

Child Well-Being Annual report to the board



December 2024



Introduction

Since 2017, our work to build a system centered on child well-being has taken shape around supporting whole families and reducing trauma.

With this vision, we've built in early and practical support for families and trauma-informed practices that reduce disparities. Our workforce is larger, more stable and diverse, and our decision-making is grounded in data and measurable impact. We've had a profound effect on our system and the children and families we serve, but there is more work to be done.

We remain committed to the six recommendations of the Child Protection Oversight Committee in 2016. Our work is guided by a strategic plan created with input from families, community-based providers and system partners. When we approach our work with this perspective, we see the intersecting challenges where we have a responsibility to act.

Our report begins again in the child protection system, where we are collaborating with families and partners to eliminate disparities and promote the well-being of all children in Hennepin County. The second half of the report highlights where we are acting collectively across Hennepin County and within Human Services to deliver systemic change. We continue to learn from our partners and the community in delivering transformative services, and where we need to go in the future.



Staying the course on what we know

Our vision for the future of child and family well-being is one where all children and youth are thriving in safe, stable homes.

We get there by honoring families and partnering with integrity to deliver trauma-informed and culturally responsive services.

Trauma-informed through the case continuum

Prevention

We know children do best when they grow with their own families in safe, stable, and well-supported homes. All families face challenges, but families with low incomes or families of color experience a disproportionate risk of child welfare involvement due to societal factors like housing instability, poverty, and mental health concerns. Prevention works within communities and across systems to address these root causes — often stemming from systemic racism, discrimination and historical trauma — with concrete resources and support.

Our Parent Support Outreach Program (PSOP) is a voluntary service driven by parents' goals for family well-being. Last year, 2,777 children and families received services through PSOP; 81.6% of those were families of color. Outcomes continue to demonstrate that prevention works: Since 2021, more than 80% of families who completed services did not experience a future screened-in child protection report.

The same challenges that make it hard to parent effectively make it difficult for youth to grow and thrive. In response, we've expanded our continuum of prevention services to create more pathways for youth and families to access support for well-being.

A dedicated Youth Support Outreach Program (YSOP) unit promotes youth independence and well-being while reducing the risk of behavioral and mental health concerns. YSOP is a voluntary service that leverages parents' and youth's strengths to create a healthy and safe path forward, in collaboration with existing supports like schools and health providers.

Beginning next year, our long-term commitment to child and family well-being will be embedded in the community at two Family Resource Centers. Each physical location will offer resources, support and opportunities requested by local families and provided by the community-based organizations who know them well. In the last year, we've engaged thousands of residents through a targeted outreach campaign to include the voices of youth and families in the center's service design.

With an integrated approach to prevention, and authentic relationships with the community members impacted by our system, we hope to see continued and increased positive outcomes for families, in the child welfare continuum and beyond.

Family involvement in decision making

In our work with children and families, we're driven by what we know to be true: Families are the best place for children. Families want to protect their children. Decision-making in children's best interest is enhanced when we infuse family voices, value their strengths, and honor their experiences and expertise.

Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) is a family centered, strengths based and culturally relevant approach to authentic engagement with families. Before any transition for children, FGDM gathers parents and extended family of children to thoughtfully plan for their safety, care and well-being. The Hennepin County FGDM team includes ten full-time, DHS-trained social workers who are neutral facilitators.

Meetings may also include service providers, foster parents, guardians ad litem, tribal representatives and other support people identified by the family. In use in Hennepin County since 1998, we've significantly increased resources dedicated to this practice in recent years. Work is underway to further integrate FGDM as an important disparity reduction strategy as we prepare to phase-in the Minnesota African American Family Preservation and Child Welfare Disproportionality Act.

When used early and often, FGDM can change the trajectory of a case, leading to better outcomes for families and an improved experience with our system. When families are empowered to keep children safe, we see fewer cases involved in court, timely permanency, and more children at home with their parents.

Permanency

Investments in kinship and relative care are strongly tied to children safely returning home to their families, and reunification remains the most common outcome for children involved in our system. Other outcomes include adoption, transfers of legal custody, or living with a previously noncustodial parent.

Our family-centered practice creates multiple pathways for children to preserve their family relationships, and we consistently see significantly more children adopted by relatives than non-relatives. Across all permanency outcomes last year, more than 75% of children left out-of-home placement to live with family or kin.

In 2023, Transfers of Permanent Physical and Legal Custody (TPLPC's) were the second most common outcome for children, surpassing adoption for the first time.

Transfers of custody can happen without terminating parental rights, and relatives and kin often prefer this path when reunification is not possible. Our Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) team and tribal partners advocate for transfers of custody to help preserve children's ties to their culture and relatives — a strategy that holds the same promise for every child and family who have historically experienced disparate outcomes in our system.

Children exiting out-of-home placement (OHP) to TPLPC vs. adoption, 2019–present

	2020	2020	2022	2023	2024*
TPLPC	12.4%	15.8%	15.6%	27.4%	26.1%
Adoption	18.0%	23.0%	24.1%	17.6%	17.3%
Total number of OHP exits	1,037	941	751	683	468

*2024 data through September 4, 2024

Out-of-home placement

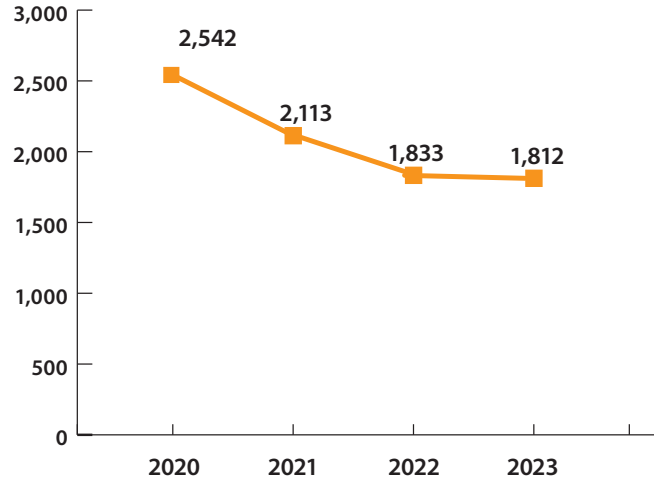
We saw an increase in the number of children entering out-of-home placement last year, but the total number of children in foster care once again declined. Reducing trauma — and sustaining it over time — reflects what’s possible with continued investment from the Hennepin County Board and a commitment to child well-being at all levels.

Our trauma-informed approach puts children and families first. Dedicated teams coordinate placements to make the best possible matches between kids and providers and deliver support services to strengthen those placements in the critical early days. For placements supported by our Placement Support team, placement disruptions have dropped 22.9% since 2022, promoting stability for children at a sensitive time and reducing further trauma.

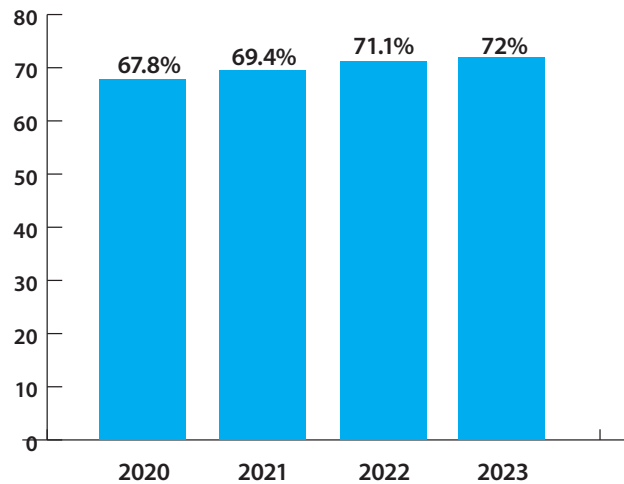
When children must be separated from their parents, identifying relatives and kin who can step in and care for them is our priority. Our use of relative care continues to increase, better preserving connections to family and culture and reducing trauma for more children every year.

That growth also signals an increasing need to surround relative providers with support for the important role they’ve taken on. New relative providers receive personalized coaching and advocacy for system navigation, services for children, and care from someone who understands the emotional complexity of family dynamics through their own lived experience. We proactively engage all new relative providers soon after placement, increasing interest in peer mentorship by more than 50% in just three months.

Children in out-of-home placement



Relative care



Workforce development

Median caseloads increased slightly in 2023, and we’re responding with new strategies to balance the workload and invest in diverse, well-trained and supported staff. We continue to intentionally vary caseload distribution among newer and more experienced workers. We also take advantage of opportunities to realign support based on need by teaming child protection social workers and child services workers whenever possible. A set of standardized criteria developed this year ensures the right level of support is in place for staff and families.

Strategies implemented in 2023 as part of our workforce development plan have continued to promote retention and minimize vacancies. The turnover rate in 2023 was 7.4%, falling 4.1% from the previous year and remaining well below the national average. Our continuous hiring model has been effective at limiting vacancies, and we’ve retained 99% of the 91 staff hired since January 1, 2024.

Our internal training and staff development team has designed an anti-racist training curriculum combining national research and best-practices with a Hennepin County lens. Introduced this year as part of our intensive eight-week training curriculum for new hires, anti-oppressive practice training will be required for all Children and Family Services staff beginning in 2025.

Staff are also supported by a robust internship program built in collaboration with local colleges and universities. Many interns are hired into permanent positions, building a strong pipeline of talent to support children and families. These new staff enter the workforce better prepared for the realities of the job, and so far, that has improved their retention.

Central to retaining staff is supporting their well-being. The Alliance for Racial Equity in Children and Family Services (ARECFS) is a peer led advisory committee that promotes anti-racism through a collaborative and inclusive workplace. Peer coaching office hours are now available five days a week to reduce the impact of secondary traumatic stress.

We’ve also initiated a process to conduct trauma-informed “stay interviews” — informal, employee-focused conversations between supervisors and staff — to proactively retain our broadly diverse workforce. A leadership cohort for new supervisors strengthens connections and leadership skills with training and reflective supervision.

Median caseloads have begun to improve throughout 2024. As we move forward on the strategies outlined in our plan, we’re confident that caseloads will become more balanced, and our talented team will continue to have the support they need to achieve the best possible outcomes with families.

Caseloads per worker

Measure	2020	2021	2022	2023
Ongoing child protection case management	10	10	10	11
ICWA* ongoing child protection case management	9	8	10	9
Child protection assessment/investigations	7	7	7	7

Note: Caseloads in December of each year

*Indian Child Welfare Act

Focusing on disparity reduction

We envision a future where every child thrives. To get there, we're building a system that focuses on reducing disparities with integrated solutions that put families first.

Our work is intentional and comprehensive. The families we serve experience disparities in multiple domains — health, housing, education, justice, and more. Our child well-being transformation began in the child protection system, but we know the work cannot stop there.

We're committed to reducing disparities among our residents with transformative services in every line of business. A set of shared core values underlie our work, guiding us to advance equity and drive innovation to achieve the best possible outcomes for all. We strive to act boldly, and with integrity, in the stewardship of our resources and our responsibility to the community.

Above all, we put people first. We recognize all families, particularly those who have historically been disproportionately represented in our system, as full partners in developing solutions together.



The next phase of child well-being

Reducing disparities for Native American children in out-of-home placement

Last year, Native American children in Hennepin County were 12 times more likely to be involved in a child protection intake than white children. That alarming disproportionality persists throughout the continuum, compounding trauma for Native American children, families, and communities.

We recognize the impact of racial disparities on children's well-being — both in our work and in areas like health, housing, employment, and criminal justice involvement. In 2024, the Child Well-Being Advisory Committee's focus shifted to disparities specifically affecting Native American children in out-of-home placement, using a Hennepin County-wide lens.

This work will help focus, inform and guide recommendations for system partners to reduce these disparities — and what we learn from this process will inform how we address disparities effecting all disproportionately represented children in Hennepin County.

Over the course of 18 months, the work is unfolding in three interlocking phases: learning, engagement, and recommendations. We explored the root causes driving disparities, including trauma, individual and systemic bias, poverty, substance use and mental health challenges, and problematic system design.

We engaged the ICWA Law Center, Minnesota Supreme Court, and the Minneapolis American Indian Center. We're meeting with a wide variety of county and community-based partners and tribal leaders to learn about their experiences and perspectives.

Above all, the lived experience of Native American children, families, tribes and community-based partners will take the lead in addressing the complex intersectionality of the challenges we are facing together.

Decisions in the best interest of Native American children cannot be made without close partnership with tribes, tribal courts, and the protection of Native American cultural values. We value our partnership with tribes and continue to strengthen our relationships with our tribal partners in Minnesota and neighboring regions to achieve the best possible outcome for every child.

We carry out this work with the shared understanding that the root causes of these issues are complex and traumatic. Our commitment is to compassionately engage in difficult but necessary conversations with integrity and accountability to the transformative impact we strive to deliver.

The committee is thoughtfully preparing to enter the recommendations phase in 2025. Potential solutions will be generated at the system level, in collaboration with county, community, and tribal partners. Recommendations will be actionable, with measurable impact on outcomes and disparity reduction.

In the child protection system

Scaling disparity reduction efforts to serve more children and families

2024 was a historic year for the child welfare system in Minnesota. Since the Minnesota African American Family Preservation and Child Welfare Disproportionality Act was signed into law this spring, we've been preparing for implementation in collaboration with Ramsey County and the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth and Families.

We've conducted a legislative walk-through of our entire case continuum to identify what practices can be strengthened, and where we need to address gaps. From there, subject matter experts are developing detailed work plans for the phase-in period and beyond. Infrastructure for ongoing analysis is embedded in our plans so we can quickly respond to what we will learn during implementation.

Preparing for a new era in how our system responds to families highlights the value of the foundation we've laid for child well-being over the last decade. To know we're successful, we will look for continued meaningful collaboration with children and families. A well-trained, culturally competent workforce, and a robust network of community-based support, will be essential to eliminate disparities and reduce the impact of trauma.

At the highest level, we'll want to see an overall reduction in disproportionately represented children in the child welfare system and out-of-home placement. And, when out-of-home placement is necessary, an increase in reunifications or other forms of permanency with a relative.

Community engagement

We cannot transform our system without the voices of youth and families who experience it. We recognize the urgency to reduce racial disparities in our system, but community-led solutions take time to listen, build trust, and create space for healing.

For over 10 years, we have committed resources to support authentic engagement with the African American and Native American communities. Those investments have increased, establishing a dedicated team of community liaisons focused on building authentic, reciprocal relationships with community members.

This year, that work has focused on several key strategies, including community forums, focus groups, and partnerships to drive key efforts to reduce disparities. Feedback from residents and community-based partners has informed several key initiatives, including the design of our Family Resource Centers, strategic plan, and our work with the American Bar Association to improve race equity in permanency outcomes.

Staff have also had a presence at formal and informal community gatherings, offering tangible resources and support and building rapport with community leaders. From what we've learned, we have expanded our outreach into emerging East and West African communities. Work is also underway to strengthen our partnerships with Black churches and other faith communities to create mutual pathways for information sharing and education about the child protection system.

51 African American and Native American community forums

57 community-based organizations

950 + resident voices



Preventing removal with peer support

Parental substance use continues to be the most common reason families become involved with child protection. Research on effective treatment models suggests that parents do better when their children remain in their care, and we're seeing positive results for families in our collaborative in-home recovery programs.



To build on this success, we've added to our continuum of in-home support for families with a peer mentoring program that uniquely supports parents of children at risk of out-of-home placement. Peer mentors provide individual guidance for system navigation, parenting and recovery that is strengths-based and trauma-informed.

Peer support reduces parents' stress and promotes engagement with child protection. In some cases, this has prevented foster care placement or expedited permanency timelines. As someone who's been there before, peers validate parents' emotions and experiences with the system, giving them hope that recovery is possible — and that their family can heal, together.

Together with the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth and Families, we're collaborating on a federal evidence-building pilot project to demonstrate the effectiveness of culturally responsive peer support with community-based providers. What we learn will inform policy and program decisions that could help more families heal, stabilize, and thrive with their children at home.

Keeping moms and newborns together safely

Child well-being begins during children's earliest moments, with healthy babies going home with their parents after birth. But for pregnant people living with substance use disorder, the birth of their child can be filled with profound fear about potential child protection involvement.



Child protection is legally required to intervene at birth in certain circumstances — like when babies are born to a mother with a prior Termination of Parental Rights (TPR). This intervention can be traumatic for parents and babies, affecting parent-child attachment.

To promote safe, healthy pregnancies and families, we're using a new approach to support pregnant people who've previously lost parental rights or legal custody of children due to substance use or mental health concerns.

In a new voluntary program, child protection partners with agencies to engage with expecting parents prior to birth, which is otherwise not legally allowed. The focus is promoting child safety, documenting successful treatment, and developing a plan for the time of birth. This way, newborns can stay with their parents and/or kin whenever possible and avoid unexpected, traumatic separations.

Families of color experience a disproportionate number of removals and losses of custody. By assessing and planning for safety ahead of time, we can reduce those disparities and improve moms' experiences with the system by offering hope and clarity that their babies can stay with them when they're born.

In every case that went through the pilot phase that began in 2021, babies either went home with their mother or were in a kinship placement. Many didn't go to court — there was a safety assessment, and the case was closed. Based on this success, this practice became official procedure for all Hennepin County investigators in fall 2023.

Technical assistance for mandated reporters

Most child protection reports come from mandated reporters — school personnel, law enforcement, medical providers, and social services workers required by law to report instances of suspected child abuse and maltreatment.

These professionals play an important role in identifying children who may need help. At the same time, children and families of color are overrepresented in the child protection system — a disparity that begins at the point of reporting.

Technical assistance for mandated reporters gives agencies a closer look at the disparities impacting children in their communities and empowers them with resources to support families.

During the six-month program, agencies review a customized snapshot of their reporting trends followed by multiple trainings to address implicit bias and historical trauma. Importantly, agencies also build an inventory of community-based services available to the children and families they work with. Ongoing follow-up support and consultation reinforces these concepts in practice.

Data from a successful pilot that ended in April 2024 suggests there is merit in focusing on the front door of the child protection system to prevent trauma and reduce racial disparities throughout. Before the pilot, Black children were the subject of 67% of reports made by the pilot agency between January and March 2023. Following technical assistance, we saw fewer reports involving Black children that did not meet criteria for a child protection response. Throughout the six-month pilot, 78% of consultations resulted in no report being necessary, and connections were made to other resources instead.

That consultation is key. Even with training, mandated reporters might feel unsure whether a given situation requires a child protection response, or community-based support. We encourage consults with our intake experts, and began offering one-on-one phone consults to anyone considering making a child protection report in 2024.

Improving the foster care experience with person-centered technology

Since 2022, we've been working through a multi-year workplan to reimagine the experience of foster care for children in out-of-home placement. The work has been broad, encompassing more than 40 recommendations of the foster care needs analysis presented by Wilder Research in 2021 along with work initiated years before.



Goals include improving the placement process as it is experienced by families; better supporting biological and foster families with clear information and trauma-informed services; giving children and youth information and support to allow them to have a voice in the process; and ensuring accurate, real-time, and useful data for everyone involved in the foster care system.

Launching in January 2025, our new out-of-home placement application delivers on each of these goals. Designed with our partners in Health and Human Services IT, this purpose-built technology interfaces with multiple current systems, leveraging data to match children's needs with providers in the best position to care for them.

Another of those systems is Binti, a digital platform foster parents and social workers have been using since 2022 to reduce paperwork and streamline the licensing process. Foster parents can also complete training and receive immediate tech support through Binti, so more time can be spent preparing for the everyday realities of being a foster parent.

Affirming care for youth in out-of-home placement

Every child deserves a safe, loving home that affirms and reflects who they are. LGBTQ+ youth are overrepresented in foster care, and often involved with other systems that can cause further trauma without inclusive policies and practices. At the same time, the LGBTQ+ community is an underutilized resource for finding supportive homes and families for children and youth in foster care.

For these reasons, our foster care and adoptions practice has evolved over the last year to enhance placement stability, permanency and well-being in the LGBTQ+ community — both for children and youth in foster care, and current and future foster parents.

The team reviewed best practices in other jurisdictions and audited its forms, policies and systems for inclusive language and tools. They strengthened recruitment and retention efforts with community outreach and culturally responsive trainings for staff and foster providers.

With a focus on sustainability, they established new partnerships with community-based providers offering placement support resources, and launched an LGBTQ+ Community of Practice to strengthen inclusion across Human Services.

The foundation of our work is to promote safety for children and youth by supporting and partnering with families. With an intentional focus on how we represent and respond to LGBTQ+ youth and parents, we're welcoming them with a clear message — you're safe here.

Integrating work across disparity domains

Opening the door to well-being

Safe, stable housing is essential for children's well-being. This year, families began moving into two supportive housing communities with dedicated units for families involved with child welfare.



Supportive housing gives families a place to land where they can get out of crisis mode. Research demonstrates that when families have stable housing, they have time to focus on things like employment, education and their children's development. With a strong foundation and access to support services, real improvements can start happening.

Opened this summer, the Vista 44 community creates 50 new homes for families in Hopkins. Twenty units are prioritized for families connected with Children and Family Services — from families receiving preventative services to those planning for reunification. Emerson Village, a similar community opened in North Minneapolis this fall, offers 20 new homes with 12 units reserved for families involved with child welfare.

At both locations, families have access to social services on or near the site. The goal is to make services as accessible as possible, while still empowering families to make their own choices. Families can stay as long as they need to stabilize and achieve their goals for self-sufficiency. Both buildings have units at a slightly higher income to allow families to stay in stable housing as their incomes rise.

At the intersection of homelessness and child safety, Vista 44 and Emerson Village are helping meet some of our resident's deepest needs. Families facing the greatest number of barriers to finding stable housing on their own, and cases where lack of housing could delay reunification or send children deeper into the system, are given priority.

Family centered court processes

Our vision for child well-being means putting children at the center of everything we do — even in something as routine as paperwork. Court documents play an important role in communicating the progress of a case and information used to decide outcomes.



This year, Children and Family Services, the County Attorney's Office, Adult Representation Services, the Guardian ad Litem Board, Public Defender's Office, the courts and tribal partners worked together to transform and the pre-hearing report, putting children's needs first.

The pre-hearing report sets the stage for a hearing, sharing critical decision-making information between system partners. The form was reorganized to lead with families' recent successes and children's current needs, prioritizing the work staff do to help families achieve their goals. Case history now follows at the end.

The new form is also smarter, using dynamic fields and auto-populating information to reduce paperwork and save time. Court orders were similarly revised using a strengths-based, family-focused lens. With a more effective and trauma-informed tools, we're focusing on families' futures and the support we provide to help them get there.

More projects are planned over the next year to improve race equity in permanency outcomes — in the legal system and beyond. The second phase of our work with the American Bar Association concluded this September, providing six recommendations to carry the work forward.

Adult Representation Services, Children and Family Services, and the Hennepin County Attorney's Office are driving key efforts guided by the recommendations. A pilot in 2025 will identify families with child protection investigations or ongoing cases that can participate in diversion instead of going to court.

Family Response and Stabilization

As we continue building a system of care for children's mental health, we're removing barriers to care so all families can access the support they need, when they need it.



Our Family Response and Stabilization Service is now available for families 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There are no eligibility requirements for families to get help, and no concern is too small. Common experiences include family conflict or signs of aggression, but we respond to all needs. When a family calls, providers meet them where they are within the hour, or at a scheduled time of their choosing.

Families commonly receive three tiers of support depending on their needs. Response services support youth and families with addressing immediate concerns and interrupting escalation. We also work with supports families already have in place to coordinate care and strengthen support networks. Stabilization services connect families with a culturally specific provider who will work with them over the next eight weeks to create a plan for ongoing support and stability.

Family Response and Stabilization believes in empowering whole families with culturally responsive care embedded in their communities — and outcomes demonstrate this approach works. Last year, 90% of families who received services had no emergency room visits, 92% had no involvement with law enforcement, and 97% preserved their same living arrangement.

When the program launched in 2021, 80% of families were referred by hospitals. Today, 62% of calls come from parents and caregivers. With the expansion to 24 hours services, we anticipate responding to 2,000 calls from families annually. We continue to listen to families and learn alongside our partners to provide practical, meaningful care just a phone call away.

In-home recovery support

Parental substance use remains the most common reason children enter foster care, accounting for 42% of entries in 2023. Families of color experience substance use disorders and family separation at disproportionate rates, but we know parents do better when children can remain safely in their care.



For these reasons, Children and Family Services and Behavioral Health have a growing partnership to bring behavioral health services closer to families involved with child protection. Since 2022, 200 parents have received in-home peer support to achieve lasting recovery. Of individuals served, 74% were Black, Indigenous or People of Color.

Using a strengths-based approach, peer specialists help parents identify the skills and resources they'll use to manage their recovery long-term. So far, In-Home Peer Support has prevented removal for 83% of children who were in-home at the start of services.

Recovery can be a difficult journey, with success and setbacks along the way. We have multiple strategies and services in place, offering tiers of support to best serve families' individual needs. In-Home Family Recovery offers a higher level of care, delivering intensive substance use and mental health services in-home, along with parent-child therapy, parenting support and case management.

Over the past two years, 50 families have participated In-Home Family Recovery. Over 90% are families of color, including 56% Native American. With in-home recovery support in place, 20 families have been preserved, reducing trauma and supporting parents with intensive treatment services. When out-of-home placement has occurred, 4 families were reunified while services continued.

By improving behavioral health outcomes for parents, we can prevent deeper-end system involvement and help more children and families achieve long-lasting safety, stability, and well-being.

Reducing barriers to student engagement

Prevention efforts work best when they are done in partnership with other systems that serve families. We collaborate with school districts to help families at risk of homelessness keep their housing and promote student engagement.



School to Housing programs are now embedded in over 180 schools across nine partner districts with the highest percentages of students experiencing homelessness. Families have access to tiers of support based on need, including one-time financial assistance, rental subsidies, and short- and long-term navigation.

We've expanded our partnership with Minneapolis Public Schools to offer families longer-term financial support paired with services to stabilize housing. Our investment includes increased staff capacity to help identify more families who may be at risk.

We also provide case management services for families whose children have significant barriers to school attendance and engagement other than housing. Connect for School Success increases student engagement and promotes family stability with upstream supports. Social workers work with families for up to one year, helping them achieve self-identified goals with a holistic, strengths-based approach. Where needs intersect, the two programs work together to combine rental assistance with family-driven supports.

Since the program's launch in 2022, 325 students in pre-K through grade 12 have received services. Aligned with the county's disparity reduction strategy, 96% were students of color and 21% spoke a primary language that was not English. Overall, the average absence rate dropped about 37%, and students gained an average of 11.2 school days per school year.

For kids, stable housing means stronger connections to school and neighbors, and a sense of community. Many families who receive support are involved with other county programs or systems. By working together, we can break down barriers to affordable housing so children and families can be better served in other areas impacting their well-being.

Child Well-Being Advisory Committee, 2024

Established in 2017, the Child Well-Being Advisory Committee helps guide and advise county staff and updates the county board on progress toward child safety and well-being outcomes. The committee is comprised of community and child welfare system experts.

October 2024

Member	Title	Organization	Term expires
Debbie Goettel	Commissioner, Chair	Hennepin County Board	Board
Angela Conley	Commissioner, Co-chair	Hennepin County Board	Board
Lola Adebara	Founder and CEO	Partnerships for Permanence	2025
June Barker Independence (C2i)	Community member and Living Skills Counselor 2024		Connections 2
Tikki Brown	Commissioner	Minnesota Department of Children, Youth and Families	∞
Josephine Dorsey	Foster care provider		2026
Todd Fellman	Judge	4th Judicial District	∞
Eric Fenner	Managing Director	Casey Family Programs	∞
Nancy Harper	Medical Director	Otto Bremer Trust Center for Safe and Healthy Children	2025
Dianne Heins	Attorney	Faegre Baker Daniels, LLP	2027
Brandon Jones	Executive Director	Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health	2026
Traci LaLiberte	Executive Director, Center for the Advanced Study of Child Welfare	University of Minnesota	2024
Anne McKeig	Justice	Minnesota Supreme Court	2025
Laura Newton	Program Director	Minneapolis American Indian Center	2025
Jessica Rogers	Executive Director	Connections 2 Independence (C2i)	2024
Jessica Ryan	Principal Attorney, Adult Representation Services	Hennepin County	∞
Mike Scholl	Senior Director	Casey Family Programs	∞
Ada Smith	Resident with lived experience		2026
Shannon Smith	Executive Director	ICWA Law Center	2027
Michael Thomas	Behavioral Health Director	NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center	2026

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Child Well-Being Advisory Committee, 2023, continued

Hennepin County staff

Jodi Wentland	Deputy County Administrator — Health and Human Services	Ex officio
Lisa Bayley	Director of Safe Communities	Ex officio
Kwesi Booker	Director of Children of Family Services	Ex officio
Sara Hollie	Director of Public Health	Ex officio
Geniene Layne	Committee coordinator	Hennepin County
Lori Munsterman	Manager, Data Analytics and CQI	Hennepin County
Lori Whittier	Principal Attorney, Child Protection Division	Hennepin County Attorney's Office



Hennepin County

Human Services

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hennepin.us