic, retirements, complexity of work

Understanding funding and costs:

- Identify gaps, underfunded areas, inequity, inefficiencies
- Inform funding structure changes

“Fundamentally, we need solid workforce that is making critical decisions related to the health and wellness of children.”

“We definitely need more staff, and we need them to stay.”

“When there is turnover, it takes three years to teach everything to be known in CPS.”

Top Themes: 2. Funding

“The poorest counties in the state often have the largest challenges [...] They also have the smallest tax base to address that.”

“Grants are too restrictive. Return to allocation and allow us to use the funds as needed vs. having to spend time redesigning continually. Our work deserves to be funded.”

“Too often we are trying to fit people into programs to help them. It would be great to have some flexible funding to prevent families from our deep-end programs.”

Inequities caused by reliance primarily on local dollars.

- Affects available services, resources, and staffing

State and federal dollars can have overlapping spending requirements.

- Creates redundancies and inefficiencies in reporting, administrative burden

Staffing needs and constraints vary.

- Recruitment for existing positions vs. lacking funding to create new positions

Top Themes: 3. Statewide IT System (SSIS)

Social Service Information System (SSIS) is the state's Child Welfare IT System.

- Used to track, manage, and pay for child welfare casework
- Developed in the mid 1990s
- 6,000 daily users of SSIS

“We have known for years SSIS contributes to less time with families, frustration for workers, and reduces workforce.”

System challenges:

- Multiple application performance issues (e.g. outages and slow screen load times).
- SSIS is difficult to navigate and not mobile-friendly for child protection field work.
- SSIS data entry requirements are burdensome to agencies and take away from time spent supporting families.
- Inability to add new data elements to assist practice, data analysis, and accountability without risking further performance issues.
- New federal system modernization regulations require increased usability and data exchanges with court, education, and juvenile justice systems.

Screenshot of Social Service Information System (SSIS)*

Screen load times can take up to 2 minutes.

Bear Alecia, SSIS Case #202910965

Name	Alleged Victim	Alleged Offender	Allegation
Physical abuse - Alex, Jayden Mentès	Alex, Jayden Mentès	Alex, Gail Mentès	Physical abu
Neglect - Alex, Jayden Mentès	Alex, Jayden Mentès	Bear, Alecia	Neglect

Allegation:

Alleged Victim: Alleged Victim Desc:

Alleged Offender: Alleged Offender Desc:

**Not actual client data*

Top Themes: 3. Statewide IT System (SSIS) Cont.

Short-term solutions:

- 2023 Legislative session
 - Scott County and the Minnesota Association of County Administrators proposed the Child Protection Paperwork Reduction Act
- Current work is underway to address:
 - More streamlined data entry requirements
 - Areas for improved user interface design
 - Technical gaps that cause performance problems in SSIS and
 - A platform and path for modernization

Long-term solution:

- Obtain funding needed to transition existing system into a modern platform that is:
 - data-driven
 - federally compliant
 - a reduced administrative burden on county and tribal staff

“When the state modernizes SSIS, there needs to be state funding dedicated to counties to ensure that they can modernize their own infrastructure to meet specs.”

Addressing these three
fundamental components of the child
protection system will provide a strong
and stable foundation that will enable
better outcomes for Minnesota
children, families, and our workforce.

Thank You

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