



Child Safety in Minnesota

Outcome-Driven and Performance-Based System

Why This, Why Now?

Minnesota should guarantee that all our children:

- Are safe from abuse and neglect (safety);
- Live in permanent and stable homes where they are nurtured (permanency); and
- Have the opportunity to reach their potential (well-being).

In a three-way collaboration, federal, state, and county or tribe have the responsibility to ensure core government services for our most vulnerable children. These basic services include responding to reports of abuse and neglect in a timely way and providing services to children and families to support permanency and well-being. The vision includes child protective services, foster care, adoption, and other child and family services.

In 2005 services to support child safety in Minnesota were funded by:

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|-----------|--------|-----------------|
| • County | 47.7 % | \$214.9 million |
| • Federal | 35.6% | \$175.0 million |
| • State | 13.7% | \$80.7 million |

Such a high dependence on county funding leads to a variety of issues:

- Outcomes vary widely across the state
- Funding levels are not stable over time
- Financial pressures on counties affect resources available for at-risk children
- State supervision is limited in its capacity to influence county outcomes and performance

Since 2000, DHS and counties have worked together to move toward a family-friendly, performance-based approach to safety, permanency, and well-being of children. Outcomes have improved, but the next phase of performance requires a more rigorous, focused, and reasonably-funded approach. Minnesota should not allow the system to backslide into adversarial practices that take decision-making out of the hands of families and place them in the purview of the courts.

Minnesota needs a stronger outcome-driven and performance-based system to continue to improve performance and ensure child safety for the families of Minnesota. The Task Force on the Future of Financing for Child Welfare in Minnesota recommends an outcomes-driven and performance-based **Child Safety Act** to include three components.

- **Child Safety System.** The Child Safety System will provide more effective incentives and infrastructure to measure performance and encourage continuous improvement in outcomes experienced by children and their families. Federally determined standards for safety, permanency, and well-being will establish the measures of performance. This state-wide system will support equity among children from different geographical areas and ethnic or cultural communities across Minnesota.
- **Child Safety Fund.** The Child Safety Fund will be structured and allocated to provide incentives for the outcome-driven and performance-based Child Safety System. Distribution of funds among counties will depend on historical factors, demonstrated need, improvement in performance on outcome measures, and innovative action.
- **Tribal Participation.** Tribes will be offered the opportunity to opt into the Child Safety performance-based system. Tribal leadership will be involved in conversations to define the options and to arrange specific requirements and procedures for participation.

The Task Force members believe that such a Child Safety Act will improve outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being for Minnesota's children; improve consistency and quality of performance of systems; and build a stable structure to respond to the unknown threats to our children in the future.

The Task Force Report is available at www.puttheURLhere.gov.