

## **Hennepin County Citizen Review Panel Input for Governor's Task Force on the Protection of Children**

### **Recommendations for the Governor's Task Force on the Protection of Children**

The Hennepin County Citizen Review Panel has studied many key child protection issues since the panel was established in late 2009 that we believe are highly relevant to the work of the Governor's Task Force for the Protection of Children. The tables below highlight the panel's detailed recommendations for each year and topic area. We have many important recurring themes in our concerns and recommendations over multiple years; we encourage the Task Force to consider these insights as you develop your recommendations. Our key themes in our concerns and recommendations from 2010 – 2013 are:

- Raising concerns about how child protection intake/screening occurs and the fact that prior history is not considered as part of the decision to screen a report in or out
  - We have strongly recommended expanding the intake process to consider prior child protection history when making final decisions to screen out or assign to the Family Assessment Response (FA) or Traditional Investigation Response tracks.
  - We are again examining the topic of intake and screening in 2014, focusing on a review of state statutes in other states regarding how prior history is handled in intake and screening decisions; we are in the process of finalizing a committee report. Based in a preliminary review of state statutes, by banning the consideration of prior history in screening, Minnesota appears to be in the small minority among states regarding this practice.
- Raising concerns over multiple years about data systems, data quality, data/file destruction, and the challenges involved in obtaining aggregate data from the state and county data systems
  - We have made multiple recommendations regarding the need for the Department of Human Services and Hennepin County to improve the quality and reliability of data, to extend data/file retention timelines, and to significantly increase the capacity to extract aggregate and longitudinal data reports on child protection and child welfare data.
- Raising concerns over how Family Assessment is being implemented, particularly regarding whether or not counties are implementing Family Assessment with fidelity to the true model of Family Assessment
  - We have recommended strengthening the implementation of Family Assessment in multiple ways, including:
    - If there are multiple future reports after no engagement, change from Family Assessment to the family investigation track.
    - If family has recent history, especially resulting in a Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) case, have full review of prior cases before a case is ruled out or assigned to Family Assessment.
    - If prior history shows same problems are continuing in a family, consider the Traditional Investigation Response.

In addition to the key themes from our panel's recommendations over multiple years, we have the following recommendations for the Governor's Task Force for the Protection of Children:

- Review the full past reports from our Citizen Review Panel, as well as other panels in Minnesota, to ensure that you are considering the wealth of information and insights from Citizen Review Panels that have been working on child protection issues for many years across Minnesota.
- Actively engage all of the citizen review panels across Minnesota in your Task Force's ongoing work and leverage the commitment, expertise, and engagement of citizen review panels to support implementation of your recommendations.

**Summary of Past Recommendations** (excerpted from full Hennepin County Citizen Review Panel Annual Reports)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>CRP Recommendations</b>
2010	<b>Recidivism of families in child protection and options for alternative strategies to improve outcomes for children</b>	We have only recently begun to explore this issue and will need more time to complete our research before making any recommendations.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>CRP Recommendations</b>
2010	<b>Racial Disparities Subcommittee Annual Report</b>	<p><b>Committee Concerns:</b></p> <p>Our committee seeks to understand the proportion of the dollars spent in out-of-home care that are invested in helping relatives care for the children. Since HCCP is spending so many dollars on expensive and often unsuccessful out-of-home placements (foster care and residential treatments), we want to benchmark the county's investment in prevention in the form of educating and supporting relatives to care for their own children.</p> <p>Our committee is concerned that important long-term outcomes indicating successful transitions to adulthood (e.g. graduation from high school, delayed parenthood, avoiding incarceration) cannot be tracked or correlated with particular placement or service experiences because client data is destroyed according to a system of policies. Efficacy is very hard to assess since no longitudinal study is even possible. Data are destroyed before graduation, adult incarceration, pregnancy can even be ascertained.</p> <p><b>Next Steps:</b></p> <p>The Racial Disparities Committee will continue to work with Lynn Lewis and other HCCP staff to create a more comprehensive picture of when racial disparities feature prominently in the experience of child clients and their families.</p>

<b>Year</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>CRP Recommendations</b>
2011	<b>Intake/Screening Process</b>	<p><b>Hennepin County Child Protection Services:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement reporting on all Family Assessment Referrals <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. If services are offered; document engagement</li> <li>b. If no services are offered, change status within the Social Services</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

		<p>Information System (SSIS) to screened out</p> <p>c. If there are multiple future reports after no engagement, change from family assessment to the family investigation track.</p> <p>2. Expand the intake process to consider prior child protection history when making final decisions to screen out or assign to the Family Assessment Response (FA) or Traditional Investigation Response tracks.</p> <p>a) If family has recent history, especially resulting in a Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) case, have full review of prior cases before a case is ruled out or assigned to FA.</p> <p>b) If prior history shows same problems are continuing in a family, consider the Traditional Investigation Response.</p> <p>3. Address adaptations for educational neglect reports to evaluate the added requirements, which may result in so few children being helped in this category, and remove them if that is the case.</p> <p><b>Minnesota Department of Human Services:</b></p> <p>4. Consider adapting SSIS system to allow contracted FA agencies to insert notations to the client's record indicating progress in services or level of engagement.</p>
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Year	Topic	CRP Recommendations
2011	<b>Recidivism in Child Protection Cases Committee</b>	<p><b>Hennepin County Child Protection:</b></p> <p>1. Consider more aggressive case planning efforts for any case repeating in child protection; especially where children are returned to foster care. Reports should be generated for supervisors to highlight cases involving frequently encountered parents so that highly experienced social workers can be assigned.</p> <p><b>Minnesota Department of Human Services in Consultation with Hennepin County Child Protection:</b></p> <p>2. Update current SSIS to improve overall data quality and the ability to create and track more specific aggregate data. Suggested areas needing improvement are:</p> <p>a. Intake reports need to have enumerated fields to have consistency.</p> <p>b. Since a significant percentage of incoming cases are currently active in the MAXIS system, allow a simple copy interface between the two systems to carry information from one system to the other.</p> <p>c. Enumerated fields should be specific as to race/ethnicity, report allegations, reporter, family/sibling identification, mental health information, and corrections history. These fields should be completed as much as possible at intake and continually updated by ongoing workers as a case progresses. In the area of race/ethnicity, expand the options to better differentiate between African</p>

		<p>Americans and African immigrants, better identification of Hispanic populations which are often categorized as Caucasian and better identification of mixed race populations.</p> <p>d. Improved <b>aggregate reporting</b> capabilities allowing for more specific program improvement analysis in various categories. Such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Recidivism: Tracking and reporting by biological parent(s) with the ability to cross reference various children associated with different caregivers</li> <li>ii. Allegation Types: Break out all allegation types by specific categories; especially in the areas of medical neglect, educational neglect and substance abuse.</li> <li>iii. Family assessment reports breaking out totals by service referral, service engagement and no further action taken.</li> </ul> <p>e. Do not delete Family Assessment data</p>
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Year	Topic	CRP Recommendations
2011	<b>Racial Disparities</b>	<p><b>Hennepin County Child Protection:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Before December 31, 2012, repeat the <i>Baseline Report of Hennepin County's Child Protection Service Continuum</i> that was issued in January 2010.</li> <li>2. During 2012, conduct research – during the school year – to acquire data that reflects the race/ethnicity for the four parties involved in a report of child abuse or neglect (the reporter, alleged victim, alleged perpetrator and the intake worker.) a. Before December 31, 2012, present the results of this research to the Citizen Review Panel and use it to target those with information needed to reduce the racial and ethnic disparities at the intake/screening level of child protection.</li> <li>3. Before December 31, 2012, review and deliver a presentation to the Citizen Review Panel about the county's plans, activities and system for measuring success in terms of achieving cultural competence in the recruitment, training and continuing education of staff.</li> <li>4. Evaluate, and where appropriate, modify Hennepin County Child Protection data destruction policies to enable the study of long-term assessment of child outcomes. Update the Citizen Review Panel on the progress in this area before December 31, 2012.</li> </ol> <p>Members of the Hennepin County Citizen Review Panel request that Hennepin County Child Protection and the Minnesota Department of Human Services give an initial response to these recommendations by May 14, 2012. Please include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How you plan to implement them and by when.</li> <li>• Who will implement them.</li> <li>• Those you are not able to or do not plan to implement and why.</li> </ul> <p>For those to be implemented, the Panel would like to receive progress reports</p>

		at their August 2012 and November 2012 Citizen Review Panel meetings or as requested.
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2012	<b>Family Assessment</b>	<b>Hennepin County:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow FA contracted community agencies to access SSIS for background information on the clients they will serve and to input service notes and assessment data to aid in future case management, without duplication of effort.</li> <li>• Provide MNCIS data, if it exists, on known household members of FA cases to contracted agencies or show them how to access the Minnesota Judicial Branch's database.</li> <li>• Consider bringing back the practice of having the contracted agency worker and a county worker make the initial FA visit to the family.</li> <li>• Have families sign a document indicating whether they agree to engage in FA services or decline the services offered.</li> <li>• Initiate a study to determine why services offered in FA cases are being declined and if more effective services could be offered. Validate what is working well and identify how more effective services could be offered and delivered.</li> <li>• Identify, develop and provide resources and services specific to housing needs.</li> <li>• Engage a rapid exit worker or similar resource to help stabilize the family's living situation upon closing a FA case.</li> <li>• Consider increasing county funding for FA post-assessment expenditures.</li> <li>• Track the number of declines or limited engagements for FA families. Develop and implement a practice guideline to define the number of declines and limited engagements a family may have before a new case is assigned at intake to the Traditional Investigation track.</li> </ul>

**Status as of 2014**

Hennepin County implemented significant changes to its Family Assessment approach, with changes beginning to be implemented in late 2013. The Citizen Review Panel is planning to re-examine how this new approach to Family Assessment is working in 2015, in order to allow time for the county to implement the new approach.

Year	Topic	CRP Recommendations
2012	<b>Educational Neglect</b>	<b>Hennepin County:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HCCPS change the current criteria that a child have at least eight full days of unexcused absences during the current school year before it is referred to child protection, to seven full days, in accordance with the Child In Need of Protection or Services statute and the definition of "habitual truant."</li> <li>• If a family reaches the threshold of unexcused absences late in the school</li> </ul>

		<p>year, look for other ways to engage the family over the summer to address other possible needs, rather than starting over the following year. For example, if the family meets the Parent Support Outreach Program (PSOP) criteria, a referral to PSOP could be an option.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Once a report meets the statutory requirements and is screened in for educational neglect, use the prior history with child protection, if there is any, to determine if the case should be opened and what services are needed. Clearly define what child protection history is to be considered.</li> <li>• Review and train all school districts, especially those with minimal contact, on reporting requirements for both educational neglect and other forms of mandated reporting.</li> </ul>
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Year	Topic	CRP Recommendations
2013	<b>Overall recommendations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Minnesota Department of Human Services and Hennepin County Child Protection respond in writing to our 2012 annual reports at their earliest convenience.</li> <li>• The Citizen Review Panel have a presence on the Hennepin County website under volunteer opportunities.</li> <li>• The Panel hopes to obtain approval for some members to attend data privacy and SSIS training so that future studies may utilize everyone's time more efficiently by allowing the Panel to access the information it may need on individual case file reviews.</li> <li>• The state [Minnesota Department of Human Services] do an audit of any reports generated by the Social Services Information System (SSIS), especially those impacting staffing and budgets.</li> </ul>

Year	Topic	CRP Recommendations
2013	<b>Service Delays/ Recidivism in Child in Need of Protective Services Cases</b>	<p><b>For the Department of Human Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Track families repeating in child protection and produce reports based on all repeats without regard to six or twelve month intervals. (Data Dashboard) Develop a program improvement plan to monitor and reduce overall recidivism over a child's lifetime. Timing: Within calendar year 2014</li> <li>• Develop a predictive model of families likely to be at high risk of repeating in child protection. Timing: Begin full year study, activate model for use in 2015</li> <li>• Develop an assessment tool to determine if the high risk family is truly exhibiting changes in behavior after receiving services. Timing: Develop in 2014 for use in 2015</li> <li>• Improve the Social Services Information System (SSIS) to allow screeners, investigators and on-going social workers to easily see what services and providers have been used in the past so that future case plans do not just repeat failed interventions. Timing: Review ideas for improvements by 6/2014 Rationale: From case files we reviewed, it was clear that</li> </ul>

Year	Topic	CRP Recommendations
		<p>determining what happened in previous CP interventions was very difficult even with much study and would be extremely difficult at the screening decision point.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the SSIS system to produce accurate aggregate reports to track recidivism (by parents) and foster care cumulative placements (by child) and develop a system to audit reports generated by the system for accuracy. Timing: Calendar year 2014 Rationale: See ‘Randomization Methodology’ and ‘Time in Foster Care’ sections of this report along with this Panel’s report for 2011 with similar recommendation.</li> </ul> <p><b>For Hennepin County Child Protection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take family history into account prior to either ruling out or assigning a case to FA. If history is significant, case should be considered for Family Investigation. Timing: Immediately</li> <li>• If a family has a long history of child protection interventions but incoming report is still recommended as FA, consider changing to investigation if services are declined. Timing: Immediately Rationale: Reviews showed some families had several FA referrals with services declined and eventually another CHIPS case would open. By that time, children were exposed to additional abuse and neglect.</li> <li>• As new reports are screened in, assign high risk families to specialized case management. Timing: After development of predictive model as recommended above. Rationale: Cases with recurring child protection openings and foster placements cause long term problems for children. If a social worker can receive special training to engage the highest risk families and certain services can be identified as appropriate for high risk families, permanency decisions can be made more quickly knowing the best case management was offered.</li> <li>• Implement strong supervisory review to case closing reports and verify that service providers are in agreement with compliance and case closure.</li> <li>• Extend trial home visit and protective supervision time post-reunification for families with child protection history to assure workers’ observe changes in parental behavior.</li> <li>• Screeners should, in cases where parents have been living in other counties prior to the incoming report, obtain possible CP history from those counties prior to making screening decisions.</li> <li>• Verify the total number of days children have spent in foster care at</li> </ul>

Year	Topic	CRP Recommendations
		<p>case opening. If that total is approaching the one year maximum, open new case with an Expedited Permanency Petition (“EPP”) rather than CHIPS.</p> <p>Timing for 9-12 – by June 2014</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and revise the ICWA guidelines that allow cases to be moving between tribal and juvenile court systems thereby avoiding mandatory permanency decisions.</li> </ul> <p>Timing: Immediately</p>

Year	Topic	CRP Recommendations
2013	<b>Extended Foster Care Program in Hennepin County</b>	<p>Our Extended Foster Care (EFC) committee recommends that Hennepin County focus its analysis and re-design of the EFC program services on the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The needs of pregnant and parenting youth.</b> Current program resources and supports are not meeting this sizeable need. This includes provision of child care supports for youth who are working or attending school. This is an opportunity to leverage a two-generation model whereby current and future poverty can be remediated.</li> <li><b>The housing stability needs of both male and female youth.</b> Homelessness is a far more common experience for EFC youth than initially thought. Taxpayer costs associated with homelessness are unsustainable. Supportive housing has been shown to provide a \$1.32 return to the community for every \$1.00 spent.</li> <li><b>Leverage ICWA.</b> Hennepin County CPS will achieve better youth outcomes by understanding and scaling the unique and relatively more successful practices associated with the ICWA model of EFC. Key among these features are: long term relationships with case workers and the enormous client impacts associated with employing an “Active Effort” standard in place of a “Reasonable Effort” standard.</li> <li><b>Expand the program to serve more youth, by recruiting more males and more youth who have had placement history in group homes, residential treatment centers and corrections institutions.</b> If any youth needs additional years of support and material assistance beyond age 18, these youth are certainly among those with the highest needs.</li> <li><b>Continue their focus on improving records accuracy,</b> including eliminating the number of youth whose addresses are unknown at a given time.</li> <li><b>Incorporate EFC youth expertise</b> by developing more trust-based (rather than transactional) relationships with youth, developing an EFC Youth Advisory Council, and studying EFC youth perceptions of program strengths and weaknesses.</li> <li><b>Develop a clear logic model to guide the management and</b></li> </ol>



		<p><b>performance assessment of the extended foster care program.</b> The program’s logic model should articulate Hennepin County’s theory of change—that is, an explanation of why Hennepin County believes that each of the program’s components and activities will lead to specific short- and long-term outcomes for participants in the program. This logic model should include a focus on how Hennepin County’s Extended Foster Care program will actually contribute to improved outcomes for youth in the program (e.g., increased skills in managing finances, positive educational and employment experiences, decreased homelessness, decreased criminal activity, etc.). The logic model should also identify how Hennepin County will more closely and accurately assess how well individual youth in the EFC program are doing in their overall well-being, looking beyond compliance with individual components of the youth’s independent living plan.</p> <p>8. <b>Develop the capacity to use a data-driven approach to managing the program. Use high-quality data to evaluate program effectiveness,</b> including identifying activities and services that are most effective at helping program participants achieve successful outcomes. Improve the relevance, accuracy, and reliability of data on youth, including those still in foster care who will become eligible for the EFC program and those enrolled in the EFC, so that the EFC will be able to assess program effectiveness based on high-quality data.</p> <p>9. <b>Ensure that meaningful permanency planning is taking place for all youth in the program.</b> With youth choosing to remain in foster care beyond age 18, Hennepin County has an additional opportunity to pursue meaningful permanency for these youth, beyond simply achieving a permanency plan of “independent living” or “emancipation.”</p> <p><b>Other Key Considerations for the Extended Foster Care Program</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are likely opportunities for increased coordination between the extended foster care program staff and other important service providers in each youth’s life. For example, individuals in the extended foster care program might benefit from having their extended foster care staff contact, guardian ad litem, and life coach all meet together to provide wrap-around support and strategizing assistance to help the youth address unmet needs, etc.</li> <li>• Minnesota DHS recently received a federal grant (“<b>Planning Grants to Develop a Model Intervention for Youth/Young Adults with Child Welfare Involvement At-Risk of Homelessness</b>”) that may have implications for extended foster care services. Our committee has not seen any details about this new grant, but we encourage Hennepin County to explore any possible connections and overlap with this new grant project in Minnesota.</li> </ul>
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December 10, 2014