

# Minnesota Supreme Court Council on Child Protection and Maltreatment Prevention

Legislative Task Force on Child Protection

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**Children's Justice Initiative**

*To ensure that children who have experienced  
abuse and neglect attain safe, stable, permanent  
homes and improved well-being.*

*CJI Mission Statement*

# Legislation and Supreme Court Order

- Authorizing Legislation  
– May 2024
- Supreme Court Order –  
August 2024
- Part of Minnesota's  
Court Improvement  
Program known as the  
Children's Justice  
Initiative



# Council's Charge



- “To develop a comprehensive blueprint to improve Minnesota's child protection system and prevent unnecessary entry of children and families into the system”
- Focus is on child safety

# Council Membership (1/2)

Statewide, multidisciplinary membership representing:

- Parents and youth with lived experience,
- Dept., Children, Youth & Families,
- Judges,
- County attorneys,
- Attorneys for parents and children,
- Guardians ad litem,
- Social services agencies,
- Tribal representatives



# Council Membership (2/2)



- Law enforcement officers,
- Child Advocacy Centers,
- Pediatricians,
- Psychotherapists,
- Foster youth ombudsperson,
- Peer recovery specialists,
- Youth life coaches,
- County commissioners,
- Educators,
- Chemical health and mental health services providers for adults and children



# Council Structure - Meetings



**Timeframe: Council meets from August 2024 through January 2026 when Final Report is due**



**Evening meetings generally held twice per month for three hours per meeting – 18 Council meetings held so far**

# Council Process



**Identification of Issues and Challenges**



**Identification of Promising Practices and Potential Solutions**



**Development of Recommendations**

# Focus on Children



- Preventing child abuse and neglect
- Preventing unnecessary entry of children and families into the system
- Improving existing child protection system



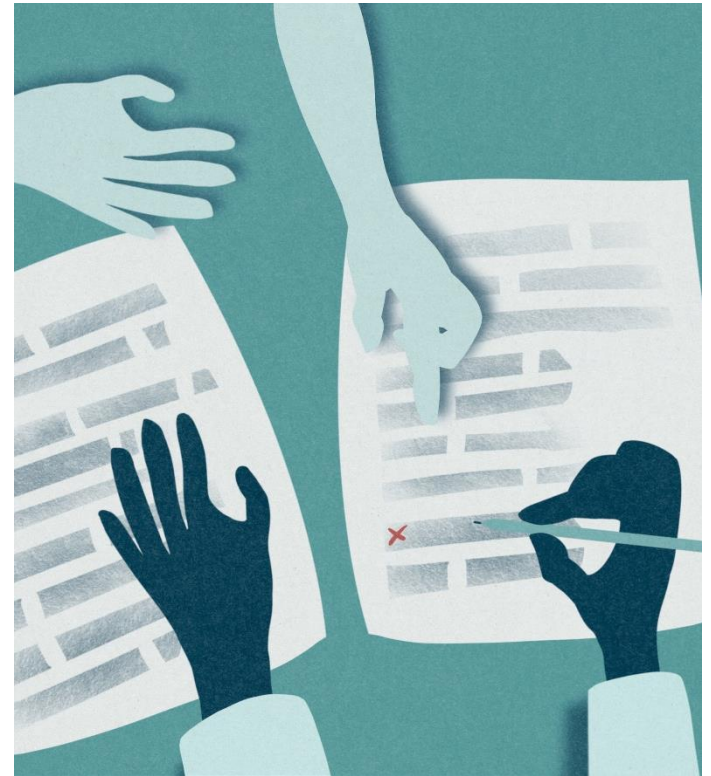
# Initial Presentations to Council

**Presentations on key topics to ensure all Council members fully understand scope of child welfare system, including social services and court processes and procedures**

**Examined: Prevention, early intervention, removal, reunification, and permanency**

# Identification of Issues, Concerns, and Challenges

- Council discussions following each of the presentations resulted in identification of issues, concerns, and challenges
- 12 pages of concerns – more will be identified through focus groups and surveys



# Examples of Concerns (1/4)



## General Concerns

- Communities need to be involved in maltreatment prevention efforts
- Trauma when children moved from school to school or foster placement to foster placement
- Not enough court hearing time to fully discuss critical issues
- SSIS severely outdated

# Examples of Concerns (2/4)

## Workforce Concerns

- Lack of people to do the work (social workers, attorneys, mental health and chemical health service providers)
- Significant turnover in many sectors – social workers, attorneys
- Inconsistent or lack of training across all stakeholder groups



# Examples of Concerns (3/4)

- **Funding Concerns**

- Property taxes shouldn't be the main source of funding for child protection
- Variation in county property tax bases result in unequal treatment of children and families across counties



# Examples of Concerns (4/4)



## **Lack of Resources Concerns:**

- Services to help families who are doing their best to protect their children
- Affordable and stable housing for many low-income families
- Help for single parents who can't afford daycare
- Mental health and chemical health treatment facilities



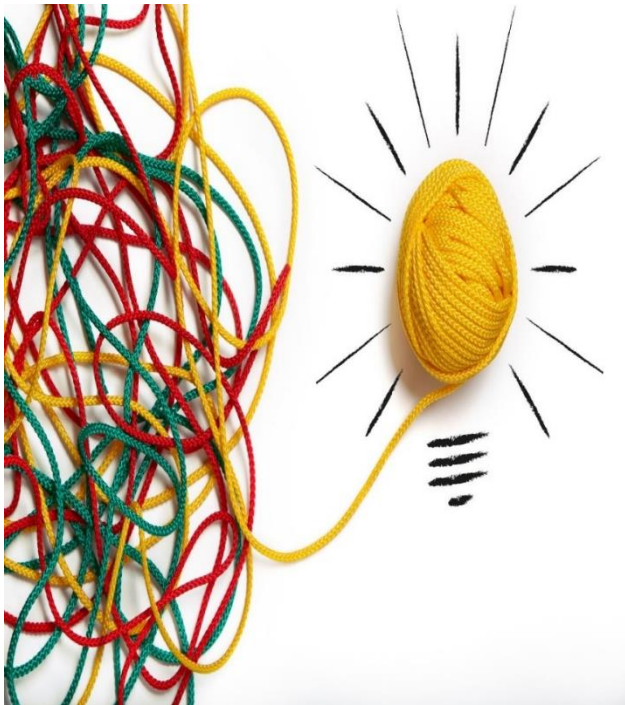
# Six Focus Areas

Issues, concerns, and challenges organized into six key focus areas:

- Maltreatment prevention
- Child well-being
- Court processes and procedures
- Social services processes and procedures
- Workforce development
- Funding systems



# Exploring Promising Practices and Potential Solutions



## Preventing Child Maltreatment

- Family Resource Centers
- Involvement of the community
- Supportive living environments for families
- Hospital to home programs

# Exploring Promising Practices and Potential Solutions

## Improving the Child Protection System

- Consistent high-quality training for all stakeholders
- Define parent and party/participant in court process
- Ensure early legal representation for parents and children
- Resources for foster youth aging out of the system



# Focus Groups - Generally



- Composition: Geographic, racial, and gender diversity
- In process of convening focus groups to gather information from communities
- Focus groups identify or validate issues, concerns and challenges
- Focus groups identify promising practices and potential solutions

# Focus Groups - Categories

1. Parents and youth with lived child protection experience
2. Cultural community leaders (Black/African American, Latino, Asian-Pacific)
3. Religious and spiritual community leaders
4. Foster parents and providers
5. Law enforcement
6. Guardians ad litem
7. County social workers
8. County agency administrators and directors
9. Tribal leaders
10. Tribal services organizations
11. Mandated reporters
12. Youth-serving organizations
13. Mental health treatment providers
14. Attorneys for parents
15. Attorneys for children
16. Juvenile court judges
17. Formerly incarcerated parents with children in child protection system
18. Coalition for child welfare

# Focus Groups - Questions

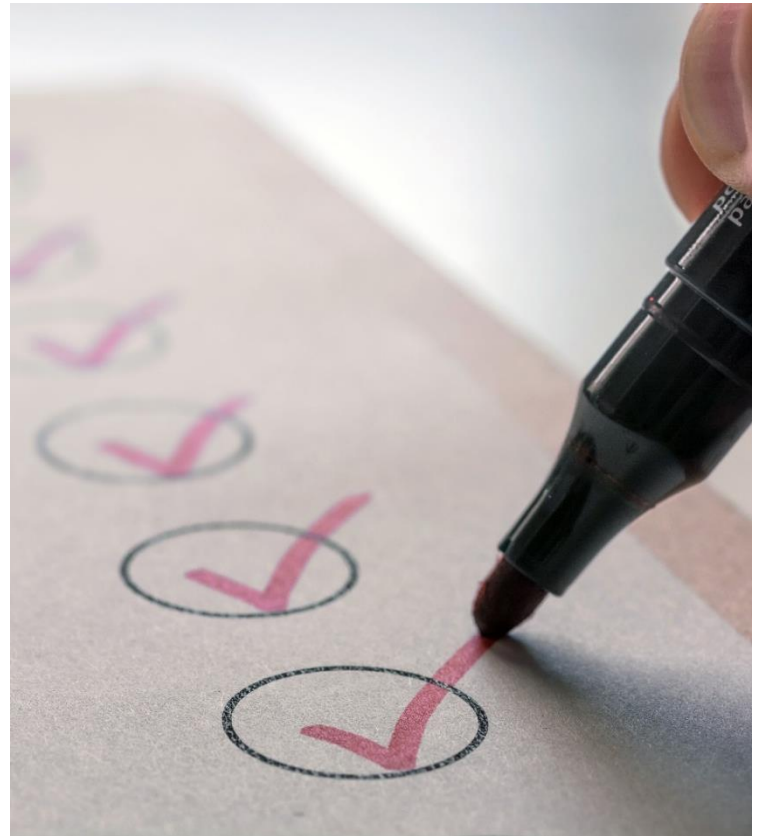


- **Questions – similar for each group**
  - What can be done to help prevent child maltreatment and prevent families from entering the child protection system?
  - What improvements are needed in the child protection system?
  - What are the strengths of the system?
  - What can be done to overcome the stigma of asking for help
  - Thinking back to the training you received, was it sufficient? What additional training should be implemented?



# Statewide Survey to Community at Large

- Surveys sent to 18 groups statewide
- Same groups as for the focus groups, but sent to everyone
- Opportunity to learn of additional challenges and solutions



# Challenges and Potential Solutions: Path to Recommendations

Challenges	Potential Solutions
Public awareness, stigma in seeking help	Community hubs, peer mentors, outreach campaigns
Resource scarcity	Expanded in-home services, non-county providers
Communication complexity	Simplified case plans and orders, multilingual/visual materials
Inconsistent standards	Uniform training, statewide screening harmonization
Workforce training and retention	Peer-support networks, competitive pay, continuing education
Placement shortages	Recruit/train foster families, expand group & PRTF
Cultural stigma and mistrust	Cultural brokers, tribal partnerships, trust building

# Updates and Reports



- **Quarterly Status Updates**
  - January 2025
  - March 2025
  - October 2025
- **Progress Report**
  - July 15, 2025
- **Final Report**
  - January 15, 2026

# Questions

