

Child Well-Being Pilot Proposal

Hennepin County is proposing a profound transformation of the Child Protection system in Minnesota and believes it can dramatically reduce costs and improve stability of families and youth. We are proposing:

- A three year state-county pilot, where we can test, evaluate and spread reforms in Hennepin County and take those learnings to develop a new Minnesota Model which produces better outcomes for youth, for families, and for the fiscal viability of the State Child protection system.

The goal is to moving from a reactionary, crisis driven system to one that identifies high risk youth and families, provides supports and early interventions, and reduces the overall volume and spending in child protection with focused reforms based on models proven to work, hence creating a new Minnesota Model for Child Well-Being.

This type of work has been demonstrated across the Country to work. With the volume and spending drastically increasing year over year in Minnesota- not only are our youth suffering with poor outcomes, but the system its self is unsustainable. The time to move the entire system to one of prevention and early intervention is now. It is what is right for the children of Minnesota and right for tax payers.

Hennepin County has developed a three year- \$26M framework, which has the potential to drastically reduce costs across the system in 3-5 years and improve critical outcomes for the youth we serve. Learnings from this pilot can be spread statewide. It will take a joint State-County investment and with strong evaluation we know we can turn the system in a positive direction.

Background

For 13 months, from October 2015 until October 2016, the Hennepin County Child Protection Oversight Committee worked to make improvements to the county's system to protect children from abuse and neglect. The work resulted in a three-year, \$26.1 million work plan and a set of six core recommendations that will dramatically shape the county's work to protect and care for children.

"It is time for a bold new approach," said Commissioner Mike Opat. "Reports of abuse and neglect are at an all-time high. Out of home placements are too high. Too many kids are suffering." On November 10, 2016, Deputy County Administrator Jennifer DeCubellis and committee co-chairs Commissioner Mike Opat and Ann Ahlstrom, presented the committee's findings and recommendations, drawn from 13 months of

system analysis conducted by the committee and staff, community partners and residents. In the briefing, county leaders recommended dramatic changes to the approach the county takes to protect and care for children.

Addressing a major problem

The committee was created by the County Board in July 2015 after a series of events, including:

- A county-initiated study by Casey Family Programs that found serious systemic problems with child protection practices.
- Child deaths from maltreatment in Minnesota, including in Hennepin County, which drew media scrutiny.
- Governor Dayton's Task Force on the Protection of Children released its recommendations.
- The county already authorized hiring 100 more social workers and county attorney staff, and has adopted a 24-7 response system.

The committee made a series of recommendations, which will stabilize the workforce and allow for reasonable workloads; improve professional supports by co-locating work teams in the same offices; offer early and practical help to families that are at risk for violence or dysfunction; improve data collection, analysis and sharing; and establish an ongoing successor committee to continue to study and monitor achievement of program goals.

The current system is unsustainable (data compares 2009 to 2016)

- Child Protection reports are up 96%
- Maltreatment findings are up 99%
- Children needing adoption is up 260%
- Out of home placement is up 65%
- Costs are up 39%, with caseloads double the national standards
- A 25% increase in spending is required to keep pace with volume increases

Costs have increased \$30M in the past 5 yrs. in Hennepin County alone. The system is unsustainable without major transformation.

Advancing child well-being

But the biggest change is the adoption of a new focus: Child well-being. The county will use multiple platforms to prioritize children's physical health, emotional and social health, relational health and development. That means that rather than waiting to intervene with a family when there is a crisis, workers across the spectrum of county services will work to identify children and families that are at risk, under toxic stress, or challenged by physical, mental or chemical health issues.

"Engaging community partners to take advantage of earlier opportunities to stabilize families will help prevent – not just respond to – maltreatment," DeCubellis said. "We hope we will spare kids the kind of emotional and physical injury that can last a lifetime."