

# Supreme Court Council on Child Protection and Maltreatment Prevention: Working Roadmap

The purpose of this document is to lay out the work of the Council in meeting two key deliverables: an interim progress report due July 15, 2025, and a final report due January 15, 2026. Per the authorizing legislation and Supreme Court order establishing the Council, the final report will contain a “comprehensive blueprint to improve Minnesota’s child protection system and prevent unnecessary entry of children and families into the system.”

## 1.1. Content of reports

The **progress report** will contain:

- **Identified challenges**, including applicable supporting data and research.
- **Summary of research and data** collected as well as surveys and focus groups conducted as of June 2025.
- **Additional challenges** may be identified and included in the final report resulting from surveys and focus groups held after June 2025.

The **final report** will contain:

- **Summary of surveys** and focus groups conducted.
- **Summary of research** and data collected and surveys and focus groups undertaken by the Council.
- **Identification of policies, laws, practices, latest research, and data** reviewed related to children in the child protection system.
- **Research reviewed** regarding the effect and impact of foster care placement and out-of-home placement (OHP) on the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and that identifies and evaluates factors designed to ensure emotional and physical safety of children in the context of child placement and permanency dispositions, family preservation, and reunification.
- **Challenges identified by Council members** resulting from their independent knowledge, research, subcommittee discussions, surveys of stakeholders, and focus groups.
- **Recommendations** for changes in policies and law that are designed to improve outcomes for children and families in the child protection system or at risk of maltreatment.

The elements of the final report are drawn from the legislation authorizing the Council and the Supreme Court order establishing the Council.

**Identified challenges** drive the recommendations. All recommendations flow from an identified challenge in the system. All challenges will eventually have at least one recommendation. A single challenge may drive multiple recommendations. Key challenges in the progress report will be agreed upon by consensus of the members present at the Council meeting where the key challenge is being

discussed. If consensus regarding a key challenge cannot be reached, a vote of the members present at that meeting will be taken and a decision to include or exclude the key challenge will be determined by the majority vote.

**Solutions** are proposed programs, campaigns, or revisions to statutes, rules, policies, or procedures addressing one or more of the identified challenges. Each challenge could have many different, and even competing, solutions. Not all solutions explored by the Council will ultimately be recommended.

**Recommendations** are the solutions favored by the Council. Recommendations will be agreed upon by consensus of the members present at the Council meeting where the recommendation is being discussed. If consensus cannot be reached, a vote of the members present at that meeting will be taken and the recommendation will be determined by the majority vote.

## 1.2. Report-drafting timelines



Reports must be submitted to the governor, the chief justice, and the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over child protection. Reports will be reviewed and agreed upon by the Council at least 15 days prior to the report due date. Council staff will work with the state court administrator's legislative liaison to ensure the reports are properly submitted.

### 1.3. Subcommittee structure

The purpose of the subcommittees is to jumpstart the content of the progress report (due July 15) by identifying and prioritizing the specific challenges that the Council wants to address<sup>1</sup>.

List of subcommittees:

- **Maltreatment prevention.**
- **Child well-being** (including children's educational stability, mental health, spirituality, and public health campaigns).
- **Social services procedures** (including maltreatment reports, screening, track assignment, and re-entry into Family Assessment and foster care).
- **Court rules and procedures** (including out of home placements and permanency).
- **Workforce development and training** (including mandated reporter training).
- **System funding** (including federal, state, and local sources, and public/private partnerships).

As their first task, each subcommittee addressed the following questions:

- What key challenges are there related to your topic? What challenges are highest priority?
- What data or research is available to document these challenges? (Staff are available to gather this data.)
- Do you know of people or organizations we should reach out to for more information regarding this challenge? (Staff are available to reach out to them.)

The list of challenges from each subcommittee will be compiled by staff and reviewed by the Council during Council meetings. All members will thereby have the opportunity to provide input on the complete list of key challenges to be included in the progress report.

Subcommittees will continue to meet after February to address the following additional questions:

- What key strengths are there related to your topic?
- What promising solutions are there to those challenges?
- What recommendations related to your topic should the Council consider?

Subcommittees are staffed by Council staff; staff will set up Zoom meetings, facilitate the meetings, and take notes.

### 1.4. Input-gathering process

The Council will use surveys and focus groups to gather community input regarding challenges in the system and promising solutions.

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<sup>1</sup> The progress report will contain a summary of key challenges and data supporting those challenges.

Gathering community input has the dual goals of:

1. Providing illustrative personal stories and quantitative survey data related to the **key challenges** identified by the Council for inclusion in the progress report, and
2. Reviewing and adding perspectives to the **promising solutions** explored by the Council for inclusion in the final report.

**Community input will be used by the Council primarily as a check on whether there is broader support for the direction the Council is headed in its identification of challenges and solutions.**

Community input will be sought from the following key constituencies:

- Those with lived experience
- Those in the community (including tribal communities, faith communities, and communities of color)
- Mandated reporters
- Professionals working in the child protection system

The method of obtaining input (survey or focus group) and the specific input sought will differ by constituency group. Some constituency groups may be engaged through both surveys and focus groups, or through more than one focus group, where appropriate.

Generally, surveys will be used under the following conditions:

- An easily reached or well-defined population exists (e.g., county attorneys, directors of county social services),
- Quantitative results are needed, and
- The input sought is well-defined.

Generally, focus groups will be used under the following conditions:

- Input from a vulnerable population is sought (e.g., those with lived experience),
- Building trust with that constituency is a priority, or
- Opportunity for immediate follow-up and exploration is important.

In addition to surveys and facilitated focus groups, informal meetings with the Chair of the SCC will be held with a handful of key constituencies where a survey or focus group is impractical.

### **1.4.1 Constituencies reached through focus groups**

Focus groups will be facilitated by Retired Judge Korey Wahwassuck. Focus groups will be held through September 2025. In general, focus groups will be limited to no more than 20 participants and generally will be scheduled for two hours in the evenings. Focus group participants will be informed of how the information they provide will be used.

Focus groups earlier in the year will be provided with key issues that the Council has identified, while focus groups later in the year will be provided with both key issues and possible solutions that the Council has identified.

Some constituencies reached through a focus group will also be reached through a survey, as indicated in each section.

#### **1.4.1.1 Youth with lived experience (2 focus groups)**

This constituency includes youth and young adults who experienced childhood abuse or neglect and who had childhood involvement in the child welfare and juvenile court systems.

Two focus groups will be held with this constituency to ensure diverse representation.

Participants will be recruited using the following methods:

- Council members will help identify individual volunteers or partner organizations who will promote engagement among their constituents
- A survey will include an invitation to provide more feedback by participating in a focus group.

Participants will be recruited to prioritize racial, gender, and geographic diversity.

Participants will weigh in on their vision for **changes needed in the system** and **their experience with challenges facing the system**. Specific discussion questions may include:

- What would prevent families from entering the child protection system? / What would help prevent child maltreatment?
- What improvements are needed in the system? / What would have helped you while you were involved in the system?
- What in the system was helpful? / What are the strengths of the system? / If you did need assistance, where would you seek that assistance?

#### **1.4.1.2 Parents with lived experience (2 focus groups)**

This constituency includes parents of children who had childhood involvement in the child welfare and juvenile court systems and parent mentors.

Two focus groups will be held with this constituency to ensure diverse representation.

Participants will be recruited using the following methods:

- Council members will help identify individual volunteers or partner organizations who will promote engagement among their constituents
- A survey will include an invitation to provide more feedback by participating in a focus group.

Participants will be recruited to prioritize racial, gender, and geographic diversity.

Participants will weigh in on their vision for **changes needed in the system** and **their experience with challenges facing the system**. Specific discussion questions may include:

- What would prevent families from entering the child protection system? / What would help prevent child maltreatment? / What barriers did you experience in getting the resources you needed?

- What improvements are needed in the system? / What would have helped you while you were involved in the system?
- What in the system was helpful? / What are the strengths of the system? / If you did need assistance, where would you seek that assistance?

#### **1.4.1.3 Foster parents and providers**

This constituency includes individuals with current or recent experience as a foster parent, including kinship care providers, therapeutic providers, and youth emergency shelters.

Participants will be recruited using the following methods:

- Council members will help identify individual volunteers or partner organizations who will promote engagement among their constituents
- A widely distributed survey will include an invitation to provide more feedback by participating in a focus group

Participants will be recruited to prioritize racial, gender, and geographic diversity.

Participants will weigh in on their vision for **changes needed in the system** and **their experience with challenges facing the system**. Specific discussion questions may include:

- What improvements are needed in the system? / What would have helped you while you were involved in the system? / What do we need more of within the child protection system?
- What in the system was helpful? / What are the strengths of the system? / If you did need assistance, where would you seek that assistance?

#### **1.4.1.4 Youth-serving organizations**

This constituency includes mentoring programs and community centers, including culturally specific organizations.

Participants will be recruited using the following methods:

- Council members will help identify individual volunteers or partner organizations who will promote engagement among their constituents

Participants will be recruited to prioritize cultural and geographic diversity.

Participants will weigh in on their vision for **community engagement in preventing maltreatment**.

#### **1.4.1.5 Tribal communities**

This constituency includes tribal community leaders from each of Minnesota's eleven federally recognized tribes.

Participants will be recruited using the following methods:

- Council members will help identify individual volunteers or partner organizations who will promote engagement among their constituents

Participants will be recruited to prioritize tribal diversity.

Participants will weigh in on their vision for **community engagement in preventing maltreatment**.

#### **1.4.1.6 Black and African American community organizations**

This constituency includes Black and African American community leaders with interest in child maltreatment prevention and/or experience with the child protection system.

Participants will be recruited using the following methods:

- Council members will help identify individual volunteers or partner organizations who will promote engagement among their constituents

Participants will be recruited to prioritize geographic diversity.

Participants will weigh in on their vision for **community engagement in preventing maltreatment**.

#### **1.4.1.7 Latino community organizations**

This constituency includes Latino community leaders with interest in child maltreatment prevention and/or experience with the child protection system.

Participants will be recruited using the following methods:

- Council members will help identify individual volunteers or partner organizations who will promote engagement among their constituents

Participants will be recruited to prioritize geographic diversity.

Participants will weigh in on their vision for **community engagement in preventing maltreatment**.

#### **1.4.1.8 Asian Pacific community organizations**

This constituency includes Asian Pacific community leaders with interest in child maltreatment prevention and/or experience with the child protection system.

Participants will be recruited using the following methods:

- Council members will help identify individual volunteers or partner organizations who will promote engagement among their constituents

Participants will be recruited to prioritize geographic diversity.

Participants will weigh in on their vision for **community engagement in preventing maltreatment**.

#### **1.4.1.9 Religious and spiritual communities**

This constituency includes clergy, leaders, and lay people in religious and spiritual communities who have experience with the child welfare system.

Participants will be recruited using the following methods:

- Council members will help identify individual volunteers or partner organizations who will promote engagement among their constituents

Participants will be recruited to prioritize cultural, geographic, and denominational/religious diversity.

Participants will weigh in on their vision for **community engagement in preventing maltreatment**.

Specific discussion questions may include:

- What resources do you need to be more actively involved in keeping children safe?

#### **1.4.1.10 Local law enforcement**

This constituency includes officers involved in child safety removals and law enforcement leadership.

Participants will be recruited using the following methods:

- Council members will help identify individual volunteers or partner organizations who will promote engagement among their constituents
- A widely distributed survey may include an invitation to provide more feedback by participating in a focus group

Participants will be recruited to prioritize racial, gender, and geographic diversity.

Participants will weigh in on their vision for **changes needed in the system** and **their experience with challenges facing the system**.

#### **1.4.1.11 County social services child protection workers**

This constituency includes current county child protection workers and those with recent experience in that role.

Participants will be recruited using the following methods:

- Council members will help identify individual volunteers or partner organizations who will promote engagement among their constituents
- A widely distributed survey may include an invitation to provide more feedback by participating in a focus group

Participants will be recruited to prioritize racial, gender, and geographic diversity.

Participants will weigh in on their vision for **changes needed in the system** and **their experience with challenges facing the system**. Specific discussion questions may include:

- What if anything was missing in your training and orientation?
- What would increase your motivation to stay in this work? / What supports do you need that you do not have? / What supports that you do have are most helpful?

#### **1.4.1.12 Guardians ad Litem**

This constituency includes current guardians ad litem and those with recent experience in that role.

Participants will be recruited using the following methods:

- Council members will help identify individual volunteers or partner organizations who will promote engagement among their constituents
- A widely distributed survey may include an invitation to provide more feedback by participating in a focus group

Participants will be recruited to prioritize racial, gender, and geographic diversity.

Participants will weigh in on their vision for **changes needed in the system** and **their experience with challenges facing the system**. Specific discussion questions may include:

- What if anything was missing in your training and orientation?
- What would increase your motivation to stay in this work? / What supports do you need that you do not have? / What supports that you do have are most helpful?

#### **1.4.1.13 Mandated reporters**

This constituency includes healthcare workers in clinics and hospitals, school personnel, childcare providers, and others who are legally mandated to report suspected child maltreatment.

Participants will be recruited using the following methods:

- Council members will help identify individual volunteers or partner organizations who will promote engagement among their constituents
- Widely distributed surveys will include an invitation to provide more feedback by participating in a focus group. Surveys may be tailored to healthcare workers, school workers, and childcare workers as needed.

Participants will be recruited to prioritize racial, gender, and geographic diversity.

Participants will weigh in on their vision for **changes needed in the system** and **their experience with challenges facing the system**. Specific discussion questions may include:

- Do you feel confident in what to report?
- What would improve the interaction with county staff taking your report?

## **1.4.2 Constituencies reached through surveys**

Surveys will be deployed using the online survey software QuestionPro. Surveys will be tailored to each constituency. In general, surveys will ask respondents to rate their level of agreement with identified challenges and solutions. Survey respondents will also have the ability to write in additional challenges and solutions and provide open-ended comments.

### **1.4.2.1 County commissioners**

County commissioners will be reached with the help of a Council member.

### **1.4.2.2 County social services directors**

County social services directors will be reached with the help of a Council member.

### **1.4.2.3 Mental and chemical health treatment providers**

Mental health treatment providers will be reached with the help of Council members.

### **1.4.2.4 Judges**

Judges will be reached through an email group maintained by the Minnesota Judicial Branch, with the help of a Council member.

### **1.4.2.5 County attorneys**

County attorneys will be reached with the help of a Council member.

### **1.4.2.6 Parent attorneys**

Parent attorneys will be reached with the help of Council members.

### **1.4.2.7 Children's attorneys**

Children's attorneys will be reached with the help of a Council member.

### **1.4.2.8 Court administration**

Court administration will be reached through email groups maintained by the Minnesota Judicial Branch and will be surveyed specifically about possible improvements to CHIPS and Permanency court administration procedures.

### **1.4.3 Constituencies reached through individual meetings**

In addition to surveys and focus groups, the Chair of the SCC and/or a designee will hold individual meetings with constituencies where a survey or focus group would be impractical. The goal of these meetings is to get feedback on the SCC's overall approach and get perspectives on promising solutions.

#### **1.4.3.1 CJI Teams**

A small number of virtual sessions will be offered to all CJI team members and structured as hour-long listening sessions with the Chair of the SCC.

#### **1.4.3.2 Legislators**

The Chair of the SCC will hold individual meetings with legislators.

#### **1.4.3.3 DCYF and DHS leadership and staff**

DCYF leadership will be provided with a preview of likely SCC recommendations in Fall 2025 and given an opportunity to comment and/or discuss the report with the Chair of the SCC.

Council members will help identify any additional agency meetings, as needed.