



Working Group on Youth Interventions

Jeffrey Lunde, Hennepin County Commissioner

Mary Ellen Heng, Acting Director, Hennepin County Department of Community Corrections & Rehabilitation

January 8, 2025 | Child Protection Task Force Hearing



Background

- During the 2023 legislative session, Hennepin County leaders advocated for the creation of the Working Group on Youth Interventions.
- A collaborative and regional system is crucial to finding effective and lasting solutions.
- There is a need for expanded treatment options for justice-involved youth. Partnering with other counties and the state is fiscally and logistically efficient and will result in options benefitting ALL youth.

Establishment & Duties

The Minnesota Legislature established the Working Group on Youth Interventions in 2023 to:

- Assess current systems and post-disposition resources for addressing the therapeutic and rehabilitative needs of youth, specifically those youth adjudicated as child in need of protection or services (CHIPS) or delinquent.
- Identify racial and gender disparities that exist in these systems.
- Analyze research models and best practices across North America, including continuum of care, program specifics, best metrics, continuous improvement, entities involved in funding and oversight, outcomes, and costs.
- Develop recommendations on the design of a regional system of care for youth interventions, sustainable financing models, and alternatives to criminal penalties.
- Evaluate coordinated approaches to youth with high behavioral health needs, with the goal of reducing and eliminating touchpoints with the justice system and identify community-based services to address youth needs and gaps in services.
- Describe the role the state of Minnesota should play in ensuring best practice resources are available to all children across the state.

Membership

- **Co-chair:** Allen Godfrey, Field Services Director, Department of Corrections
- **Co-chair:** Jeffrey Lunde, County Commissioner, Hennepin County
- Joseph Glasrud, County Attorney, Stevens County
- Sarah Ellsworth, Managing Attorney, 10th Judicial District, Juvenile Division, Minnesota Board of Public Defense (Anoka County)
- Dawanna Witt, Sheriff, Hennepin County
- Dylan Warkentin, Director, Community Corrections, Anoka County
- Heather Goodwin, Director, Health and Human Services, Carver County
- Suwana Kirkland, Director, Community Corrections, Dakota County
- Nikki Niles, Director, Dodge & Olmsted (D&O) Community Corrections, Olmsted County
- Kathy Hedin, Deputy County Manager, Ramsey County
- Molly Bruner, Director, Community Corrections, Scott County
- Paula Stocke, Deputy Director, Public Health & Human Services, St. Louis County
- Melissa Huberty, Human Services Administrator, Stearns County
- Terry Thomas, Director, Community Corrections, Washington County
- Wendy Morton, Supervisor, Child & Family Social Services, Minnesota Prairie County Alliance (Dodge, Steele, and Waseca Counties)
- Lynne Penke Valdes, Deputy County Administrator, Otter Tail County
- Catherine Johnson, Director, Community Corrections and Rehabilitation, Hennepin County
- Nicole Kern, Director, Community Corrections, Morrison County
- Jim Schneider, Director, Probation, Cass County
- Terry Fawcett, Director, Probation, Pine County
- Ashley Solsrud-Beckman, Child Foster Care Well-Being Program representative, Minnesota Department of Human Services
- Diane Neal, Deputy Director Mental Health, Minnesota Department of Human Services
- Elliot Butay, Senior Policy Coordinator, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
- Millie Hernandez, Branch Director, Minneapolis American Indian Center
- Jasmine Mattison, Against All Odds Twin Cities, Ramsey County
- Shana King, Community Outreach Advocate/Parent Mentor, Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Law Center, Hennepin County



Meetings

- Meeting 1 / Sep. 13, 2023: Member introductions; nonpartisan staff overview of enabling legislation, data practices and open meeting laws; initial data strategy presentation.
- Meeting 2 / Oct. 4, 2023: Review of working group's key objectives; gathered additional insights and questions based on proposed research questions; review of key timelines, logistics, deadline and testimony.
- Meeting 3 / Oct. 25, 2023: Discussion of data needs; update on the provider survey; testimony provided.
- Meeting 4 / Nov. 15, 2023: Review of data gathering efforts; testimony provided.
- Meeting 5 / Dec. 13, 2023: Review of data gathering efforts; testimony provided.
- Meeting 6 / Jan. 3, 2024: Reviewed and provided feedback on draft versions of the data report and recommendations.
- Meeting 7 / Jan. 31, 2024: Reviewed and provided feedback on an updated draft of the recommendations.
- Meeting 8 / Feb. 14, 2024: Reviewed and voted to approve the final report.
- Feb. 23, 2024: Final report submitted to Legislature.

Research

Research was conducted to address questions posed by the Legislature

- Current approaches to addressing therapeutic and rehabilitative needs of youth in Minnesota
- Licensing and certification in Minnesota
- Models and best practices across North America

Data

Data sources:

- Minnesota Judicial Branch (courts)
- Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC)
- Surveys sent to correctional facilities and treatment providers

Data limitations:

- Court race data required a Supreme Court order for release
- Court and DHS data collected and tracked differently; not shared with each other
- DHS does not specifically identify CHIPS cases
- Start/end dates frequently missing; time in treatment not specifically provided; placement records frequently overlap
- Some systems do not allow for LGBTQ+ or gender identity data
- Non-residential, community-based services and providers are not included in state data

Takeaways

Barriers:

- **Resources vary** among the 87 counties – regional approach could alleviate this
- Licensing, certification and funding are **major barriers** for facilities and service providers
- Crucial **funding is based on facility**, not the youth or their needs
- Data collection and sharing are **inadequate**
- Facilities face **workforce challenges**

Impacts:

- Two-track system **impedes access** to services – one track would equalize regardless of DOC/DHS designation
- **Interrupted services** have a major negative impact on youth well-being
- **Cultural and linguistic differences** play too small a role in programming development
- Racial **disparities** persist
- **Low and under-trained staffing** limits capacity and services offered

Recommendations

The working group's recommendations focus on six primary areas:

1. Building a **regional system of care** throughout the state, that will keep youth closer to home and maximize connection, contact, and support for both youth and family.
2. Continued study of facility licensing and certification and evaluation of accountability, **governance and oversight**.
3. **Fiscal strategies** to support and retain existing staff and providers, increase access to programs for youth and family, improve reimbursement for providers, as well as support infrastructure changes needed in many facilities.
4. Improving **data** collection, data sharing, and data analysis, to ensure transparency and better data driven decisions.
5. Improving the **programming** offered in out-of-home placement facilities and across the entire continuum of care for system involved youth to better comply with best practices.
6. Addressing the **workforce development** needs that are impacting our system providers and community providers, including hiring, retention, training, salary, and wellness.

Hennepin County's next steps

The situation is urgent; now is the time for action

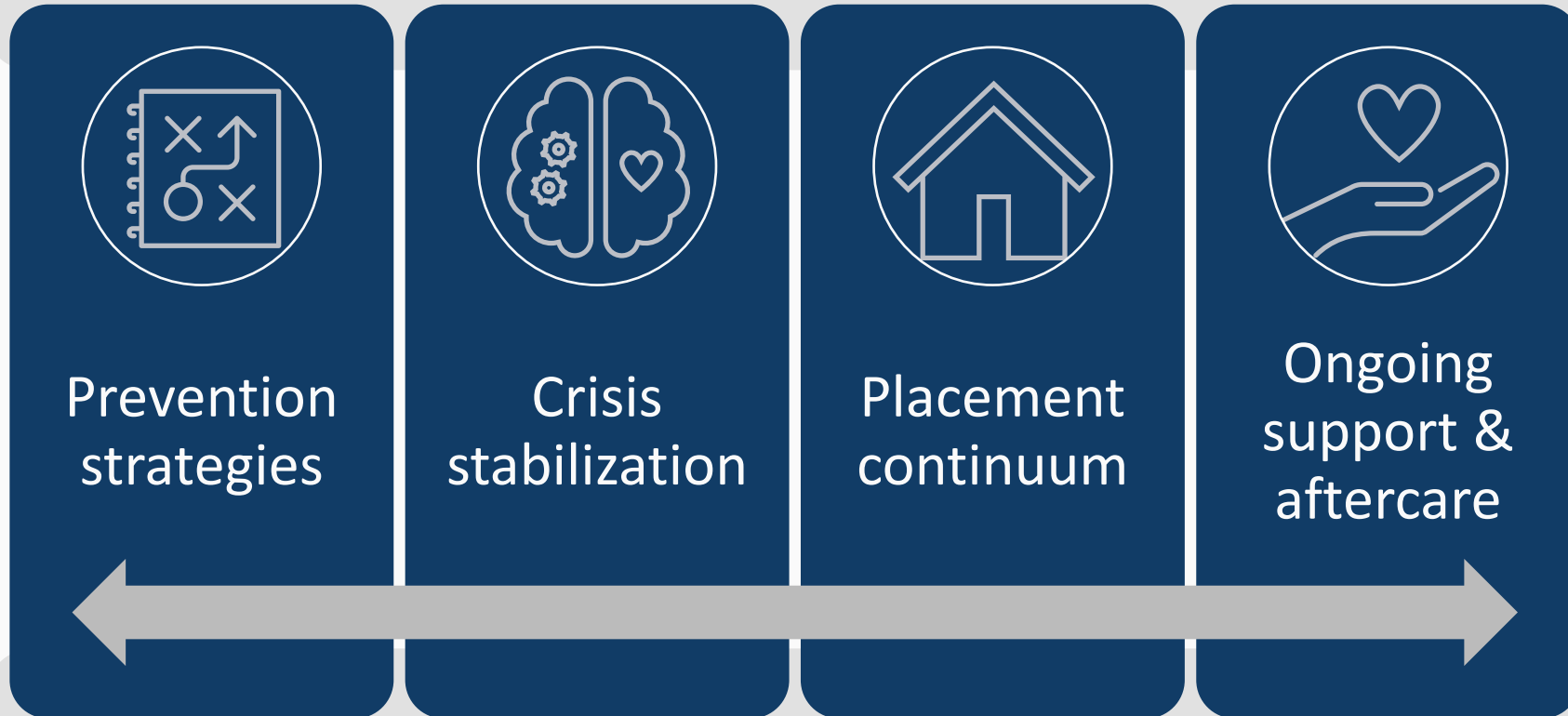
- We are moving forward with Working Group on Youth Interventions recommendation to implement a regional continuum of care
- Coordination of multi-county workgroup
- Assessing gaps in the continuum of care and how to coordinate across county lines
- Developing a formal structure to move that forward in collaboration with partners

Our shared vision and path forward

Regional approach and regional framework

- Regional oversight agreements
- Shared vision, values and commitments
- Operations, infrastructure, space, programming, funding, and data-sharing strategies

A continuum of care – no matter how youth enter the system



Centering youth, family, and community support system

Commitment to youth development, providing various levels of sustainable trauma-informed care and supports

Coordinating a regional approach



Participating counties: Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Scott, Ramsey, and Washington counties in the metro, plus Olmsted and Stearns counties



Advancing an immediate response, including a Hennepin County youth crisis stabilization center



Regional continuum design and planning for 2026 implementation



Policy proposals and legislative funding

Policy proposals and legislative funding



Key policy areas

- Licensing and certification
- Medicaid benefit policy
- Reimbursement rate structure
- Multi-Disciplinary Team



Key funding needs

- Staffing stabilization
- Programming / services
- Facilities / infrastructure
- Build-out of regional continuum of care framework

Questions