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Gamble-Skogmo · Land Grant Chair in Child Welfare & Youth Policy

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

A CHILD WELFARE RESEARCH AGENDA FOR THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

Prepared by

Gamble-Skogmo Land Grant Chair in Child Welfare & Youth Policy
In cooperation with the
Minnesota Department of Human Services,
The Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare,
And
The Children, Youth and Family Consortium

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Land Grant Chair in Child Welfare & Youth Policy

The mission of the Gamble-Skogmo Land Grant Chair in Child Welfare and Youth Policy is to serve the children and families of Minnesota by:

- understanding community needs,
- conducting nationally significant research that is responsive to these needs,
- providing technical assistance and consultation locally and nationally, and
- educating and training service providers, administrators, and policy makers in the field of child welfare and youth policy.

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The Child Welfare Research Agenda for the State of Minnesota (Minnesota Child Welfare Research Agenda) was prepared by the office of the Gamble-Skogmo Land Grant Chair in Child Welfare & Youth Policy at the School of Social Work of the University of Minnesota. It is a product of many discussions with MN Department of Human Services workers, supervisors and administrators; various Advisory Groups; the U of M School of Social Work, Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare, and Children, Youth and Families Consortium; child welfare service provider agencies; advocates; researchers and experts in the field. The participants in and process of creating the Minnesota Child Welfare Research Agenda are detailed in section 1.1, "Creating a Research Agenda."

All these collaborators have attempted to produce an agenda that incorporates the needs, concerns and views of all of the varied respondents and contributors who participated in the agenda building process. While this has not been a simple task, we believe that the resulting Minnesota Child Welfare Research Agenda does reflect a consensus about the most pressing research questions affecting work with children and families of Minnesota. We would like to thank all the individuals and groups who dedicated their time and energy to building the unified Minnesota Child Welfare Research Agenda. The Gamble-Skogmo Chair will continue dialogue with these and other interested parties to update the Research Agenda periodically and to ensure that research activities are integrated with present and future practice and policy needs in Minnesota.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Social work practice in human services is increasingly guided by research findings that support (or do not support) the efficacy of intervention methods. The formulation of social policy is more and more dependent on evidence substantiating the effectiveness of a given approach. As a result, social work agencies increasingly turn to research in the field to integrate program evaluations with everyday practice. Many child welfare initiatives in Minnesota include research as a major program component. Examples include the Alternative Response program to help deflect non-serious reports from involuntary child protection investigations and the ongoing evaluation of the Structured Decision Making model currently used in many Minnesota county child welfare offices.

To lend planfulness to research initiatives, a number of states and organizations have begun to draft research agendas to help guide future activities and inquiries. Minnesota, too, found it useful to examine its research priorities and intentions with an eye toward developing a research agenda. The plan was to create a document to inform child welfare researchers and funders about what is needed and to aid program planners in prioritizing research projects when the field is rife with so many possibilities. Our work on this agenda was based on the approach used successfully in Illinois (Mark F. Testa, Michelle A. Johnson, & Susan J. Wells, 1999). In 2002, through a process of discussion, evaluation and prioritization, a framework for a Minnesota research agenda began to take shape. During 2003, the Minnesota Child Welfare Research Agenda was compiled, edited, revised and published.

This Child Welfare Research Agenda is a tool to help researchers gain information about topics of immediate concern. It contains recommendations for planners, directors and managers to consider when establishing research projects and consists of gathered, organized information about child welfare research. Its intent, to help focus child welfare research in Minnesota toward the needs of the community, was achieved with the help of many people who share the same goal of supporting child and family well-being in Minnesota.

As time passes and new issues emerge, organizations and communities may wish to pursue new directions. The Office of the Gamble-Skogmo Land Grant Chair in Child Welfare & Youth Policy will continue its dialogue with the child welfare community to update the Research Agenda periodically. Such updates may be done through periodic bulletins, with revised agendas to be developed as needed.

1.1 CREATING A RESEARCH AGENDA

The Office of the Gamble-Skogmo Land Grant Chair in Child Welfare & Youth Policy in the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota, in collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS), the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare (CASCW) and the Children, Youth and Families Consortium (CYFC), conducted interviews with child welfare experts and practitioners across the state. In June 2002, a conference, "Developing

a Child Welfare Agenda for the State of Minnesota", was held in which child welfare providers, advocates and educators identified specific areas of interest in child welfare. (Proceedings from this meeting may be found at http://www.cyfc.umn.edu/features/childwelfareagenda.pdf. See Appendix C for a roster of meeting participants.) Using the results of the interviews and the conference, more than 150 research questions were established within those areas. The seven areas of interest identified by the participants form the chapters of this document: Program Planning & Administration, Prevention of Child Maltreatment, Child Protection, Child and Family Services, Out-of-Home Care, Reunification, and Adoption/Relative Custody. Discussion teams identified the "top two" questions in each category.

The process of building the research agenda has been achieved through ongoing discussions and meetings with DHS, county agencies, University staff, and a wide range of constituents from the child welfare community. Organizations participating in these discussions included but were not limited to:

- Children's Law Center of Minnesota
- Chicano Latino Affairs Council
- Council on Black Minnesotans
- Offices of the Ombudspersons for Families
- North American Council on Adoptable Children
- Children's Defense Fund of Minnesota
- Minnesota Council of Child Caring Agencies
- Minnesota Foster Care Association
- African American Adoption and Permanency Planning
- Family Alternatives
- Growing Home Minnesota
- Minneapolis Foundation
- Youth Campus
- Ready 4K
- Council on Black Minnesotans
- McKnight Foundation
- West Broadway Village Social Services

A complete list of those contributing to the development of the research agenda may be found in Appendix B.

Though the importance of every research question is recognized, a process for prioritizing the most critical questions was required to narrow the large amount of information about felt need into a substantial and meaningful yet feasible research agenda. Through a mailed survey, the Gamble-Skogmo Land Grant Chair requested input from child welfare professionals, community leaders, university researchers, policy makers, legislators, judges and researchers on all of the potential research questions. In this process, respondents were asked to prioritize the most important issues for the State and the children and families it serves. The complete results of the prioritization process may be seen in Appendix B.

1.1.1 Scope and Purpose of the Minnesota Child Welfare Research Agenda: Building Research Based Practice

The Minnesota Child Welfare Research Agenda is intended as a guide for planners, researchers, funders, directors and managers as they consider new and continuing projects. The research priorities identified in the Agenda reflect the thoughts of many people engaged in child welfare practice and research. Taken as a whole, the research agenda represents the perceived needs of the child welfare community in Minnesota. It is not intended to mandate research projects but rather to guide research to advance knowledge about issues of immediate interest within the State.

The research agenda should be more than a collection of research topics. It should reflect the goals that the Gamble-Skogmo Office, the Department of Human Services and the counties would like to achieve over the next three- to five-year period, and how research activities will be focused to achieve those goals. The research agenda should also be theoretically and practically geared toward preparing the State for the future; not only documenting *current* performance but also reflecting an orientation toward measuring and achieving future service goals.

1.2 FRAMEWORK FOR A RESEARCH AGENDA

This document presents brief summaries of the current topics of interest, unified research priorities, and descriptions of known current research studies underway within Minnesota.

The unified research priorities reflect the consensus of those who prioritized questions in the formal processes described in section 1.1 Creating a Research Agenda (see Appendix B for full results of the prioritization process). The questions are organized under the following headings: program planning and administration; prevention of child maltreatment; child protection; child and family services; out-of-home care; reunification; and adoption/relative custody.

The "Current Related Projects" represent research projects undertaken by the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota and other researchers in Minnesota. The project descriptions therein reflect information available at the time of publication; therefore, some projects may be described more fully than others, and some may have been unknowingly omitted due to insufficient information.

Program Planning And Administration

2 PROGRAM PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

2.1 ABOUT PROGRAM PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

In Minnesota, child welfare administrators and caseworkers recognize the importance of enhancing the services delivered to clients. The 1997 changes to federal law under the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) have heightened attention to improving child welfare outcomes, making the need for administrative change and focused planning more important than ever. Consequently, one of the seven identified research topics is Program Planning and Administration. Research questions in this topic ranged from addressing racial disparity, to connecting child welfare systems, to funding, to disseminating knowledge. Minnesota is not alone in considering planning and administration of great importance.

The United States Department of Health and Human Services offers an overview of child welfare services reported by 46 state administrators who participated in the State Agency Discussion Guide. Key findings from the analysis of their responses are:

- Two-thirds of the respondents reported that the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) has resulted in enhancements or changes in at least one of the following four areas: child safety, permanency, collaboration with the courts, and data collection.
- Although there have always been informal collaborations to provide services to clients and their families, administrators report an increased emphasis on formal collaborations between agencies and groups providing services to those children and families serviced by child welfare agencies.
- Child welfare providers report increasing participation in multidisciplinary teams. Case teams have long existed, but innovative programs (1) involve many more partners, including families and (2) begin at an earlier stage in the assessment of children and families.
- State administrators identified several areas of concern about the future of child welfare, including insufficient funding, increasingly complex caseloads, and workforce issues (e.g., high turnover, low salaries and insufficient training).
- The most frequently reported promising developments in child welfare included the following:
  - Growing emphasis on prevention and early intervention
  - Increased collaboration among service providers
  - Greater involvement of families in decision-making
  - Increased emphasis on evaluation and outcomes

Interviews conducted for this report suggest that although states face similar challenges, they use diverse strategies to address them. Administrators expressed interest in learning how other states respond to Federal, state, and local changes and challenges (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children Youth and Families, 2001).

In 2001 the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) addressed the need for a commitment to improving the quality of child welfare outcomes (American Public Human Services Association, 2001). While many elements are necessary to build and strengthen the capacity to achieve outcomes, here are some that child welfare agencies need:

- A sufficient quantity and quality of a comprehensive array of services including prevention, family preservation and support, treatment, reunification, aftercare, post-adoption, substance abuse, mental health and other services targeted to the specialized needs of individual children and families.
- A well-trained, well-supervised, competent, sufficient workforce with manageable caseloads, employing best practice approaches to work with families.
- An adequate pool of well-prepared foster and adoptive parents.
- Partnerships with private agencies that focus on performance and partnerships with the community to support the goals of the system.
- A partnership with the juvenile court system and adequate resources for the courts and legal staff to move cases in a timely way.

APHSA further states that the child welfare field has agreed upon safety, permanence, and well-being as desired outcomes for children in the child welfare system. In spite of great strides in implementing ASFA, development of new programs, and heightened focus on measuring outcomes, the child welfare system lacks the full capacity for achieving outcomes. Child welfare practice has become more and more complex, with tremendous demands on the system, including challenging populations, caseloads, and resources; interstate issues; perceived conflicts between child safety and family preservation; overrepresentation of children of color; and increased expectations and requirements. In recent years, children and families who come to the attention of child welfare increasingly exhibit multiple problems that require a coordinated response from multiple public agencies and service systems in addition to child welfare. One of the most dramatic changes is the magnitude of families with serious substance abuse problems. Mental illness and domestic violence are also a serious concern. These increased demands strain agencies' capacities at the same time as they are subject to increased scrutiny by elected officials, the media, advocates, and litigators regarding the performance of public child welfare agencies, as well as new mandates and expectations resulting from ASFA. Furthermore, agencies need community support to achieve successful outcomes for children. Children live in communities, all members of which need to view child protection as a system of many entities, not just a single agency.

The literature suggests (see bibliography for further reference material) that ongoing research in program planning and administration should:

- Investigate the training and supervision of child welfare caseworkers
- Study the outcomes of partnerships between agencies and other service providers
- Assess the services provided to diverse populations and to families with multiple problems

2.2 PROGRAM PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Individuals and groups involved in discussions and requests for input on the research agenda (see section 1.1) generated several potential research questions pertaining to program planning and administration (see Appendix B). Though the importance of every research question was recognized, a process for prioritizing the most critical questions was required to narrow the large amount of information about felt need into a substantial, meaningful, and feasible research agenda.

Through a formal prioritization process (described in section 1.1) the Gamble-Skogmo Chair solicited input from child welfare professionals, community leaders, university researchers, policy makers, legislators, and researchers on all the potential research questions. As part of this process, respondents were asked to prioritize research questions by their importance for children and families in Minnesota. Staff of the Office of the Gamble-Skogmo Land Grant Chair compiled and edited these final priorities. Because these questions represent many diverse perspectives in the child welfare community, the wording may not always reflect a researcher's point of view. For example, a question may be somewhat open ended or broad. In the document preparation, we determined that the published questions should accurately reflect the felt needs of the community. It is expected that those who decide to study these issues will re-phrase them as necessary in accordance with accepted research principles.

Where elaboration of a question occurs, it is noted in italics and represents the author's addition of further areas of study within the original research question posed by the respondents. When examples are given to help define a research question, they reflect information from the author's interviews and interaction with the participants.

2.2.1 *Racial Disparities in Child Welfare Services*

- What should County Social Services do to reduce racial disparity?
  - What is the source of racial disparities in the child welfare system?
  - At what point should the county intervene?
  - How should the counties respond in practice?

Current Related Projects

Disproportionate Representation of African American Children in Child Welfare
Samuel Myers, Hubert Humphrey Institute on Public Policy, University of Minnesota
This study examines reporting of child abuse & neglect of whites vs. non-whites in 3 Minnesota counties and 1 South Carolina county.

African American Placement Disparity Case Record Study
Minnesota Department of Human Services & the African American Disparities Advisory Committee
Project Consultant, Susan J. Wells, Gamble-Skogmo Land Grant Chair in Child Welfare, School of Social Work, University of Minnesota
This study focuses on determining whether there are differences in placement and service delivery that are associated with race (white v. African American). The following counties are participating in the study: Anoka, Hennepin, Olmstead and Ramsey.

2.2.2 *Connecting Child Welfare Systems*

- How can we more effectively connect systems to one another, e.g. MFIP, juvenile court, SSIS, truancy?

Current Related Projects

Data Linkage Project
Marcie Jefferys, Executive Director CASCW, School of Social Work, University of Minnesota
The Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare is determining how to collaborate better in researching critical state issues by exploring how to link state-collected administrative data across systems and agencies to get a more comprehensive picture of Minnesotans' well being and the impact of programs and policies on children and families.

2.2.3 *Efficacy of Child Protective Services Intervention*

- What is the efficacy of CPS intervention?

2.2.4 *Administration of Child Welfare System*

- Are there more effective ways to administer our child welfare system? For example, counties in Minnesota have child welfare agendas that differ from one another.

Current Related Projects

Child Welfare Longitudinal Study
Marcie Jefferys, Executive Director CASCW, School of Social Work, University of Minnesota
Minnesota Department of Human Services
This project proposes to track the progress of children who entered the child welfare system in 2000. It will provide data on a variety of issues including the impact of various policies as they are implemented on child welfare indicators and potential qualitative evaluation issues.

2.2.5 *Fiscal Management and Enhancing Performance*

- How does performance contracting impact quality of care and long-term outcomes?
  - What agency practices contribute to the success of performance contracting?

Prevention of Child Maltreatment

3 PREVENTION OF CHILD MALTREATMENT

3.1 ABOUT THE PREVENTION OF CHILD MALTREATMENT

Child maltreatment is traditionally defined as neglect and abuse. Neglect is by far the most common form of maltreatment, but physical abuse, sexual abuse and mental injury are also of great concern. In 2001 more than 9,000 children were abused and neglected in Minnesota. These children are much more likely to perform poorly in school, get involved in criminal activities, and eventually abuse or neglect their own children (Minnesota Department of Human Services, 2003a).

Primary prevention strategies are aimed at averting abusive acts toward children before they occur. Strategies such as parent education programs, home visitation, and awareness campaigns help inform parents in families identified as high-risk through individual assessment or by affiliation with a high-risk community, such as young single mothers or families from lower socioeconomic background. Other primary strategies include media campaigns and mass educational programs conducted at a statewide or national level. Programs focusing on primary prevention, such as home visitation, have been the targets of the most research.

Secondary prevention of child abuse seeks to prevent abuse to children identified as high-risk. Schools have initiated programs to educate children about their own safety and have provided opportunities for abused children to disclose their problems in a safe environment. Tertiary prevention focuses on preventing continuing abuse or neglect. Other than school programs, most tertiary preventions are undertaken once a child is referred to child welfare services and may include family-centered services or family preservation services (adapted from (Rubin, Lane, & Ludwig, 2001)).

Even as child welfare caseloads increased in the past two decades, there was a decline in funding to study the causes and consequences of child maltreatment. Only recently have states initiated adequate systems to track caseloads and follow the progress, or lack thereof, of children who enter the system. This will lead to increased knowledge about cases of child maltreatment known to the child welfare system. Population-based research is also needed to understand why some children are reported to the child welfare system while others are missed, and which children are at risk for child abuse or neglect (Joint Center for Poverty Research, 2000).

The literature suggests (see bibliography for further reference material) that ongoing research in the prevention of child maltreatment should:

- Investigate the long-term effects of prevention programs
- Assess home visitation strategies
- Evaluate community-based efforts such as mass educational programs or media campaigns
- Study outcomes of secondary prevention programs

3.2 PREVENTION OF CHILD MALTREATMENT RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Individuals and groups involved in discussions and requests for input on the research agenda (see section 1.1) generated several potential research questions pertaining to program planning and administration (see Appendix B). Though the importance of every research question was recognized, a process for prioritizing the most critical questions was required to narrow the large amount of information about felt need into a substantial, meaningful, and feasible research agenda. In this chapter, a gap existed between the five priorities selected and one of the "top two" questions as identified in the initial framing of the research questions. Both the prioritized questions and the "top two" questions have been included in the research priorities below. Consequently, there are six priorities in this chapter rather than five.

Through a formal prioritization process (described in section 1.1) the Gamble-Skogmo Chair solicited input from child welfare professionals, community leaders, university researchers, policy makers, legislators, and researchers on all the potential research questions. As part of this process, respondents were asked to prioritize research questions by their importance for children and families in Minnesota. Staff of the Office of the Gamble-Skogmo Land Grant Chair compiled and edited these final priorities. Because these questions represent many diverse perspectives in the child welfare community, the wording may not always reflect a researcher's point of view. For example, a question may be somewhat open ended or broad. In the document preparation, we determined that the published questions should accurately reflect the felt needs of the community. It is expected that those who decide to study these issues will re-phrase them as necessary in accordance with accepted research principles.

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3.2.1 *Services Responsible for Reduction of Abuse and Neglect*

- What preventive services are responsible for verifiable, county-by-county reductions in rates of abuse and neglect?

Current Related Projects

Crisis Nursery a KEY to Prevention
Brad Foss, Program Planner, Chisago County Human Services
Chisago county is working with the Children's Home Society Chisago/Isanti Crisis Nursery to assess this program's capacity to reduce abuse and neglect.

3.2.2 *Children with Continuing or Intermittent Contact with Child Protection*

- Can we identify those children most at risk of continuing or intermittent contact with child protection and develop options to address service needs?

Current Related Projects

Link Research Project
Jeffrey Edleson, Professor, Director of MN Center Against Violence & Abuse, School of Social Work, University of Minnesota
This project aims to develop new research, programs and policies to aid children exposed to adult domestic violence. In the past 10 years, the research group has evaluated groups for children exposed to violence, conducted focus groups of service providers, surveyed child maltreatment reports by police & the community, and examined services to families in the child protection system. The project is now focusing on developing an instrument that measures a child's exposure to and involvement in adult domestic violence events.

3.2.3 *Relationship of Risk Factors and Protective Factors*

- How do risk factors and protective factors relate to one another?

3.2.4 *Effect of Stable Housing and Stable School Settings*

- What effect do stable housing and stable school settings have on the prevention of child abuse and neglect?

3.2.5 *Standards for Culturally Competent Child Welfare Work*

- What should our standards be for culturally competent child welfare work?

  The following questions are an elaboration of this priority:

  How do you recognize and measure cultural competence in child welfare work?
  What are the most effective methods of assuring cultural competence?

3.2.6 *Impact of Intergenerational Parenting Styles and Practices*

- How do the differing styles and practices of intergenerational families impact parenting and child well being?

Current Related Projects

African American Grandmothers
Priscilla Gibson, Assistant Professor, School of Social Work, University of Minnesota
A study of the experiences of grandmothers in helping grandchildren succeed in the 21st century.

CHILD PROTECTION

4 CHILD PROTECTION

4.1 ABOUT CHILD PROTECTION

Child protective services (CPS) have been a priority of states and counties for many years. While there have been recent declines in substantiated cases of abuse and neglect, the number of substantiated victims of abuse and neglect in the U.S. is two to three times higher than in other industrialized countries (Joint Center for Poverty Research, 2000) It is clear that CPS should continue to be a focus of research and innovation.

Child protective services agencies provide services to prevent future instances of child abuse and neglect and to remedy conditions that come to the attention of child welfare agencies. In 2001 almost 28 children per 1,000 in the U.S. received preventive services. Minnesota's child population in 2001 was 1,298,000. During that year 6,774 children, or 5.2 per 1,000 children, received protective services (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Children Youth and Families, 2003). In spite of this better-than-national average, the community continues to seek improved models and methods.

The question has been raised whether the traditional CPS system in which the family becomes involved with the agency at the first report of abuse and/or neglect is the best solution for child protection. Researchers and workers are asking what services are effective, whether families should be ordered to accept services, whether they should be prosecuted as offenders, whether all families should receive the same response or should different families receive different responses? Primary among the solutions to address these problems is that CPS agencies should increase their flexibility in responding to families with different needs.

Suggestions for improving CPS focus on either narrowing the range of children and families who would receive an investigation or broadening the range of children and families who might receive voluntary services. Generally, suggestions for narrowing the response of the CPS agency have focused on improving the screening of child maltreatment reports and/or authorizing different agencies to be responsible for different types of cases. Suggestions for broadening the response of the CPS agency emphasize the need to provide individually tailored remediating services to more at-risk families(U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, 2001).

In Minnesota as in many other states, new initiatives are being undertaken to improve child preventive services. McDonald and Associates (2001) cite some types of initiatives, found in Minnesota and other localities:

- Introduction of family assessment or differential response systems.
- Creation or support of community-centered service delivery systems.
- Clearer delineation of the relationship between CPS and law enforcement.
- Increased collaboration between CPS agencies and alcohol and other drug agencies.

- Development of collaboration between CPS agencies and domestic violence agencies.

The literature suggests (see bibliography for further reference material) that ongoing research in child protection should:

- Study the effectiveness of court-ordered services and voluntary formal services
- Evaluate outcomes for traditional and nontraditional CPS systems
- Assess collaboration between CPS agencies and other service providers, such as drug and alcohol prevention agencies
- Study the community-centered service delivery systems in Minnesota

4.2 CHILD PROTECTION RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Individuals and groups involved in discussions and requests for input on the research agenda (see section 1.1) generated several potential research questions pertaining to program planning and administration (see Appendix B). Though the importance of every research question was recognized, a process for prioritizing the most critical questions was required to narrow the large amount of information about felt need into a substantial, meaningful, and feasible research agenda.

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4.2.1 *Effective Case Planning*

- What are the elements of effective case planning and how can we ensure that they are implemented?

4.2.2 *Services to Change and Reduce or Prevent Abuse/Neglect*

- Are there any proven/validated services that positively change family function and reduce or prevent the incidence of abuse/neglect?

Current Related Projects

MN Alternative Response Project Evaluation
MN Department of Human Services
Institute of Applied Research
This is an evaluation of a new flexible approach to addressing child maltreatment reports in Minnesota. The project is being conducted in 20 counties in the state.

Federal Child Welfare Review: "Child & Family Services Review"
Erin Sullivan-Sutton, Director-Child Services Division, MN Department of Human Services
This evaluation provides information on the areas of success and those needing improvement in Minnesota's Child Welfare programs.

4.2.3 *Effective Interventions*

- What interventions are most effective in the timeframes required by the Adoption and Safe Families Act?

4.2.4 *Model for Effective CPS*

- What is the model for effective CPS?
  - What do we already know?
  - What do we need to know?
  - What are the promising or evidence-based practices?

Current Related Projects

Structured Decision Making Study
MN Department of Human Services
Evaluator to be determined
A validation study (with expanded features) in Minnesota of the use of structured decision-making to increase the consistency and validity of decision making, target resources to families most at risk, and improve the effectiveness of Child Protective Services.

4.2.5 *Case Planning and Reasonable Efforts*

- How can case planning and reasonable efforts aid us in practice?

  The following questions are an elaboration of this priority:

  What do reasonable efforts in practice consist of today?
  What are the similarities in models of case planning across geographic areas?
  How do case outcomes differ by type or model of reasonable efforts?
  How do case outcomes differ by type of model of case planning?

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

5 CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

5.1 ABOUT CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

In Minnesota, the Department of Human Services' Children and Family Services Division works in partnership with tribes, counties, communities and service providers to support families based on their cultural and individual needs and strengths. The Department helps to ensure that providers have the tools they need to help children and families in Minnesota (Minnesota Department of Human Services, 2003b). The counties, tribes, communities and service providers offer a myriad of programs making up the wealth of child and family services in the state. With so many services to evaluate and improve, the State and the counties rely on purposeful, effective research from a variety of sources.

Services for families can be considered in three groups: basic social services, family support services, and family preservation services. Children are assisted with child protection services, mental health services, out-of-home care, reunification services and adoption/relative custody. In many instances the development and implementation of services has outrun the evaluative research-based knowledge about them. Many questions about child and family services remain to be answered.

Research into existing programs in Minnesota can help practitioners share best practices and build meaningful policies for child and family well being. Service managers are asking for information about new models of integrated treatment and family-centered case management to help minimize fragmentation and support the alternative response system already in use. New systems of collaboration between providers are being used and must be studied to help others emulate and improve upon them. Studies of the programs and practices in place in the state will help to standardize services and to address gaps in service provision.

A multi-year evaluation of family preservation and reunification programs in Kentucky, Tennessee, New Jersey and Pennsylvania concluded that time-limited, crisis-oriented, intensive family services had minimal effect on placement prevention and suggested that the objective of services be centered on improving family and child functioning rather than preventing placement (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, 2002). This study, combined with a number of similar studies in other states, indicates the need for the development of other models, with corroborating research, to deliver effective child and family services.

Issues in evaluation discussed in a 1998 article in *Protecting Children from Abuse and Neglect* are still pertinent today. Noting the need for greater knowledge about family support and family preservation programs, McCroskey and Meezan (1998) emphasize the following issues in evaluation:

Family Support

Evaluated program models. Although most programs are small and community-based, most studies have been done on demonstration efforts with large budgets. It is not clear if the two types of programs are similar or different.

Random assignment. Random assignment to a treatment or control group is difficult in a program whose doors are open to all who are interested. Alternative comparison strategies might be used instead of traditional experimental evaluation designs.

Evaluation approach. Studies of family support have often used nontraditional approaches in which the evaluator is in direct contact with the program staff and clients. The impact of this approach needs to be better understood as does the impact of qualitative understanding over quantitative assessment.

Program implementation. Researchers should study configurations of program components, staffing patterns, barriers to participation and parents' experiences in family support programs. Resulting knowledge will indicate what programs work for whom and why.

Goals and outcomes. Lack of reliable, well-accepted measures of program impact on families or communities is a challenge to evaluation of goals. It is more common for evaluations to emphasize child development outcomes even though most services are aimed at families.

Family Preservation

Evaluated program models. Rather than emphasizing a single model of intensive family preservation services, studies should encompass different program models, varying service features, and the targeting of specific services to specific families.

Program implementation. Family preservation program issues deserving of further study are the fidelity with which program models are implemented, the skills and attitudes needed by workers, and the agency structures and supervisory supports that promote successful service delivery and positive outcome.

Goals and outcomes. Most attention has gone to the prevention of out-of-home placement as the primary outcome of family preservation programs. Other outcomes such as system impact, family functioning, child well-being, social support, and effects on the larger community deserve study.

Study of the principles and approaches of current child and family services could lead to new directions in rethinking child welfare services. New efforts that focus on involving a wide range of community groups, developing ongoing partnerships with allied child-serving systems, seeking effective ways to blend funding streams, and examining the roles of public and community agencies await evaluation. New strategies for assessing families and conducting evaluation research can help determine which families should receive which services to achieve desired outcomes for children (McCroskey & Meezan, 1998).

The literature suggests (see bibliography for further reference material) that ongoing research in child and family services should:

- Investigate family outcomes from services
- Assess the collaborative efforts between public and private agencies
- Study small community-based service efforts

5.2 CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Individuals and groups involved in discussions and requests for input on the research agenda (see section 1.1) generated several potential research questions pertaining to program planning and administration (see Appendix B). Though the importance of every research question was recognized, a process for prioritizing the most critical questions was required to narrow the large amount of information about felt need into a substantial, meaningful, and feasible research agenda.

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5.2.1 *Evidence-based Policy and Practice*

- How do we identify and promote evidence-based policy and practice?
  For example, what methods work in translating research to practice?

5.2.2 *Early Emotional Disturbance/Mental Health Issues*

- What is the most effective way to prevent or identify early emotional disturbances/mental health issues of young children and to treat those issues within the context of the whole family?
  For example, which screening tools are least intrusive and, at the same time, most accurate? What types of interventions are most effective at the time of early identification?

5.2.3 *Community-based In-home Programs/Services*

- What community-based in-home programs/services work best to promote child and family well being?

Current Related Projects

High-Risk Families and their Children
Esther Wattenberg, Professor, Coordinator of Special Projects-CASCW, School of Social Work, University of Minnesota
A program to strengthen the partnership between child protection and community-based agencies on behalf of high-risk families and their children.

5.2.4 *Avoiding Out-of-Home Placement*

- Is there a way to deliver concrete services to a family and avoid a costly, disruptive out-of-home placement?

5.2.5 *Doing No Harm*

- How do we avoid unintended mental health consequences for children?

  The following questions are an elaboration of this priority:

  What are the unintended consequences of agency policies and procedures with respect to effective and consistent mental health treatment of children?
  What are the most effective mechanisms to address these problems?

OUT-OF-HOME CARE

6 OUT-OF-HOME CARE

6.1 ABOUT OUT-OF-HOME CARE

Through its Social Services Information System (SSIS) the Minnesota Department of Human Services collects and analyzes data about child welfare. This data was used to compile the 2003 report to the state legislature. In its Executive Summary the following statistics about out-of-home care for 2001 were given (Minnesota Department of Human Services & Children & Family Services Administration, 2003):

- About 17,600 children were removed from their homes and entered out-of-home care in 2001. More were boys (56.3%) than girls (43.7%). The majority were adolescents (58%). African American and American Indian children were represented in out-of-home care at rates of more than four and seven times their representation in the Minnesota population.
- Most children (87%) were in out-of-home care only once during the year. Additionally, most experienced no moves while in care (60.5%). Most of the children were placed in a family-type setting. About one-third were in care for one week or less. Children under eight spent an average of twelve fewer days in care than the average for all children. In 2000, the difference was four days.
- About 30 percent of the children who entered care in 2001 had a prior placement within the previous year. There are no major differences in the re-entry status of the children by race. The most frequent reasons cited for entering care were related to the behavior of the child. Over 80 percent of the children left care to return home to a parent, primary caretaker or other relative.

Out-of-home care has long been a part of child welfare and has evolved through the decades based on the experience of children and families. As shown in the research priorities in this chapter, members of the social work community have many concerns about out-of-home care. Further research will help to clarify the issues and possible solutions.

Some overarching themes for research in out-of-home care can guide efforts and aid in understanding the experiences of children and improving those experiences. First, broad-reaching program evaluation research should be done on the services offered to children and their families. Second, organizational studies of aspects of the child welfare system and other related systems should be undertaken. Third, more research on child welfare decision-making is needed. Fourth, the role of race and ethnicity should be explored. Fifth, methodological issues, which emerge in calls for future research on out-of-home care, should be considered in prioritizing future efforts (Courtney, 2000).

Deeper and more focused analysis of out-of-home care will enable researchers and practitioners to change policies that are not working and to develop new strategies to increase the well being of children in care. The transitory and yet critical nature of out-of-home care makes it one of the most challenging areas of study in child welfare.

The literature suggests (see bibliography for further reference material) that ongoing research in out-of-home care should:

- Evaluate the racial disparity in out-of-home care for African American and American Indian children
- Study children and families who reenter out-of-home care
- Assess services offered to families who experience out-of-home care

6.2 OUT-OF-HOME CARE RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Individuals and groups involved in discussions and requests for input on the research agenda (see section 1.1) generated several potential research questions pertaining to program planning and administration (see Appendix B). Though the importance of every research question was recognized, a process for prioritizing the most critical questions was required to narrow the large amount of information about felt need into a substantial, meaningful, and feasible research agenda.

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6.2.1 *Matching Interventions with Needs*

- How can we best match interventions with assessed needs?

  The following questions are an elaboration of this priority:

  How effective are current methods of matching needs and interventions?
  How can they be improved?
  Can tools be created or developed to maximize this matching process?

Current Related Projects

Hennepin County Stability/Instability Study
Esther Wattenberg, Professor, School of Social Work, University of Minnesota
Kim Nguyen, Visiting Scholar, Hennepin County Children, Family & Adult Services
Project Consultant Susan J. Wells, Gamble-Skogmo Chair in Child Welfare & Youth Policy, School of Social Work, University of Minnesota
This study determined factors associated with the stability and instability of placement experiences in Hennepin County and indicated ways to minimize unstable care. The final report on the study was completed in June 2003.

Comparison of Foster Care Outcomes
Sheila Schmaltz, Director of Quality Outcomes, The Professional Association of Treatment Homes, Inc., St. Paul
This is an ongoing study of foster care outcomes in many agencies (including PATH in Minnesota) providing information about the impact of foster care services and addressing the need for benchmarks in foster care.

The Kids Capacity Initiative Pilot Project
Linda Jones, Associate Professor, Project Evaluation Director, School of Social Work, University of Minnesota
The purpose of this project is to develop, implement and evaluate a strengths-based approach to specialized foster care. A three year process and outcome evaluation of the Kids Capacity Initiative examines the effectiveness of this innovative program which was developed and implemented by Family Alternatives, a Minneapolis foster care agency.

6.2.1 *Reduction of Out-of-Home Placements*

- What preventive services are actually reducing out-of-home placements?
  The following questions are an elaboration of this priority:
  How effective are the preventive services?
  Can the most successful be described and replicated?

6.2.3 *Kinship Care*

- Is kinship care more stable than out-of-home care?
  - What is the long-term impact of kinship care on children?
  - Is there a difference in outcomes for children in kinship care between long-term versus short-term placement?
  - Are these outcomes different for different children?

6.2.4 *Reasons for Reentry*

- What are the reasons for reentry?

Current Related Projects

Placement Re-entry & Stability Study
MN Department of Human Services
This study was a statewide analysis of two issues identified as problematic by the Federal Child and Family Services Review. The study was completed and a report issued in September 2003.

Foster Care Re-Entry
Minnesota Department of Human Services
Hennepin County
Project Consultant Susan J. Wells, Gamble-Skogmo Chair in Child Welfare & Youth Policy, School of Social Work, University of Minnesota
This project identified risk factors for foster care re-entry after reunification and provided recommendations to help minimize the risk of re-entry.

6.2.5 *Foster Care for Children of Color*

- How can we best help children of color in foster care?

Current Related Projects

Domestic Violence and Out-of-Home Placement
Oliver Williams, Professor, Director Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community-(IDVAAC), School of Social Work, University of Minnesota
This study examining domestic violence issues and out of home placement concerns of African American children will be completed early in 2004.

Field Test of the 4-D Assessment Tools
Jane Gilgun, Professor, School of Social Work, University of Minnesota
Growing Home
This project will develop assessment tools for kids based on the Indian concept of courage.

REUNIFICATION

7 REUNIFICATION

7.1 ABOUT REUNIFICATION

Reunification, reconnecting children with their families through a variety of services and supports, was emphasized in the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980. Since that time, family reunification has been both strengthened and diminished by legislation, funding and practice. Research in reunification provides support for a critical aspect of child welfare.

Although visitation has been linked with improved prospects for reunification, research findings have not been consistent. More research on the structure of visitation is needed, especially with an eye to improving parent-child relationships and assessing parents' capacity to resume responsibility for children. Another area for research is investigation into the combination of services and client characteristics that promote positive change for parents and children and lead to successful reunifications. Finally, follow-up studies should be completed to expand knowledge about factors that contribute to the long-term well being of children who are reunified with their families (Child Welfare League of America, 2002).

Research into existing family preservation programs in other states has not provided evidence that the programs affected placement prevention or had more than minimal benefits in family functioning. Many of these research projects addressed not only prevention of initial placements but efforts to aid in reunification and prevent reunification disruption. A study of family preservation programs in Kentucky, New Jersey, Tennessee and Philadelphia yielded three main conclusions (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, 2002). First, the programs' objective of placement prevention should be carefully considered. Researchers concluded that other objectives, especially the improvement of family and child functioning, be the focus of family services. Second, a need was perceived in these programs for more specific services, for more emphasis on the characteristics of the clients, and on the development of competencies of the workers. Third was the issue of length and intensity of service. The study indicated that the families involved had chronic difficulties for which short-term, crisis-approach solutions were not effective in the long term. A range of service lengths and service intensities are essential to meeting the needs of these child welfare clients.

During 2001, of the 10,657 children in Minnesota who exited from foster care, 73% were reunified with their families. The majority of these reunifications, about 91%, occurred within twelve months' time. (Minnesota Department of Human Services & Children & Family Services Administration, 2003) The child welfare community has important questions about risk factors for poor outcomes of reunification, about the services available to the families to which children are returning, and about the reunification and its relationship to placement prevention. Research into these and other reunification issues will guide the state and the counties in the establishment of programs and policies.

The literature suggests (see bibliography for further reference material) that ongoing research in reunification should:

- Evaluate home visitation related to successful reunification
- Study the services offered to families being reunified
- Investigate how client characteristics and services offered intersect to create successful reunifications

7.2 REUNIFICATION RESEARCH PRIORITIES

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7.2.1 *Poor Reunification Outcomes*

- Can we identify risk factors that predict poor reunification outcomes?
  - Can we identify protective factors and services that facilitate a safe return to family?

Current Related Projects

Family Group Decision Making in Minnesota
MN Department of Human Services
This is an evaluation study of the first two years of use of family group decision making in 19 Minnesota counties. The report was published in January 2003.

Foster Care Re-Entry
Minnesota Department of Human Services
Hennepin County
Project Consultant Susan J. Wells, Gamble-Skogmo Chair in Child Welfare & Youth Policy, School of Social Work, University of Minnesota
This project identified risk factors for foster care re-entry after reunification and provided recommendations to help minimize the risk of re-entry.

7.2.2 *Waiving Timelines*

- Should the specified timelines be waived if adequate resources are not provided? For example, resources such as timely orders issued by the court, common "marching" orders to defense and county attorneys, and/or trained guardians ad litem.

  The following questions are an elaboration of this priority:

  What is the current practice nationally? In the state?
  What are case outcomes for children when they are or are not waived?

7.2.3 *Cost Effects*

- What is the cost effectiveness of reunification vs. preventing placement in the first place? For example, are there cases for whom placement is always desirable? Are there cases that can almost always be serviced successfully at home with more resources? How can these cases be differentiated from one another?

7.2.4 *Availability of Reunification Services*

- To what extent are reunification services available to families to whom the children are returning?

  The following questions are an elaboration of this priority:

  What is the current practice in Minnesota?
  What is possible with current resources?
  What would the cost be of increasing these services to maximize effectiveness?

7.2.5 *Number of Reunifications*

- What is the number of reunifications that must happen before we know that successful reunification is unlikely?

ADOPTION/RELATIVE CUSTODY

8 ADOPTION/RELATIVE CUSTODY

8.1 ABOUT ADOPTION/RELATIVE CUSTODY

Over 2% of all children in the United States are adopted. In a 1997 survey, 58% of Americans said they know someone who has been adopted, have adopted a child or have relinquished a child for adoption (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, 2003). Clearly, adoption is a topic touching many people in the state and in the country.

Many opportunities exist to evaluate the adoption process, to understand the factors behind adoption, to study the effects of adoption on children and families, and to provide research to improve adoption outcomes. The Center for Adoption Research at the University of Massachusetts tracks many projects which take a closer look at varying aspects of adoption. One study by Thomas Morton of the Child Welfare Institute in Atlanta is examining the home study process. Since home study is one of the most significant steps in the adoption process, the study will update knowledge about state adoption policies and procedures and will report on the range and variation of information sent to the caseworker, the reasons a caseworker accepts or rejects a possible adoptive family, and an analysis of sample home studies

Two other research projects are highlighted by the Center for Adoption Research. The first takes a look at the role of relative custody in adoption and foster care. Since legal custody has become a way of obtaining permanency for foster children, what have been the effects on adoption? Another study is evaluating the social development of children who were adopted in infancy by examining the mother-child interactions in these adoptive families. Other topics in which research is being conducted include the effectiveness of post-adoption services, ethics in adoption, the relationship between adoption and religion, effects of search for biological information by adopted people, and adoption and parental sexuality (Center for Adoption Research, 2002).

The Children and Family Research Center of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign asks two critical questions about adoption (Children and Family Research Center, 2002). First, *what type of adoption best supports the well-being of the child and is both appropriate and available?* Within this topic are imbedded concerns about the apparent advantages of kinship adoption as opposed to non-kin care and questions about single-parent adoptions, adoptions by other than foster parents, and trans-racial adoptions.

Second, *what support is required to prevent adoption disruption?* Concerns in this area encompass educational support, parenting support and mental health services. Research can provide answers to questions about how success in education through tutoring and good relationships with educators aid adoption. Support services for parents undoubtedly affect the success of adoption, but which parents and which services are most effective? Mental health services are critical in adoptions of

children with behavioral problems. More research is needed to discover how these services minimize disruption of adoption.

The literature suggests (see bibliography for further reference material) that ongoing research in adoption/relative custody should:

- Investigate what services are likely to decrease adoption disruption
- Evaluate whether caseworkers have adequate information about prospective adoptive children and families
- Assess the social and developmental well-being of adopted children in a variety of adoption placements

8.2 ADOPTION/RELATIVE CUSTODY RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Individuals and groups involved in discussions and requests for input on the research agenda (see section 1.1) generated several potential research questions pertaining to program planning and administration (see Appendix B). Though the importance of every research question was recognized, a process for prioritizing the most critical questions was required to narrow the large amount of information about felt need into a substantial, meaningful, and feasible research agenda.

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8.2.1 *Successful Adoption of Older Children*

- What factors improve successful adoptions of older children?

Current Related Projects

Minnesota/Texas Adoption Research Project
Harold Grotevant, Professor and Department Head, Department of Family Social Science, University of Minnesota
This is a longitudinal, multi-site project aimed at understanding the experiences of adoptive kinship networks having different levels of openness in their relationships.

Hennepin County Adoption Project
Jane Gilgun, Professor, School of Social Work, University of Minnesota
The project is a five-year research project on the capacities for parenting adoptive children with special needs.

8.2.2 *Subsidizing Adoptive and Guardian Homes*

- Is it better for children if adoptive and relative custody homes receive enhanced benefits? And is the Title IV-E waiver an option?

8.2.3 *Time Limits*

- What are the effects of ASFA's and Minnesota's time limits on outcomes for children, especially children under age 8 and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/FAE infants?

8.2.4 *Characteristics of Families Receiving Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)*

- What are the characteristics of families receiving TPRs (role of social class, quality of their attorney, etc.)?

8.2.5 *Adoption Assistance Payment*

- Is the lower payment of adoption assistance (vs. foster care) a deterrent for adoptive or foster adoptive families?

Current Related Projects

Single Benefit Package for Children in Out-of-Home Placement
Minnesota Department of Human Services
This report looks at equalizing benefits among foster care and subsidized adoption. Currently Minnesota has one of the highest foster care payment rates and one of the lowest adoption subsidy rates.

Fiscal Incentives and Adoption
Joe Kroll, North American Council on Adoptable Children
This study investigates and clarifies adoption subsidies in Minnesota.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ASFA	Adoption and Safe Families Act
CASCW	Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare
CHIPS	Child in Need of Protection or Services
CPS	Child Protective Services
CYFC	Children, Youth and Families Consortium
DHS, "the Department"	Minnesota Department of Human Services
ECFE	Early Childhood Family Education
FAE	Fetal Alcohol Effects
FAS	Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
Gamble-Skogmo Office	Gamble-Skogmo Land Grant Chair in Child Welfare & Youth Policy
ICWA	Indian Child Welfare Act
IDVAAC	Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community
MFIP	Minnesota Family Investment Plan
SSIS	Social Services Information System
TPR	Termination of Parental Rights

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND PRIORITIZATION RESULTS

1 INTRODUCTION

The process of building a Child Welfare Research Agenda for the State of Minnesota that reflects the needs of the Minnesota Department of Human Services (Department, DHS), the goals and mission of the Gamble-Skogmo Land Grant Chair, and the concerns of other child welfare service providers and advocates has been achieved through discussions and meetings with Department staff and a wide range of constituents from the child welfare community since the Summer of 2002. These discussions included but were not limited to the following groups.

- Minnesota Department of Human Services
- Office of the Ombudspersons for Families
- Children's Law Center of Minnesota
- Institute of Child Development
- Minnesota House of Representatives
- Minnesota Senate
- Scott County
- Augsburg College Department of Social Work
- Chicano Latino Affairs Council
- Dakota County Social Services
- Children's Defense Fund of Minnesota
- North American Council on Adoptable Children
- Hubert H. Humphrey Institute
- Growing Home Minnesota
- Council on Black Minnesotans
- Stearns County
- African American Adoption and Permanency Planning
- Youth Campus
- Hennepin County
- Ready 4K
- West Broadway Village Social Services
- Ramsey County
- Association of Minnesota Counties
- Washington County Community Services
- University of Minnesota Law School

- Anoka County Social Services
- Minnesota Council of Child Caring Agencies
- Family Alternatives
- University of Minnesota – Duluth
- Hennepin County
- Mille Lacs County

Individuals and groups involved in these discussions generated over 150 research questions which were then categorized under headings reflecting seven specific areas of child welfare: program planning and administration; prevention of child maltreatment; child protection; child and family services; out-of-home care; reunification; and adoption/relative custody. Discussion teams identified the top two questions in each category.

Though the importance of every research question was recognized, a process for prioritizing the most critical questions was required to narrow the large number of questions into a substantial and meaningful yet feasible research agenda.

1.1 METHOD FOR PRIORITIZING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Through a formal prioritization process conducted in the winter and spring of 2003, the Gamble-Skogmo Office requested input from child welfare professionals, community leaders, university researchers, policy makers, legislators, and researchers on all potential research questions. As part of this process, respondents were asked to prioritize research questions pertaining to outcomes and service delivery within the intervention areas.

Because of the large number of possible rankings, responses were analyzed by frequency count (i.e. items that were ranked as the highest priority by the largest number of respondents became the first ranked item; items receiving the second largest number of responses as the highest priority item became the second ranked item, and so on). Results presented in the Child Welfare Research Agenda reflect the first five rankings in each category. The research priorities presented in this appendix reflect the rankings of all questions by the respondents.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND PRIORITIZATION RESULTS

2 PROGRAM PLANNING & ADMINISTRATION

		Number of respondents who ranked question as:				
		Top Priority				Lower Priority
Rank	Research Questions	1	2	3	4	5
1	What should County Social Services do to reduce racial disparity? At what point should the county intervene? Why are children of color coming into the system at a greater rate? How should the counties respond in practice?	15	2	3	2	0
2	How can we more effectively connect systems to one another? e.g. MFIP, juvenile court, SSIS, truancy	4	8	3	2	2
3	What is the efficacy of CPS intervention?	5	3	3	5	4
4	Are there more effective ways to administer our child welfare system (e.g. counties have different child welfare agendas)?	0	6	3	5	2
5	How does performance contracting impact quality of care and long-term outcomes? What agency practices contribute to the success of performance contracting?	1	0	4	6	8
6	How can we fund prevention strategies and tools?	0	1	7	2	5
7	Are we moving in the right direction by diverting prevention money to community organizations for prevention services? How do we know they are having positive outcomes when private providers seem to have few measurable outcomes imposed on them, e.g. accountability?	1	4	2	2	2
8	What is the most effective architecture for financing and use of performance incentives?	1	3	3	1	3
9	Is it possible to have an academic assessment of children entering care and have follow-along evaluations of developmentally appropriate targets?	0	2	0	2	2
10	What are the most effective means of knowledge dissemination and application?	1	0	1	2	1

3 PREVENTION OF CHILD MALTREATMENT

Rank	Research Questions	Number of respondents who ranked question as: Top Priority 1	2	3	4	Lower Priority 5
1	What preventive services are responsible for verifiable, county-by-county reductions in rates of abuse and neglect?	6	1	4	2	1
2	Can we identify those children most at risk of continuing or intermittent contact with child protection and develop options to address service needs?	1	2	5	6	1
3	How do risk factors and protective factors relate to one another?	3	3	3	1	1
4	What effect do stable housing and stable school settings have on the prevention of child abuse and neglect?	2	3	2	2	0
5	What should our standards be for culturally competent child welfare work?	2	3	1	2	2
6	What parent training strategies, if any, are effective with families in the child protection system?	2	2	1	2	6
7	Can a community do more to prevent child maltreatment by helping families remain stable in the communities in which they live?	3	3	1	0	0
8	Are our assessments tools appropriate, i.e. given changing family structures, interest in assessing strengths?	2	3	0	2	1
9	What is effective in preventing future CP openings?	0	2	3	3	1
10	Would prevention be more effective if it focused on developing individual, family, and community strengths?	1	1	4	1	1
11	How do intergenerational parenting styles and practices have an impact of different styles on child well being?	3	1	1	0	1
12	What are the child maltreatment incidence rates for younger siblings of victims?	1	1	3	1	2
13	What is the correlation between the lack of a liveable wage and the incidence of child maltreatment?	1	0	0	2	4
14	Why aren't there more people of color in the child welfare profession?	2	0	0	0	1
15	What are the outcomes for children in families whose parents have been sanctioned or timed out of MFIP?	1	1	0	1	0
16	Has ICWA had a positive or negative effect on children?	0	0	1	2	2
17	What connections exist between spousal abuse and child maltreatment?	0	1	0	1	1
18	What are the success rates (completion of goals, no subsequent maltreatment) for public social service vs. public health vs. private providers?	0	1	0	0	2

19	Is the earned income tax credit program being utilized to its fullest extent in reducing the number of families living in poverty?	0	1	0	0	1
20	Is family chaos more detrimental to children than other factors?	0	1	0	0	0
21	What are the success rates for home nurse visiting vs. head start vs. ECFE vs. early childhood special education?	0	0	0	2	0
22	Why are faith communities so underrepresented in mandatory reporting?	0	0	1	0	0

3.1 Additional Prevention of Child Maltreatment Questions Presented by Respondents

Are EPSDT examinations being carried out? If they were to be done, would we be able to better intervene early regarding child maltreatment?

Can we train workers to develop more meaningful parenting using the "Guiding Principles" program, which incorporates such concepts as Adult Being There, Adult Affection, Mutual Relationships, Repetition and Challenge, Stability of Activities, and Content of Activities?

To what degree does social isolation have an impact on child maltreatment?

Is there a way to move the system to a place where a "well family" receives some recognition, similar to the way in which the medical field moved to "well baby" checkups? This might lead to a reduction in cases of maltreatment.

Which principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is Minnesota following?

4 CHILD PROTECTION

Rank	Research Questions	Number of respondents who ranked question as: Top Priority 1	2	3	4	Lower Priority 5
1	What are the elements of most effective case planning and how can we ensure that it is implemented?	9	2	3	2	0
2	Are there any proven/validated services that positively change family function and reduce or prevent the incidence of abuse/neglect?	4	2	3	1	2
3	What interventions are most effective in the time required by the Adoption and Safe Families Act?	0	4	2	3	2
4	What's the model for effective CPS? What do we already know? What do we need to know? What are the promising or evidence-based practices?	2	1	2	2	1
5	How can case planning and reasonable efforts aid us in practice?	2	3	0	0	0
6	How do you practice cultural competence effectively?	3	1	0	1	0
7	Can we establish specific indicators of what constitutes neglect for the purpose of CPS intervention?	1	3	1	0	1
8	How are the reasonable efforts to prevent placement defined, and what do they mean to front-line workers?	0	2	3	1	0
9	Which protective factors in one culture or setting transcend culture? Which don't?	1	1	2	1	0
10	What is it that is effective in families who experience domestic abuse that actually keeps kids safe?	0	2	0	4	0
11	What is the balance between reunification and protection and reasonable efforts?	1	1	0	2	2
12	How do you ensure client participation vs being "dictated to"?	1	1	0	0	2
13	How can we use research to support application in practice? What are the most effective ways to do this? How can we effectively interface with the courts on this?	0	1	1	2	0
14	How do we identify substance abuse in families?	2	0	0	0	0
15	What is the impact of open CHIPS proceedings? Is it achieving its initial goal? Have there been any surprising results?	1	0	1	1	0
16	Will an increased focus on treating the children result in better (well-being) outcomes for the children and intervene in the cycle of CA/N? This is a fundamental issue.	0	0	2	1	1
17	Can we demonstrate effective and feasible ways to coordinate multi-agency plans?	0	0	2	1	1
18	What methods can be used to ensure that ICWA guidelines are followed?	1	1	0	0	0
19	Do court-appointed guardian ad litems have a positive impact on case outcomes?	0	1	0	1	2
20	Would focusing on enhancing protective factors enhance the effectiveness of CPS?	0	1	1	0	0
21	Are there better indicators of when to initiate termination of parental rights sooner?	0	0	0	3	1

22	Alternative response programs are very different throughout the state. How will we measure and/or compare them to evaluate their value?	0	0	2	0	0
23	What factors contribute to disruptions of transfer of legal custody?	0	1	0	0	1
24	How has training been beneficial and in what ways	0	0	0	1	2
25	What do we know about the migration of families across jurisdictions?	0	0	1	0	1
26	Does mandated reporting improve safety and care of children?	0	0	1	0	1
27	Do parents use CPS as a resource when raising their children?	0	1	0	0	0
28	How can we educate parents for the broader responsibility of protecting their children?	0	0	0	1	2
29	Does block training (before going into practice) help make more effective workers?	0	0	1	0	0
30	What impact would having workers who reflect the community have on practice effectiveness and outcomes?	0	0	1	0	0
31	What is the best intervention for a chronic "garbage house"?	0	0	0	0	3
32	What happens to families who don't meet the criteria for receiving disabilities services?	0	0	0	1	0

4.1 Additional Child Protection Questions Presented by Respondents

How are families with disabilities treated in the system?

What percent of families have more than one generation who grew up in CPS?

What can a pregnant woman do for her unborn child to receive services? CHIPS only becomes effective after the child is born.

How might corrective services be offered/accepted when defense attorneys counsel "deny"?

Is there a way to enforce random compliance reviews of open cases of Indian Child Welfare in the state? At this late date, ICWA is not being followed.

How can the University ensure the success of the Children's Justice Initiative?

What is the best intervention for a home that has been used to manufacture methamphetamines?

5 CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

Rank	Research Questions	Number of respondents who ranked question as: Top Priority 1	2	3	4	Lower Priority 5
1	How do we identify and promote evidence-based policy and practice?	10	3	2	0	0
2	What is the most effective way to prevent or identify early emotional disturbances/mental health issues of young children and to treat those issues within the context of the whole family?	3	4	5	3	2
3	What community-based in-home programs/services work best to promote child and family well-being?	4	5	0	4	2
4	Is there a way to deliver concrete services to a family and avoid a costly, disruptive out-of-home placement?	5	2	4	1	3
5	How do we do no harm to children's mental health?	2	3	0	0	2
6	Are in-home services as valuable to the family as currently thought, i.e. do they achieve positive outcomes (reunification) and for which population?	0	1	4	4	0
7	What are the benefits of skill-based training vs. therapy (especially insight-oriented therapy)?	1	2	2	1	2
8	Are family-based services available to the families that most need them?	1	2	0	4	2
9	Is there any evidence that brief, intense in-home therapeutic services have better long-term effects than longer duration services?	0	1	3	2	2
10	Does short-term, intensive involvement (90 days, 2-3 days/week) result in improved family functioning vs. long-term involvement (one year, 1/week)?	1	1	1	2	2
11	What is the difference between professional vs. paraprofessional staff with respect to positive outcomes?	0	1	4	0	1
12	Are there better indicators of when in-home services are appropriate? What are the predictors of successful outcomes? This might help avoid "throwing money" at poor prognosis cases.	1	1	2	1	0
13	What is the efficacy of using paraprofessional vs. professional vs. clinical staff?	1	0	1	0	2
14	What is the alternative to therapy services in child welfare practices?	0	0	1	1	1
15	What should take precedence: the need and utility of counseling vs. the need for life skills for most families?	0	1	0	0	1
16	What is the impact of medical assistance-funded home care services?	0	0	0	1	2
17	Most in-home services appear to be more expensive than "agency-based" services. Is the money worth it? Are they more effective?	0	0	0	1	1

18	If a juvenile has made a court appearance for a sexual offense, what happens to him/her after (s)/he leaves the system? Community registration of juvenile sexual offenders is not required.	0	0	0	1	1
19	Is therapy successful in preventing return to CPS openings?	0	0	0	0	2

6 OUT-OF-HOME CARE

Rank	Research Questions	Number of respondents who ranked question as: Top Priority 1	2	3	4	Lower Priority 5
1	How can we best match interventions with assessed needs?	9	1	1	2	0
2	What preventive services are actually reducing out-of-home placements?	2	4	2	3	2
3	Is kinship care more stable than out-of–home care? What is the long-term impact of kinship care on children? Is there a difference in outcomes for children in kinship care between long-term versus short-term placement? Are these outcomes for different children?	2	3	3	3	0
4	What are the reasons for reentry?	3	2	2	0	1
5	How can we best help children of color in foster care?	2	3	0	1	2
6	How do we address potential racism in placement policies?	2	1	2	0	0
7	What is the most effective way to use kinship care?	2	0	2	0	2
8	How can we assess whether initial placements are the best possible choice prior to placing the child?	1	1	1	2	1
9	What are our post-foster care outcomes?	1	1	2	0	1
10	In what ways can we effectively measure how different ethnic groups fare in out-of home placements?	0	2	1	2	1
11	What is the general well being of children in out-of–home care? How does well-being vary by living arrangement? What accounts for well-being deficits in children in care?	1	1	0	0	5
12	Does the use of group home and residential care have a lasting (one year and longer) impact on behavior improvement on adolescents (age 12 and up) after they return home?	0	2	1	1	1
13	What are the most effective interventions with parents?	0	1	2	1	1
14	What are the long-term results of children who leave the system as adults?	2	0	0	1	0
15	How do we create healthy environments that will promote the growth of children in the placement process?	2	0	0	0	0
16	How can we objectively evaluate residential treatment facilities to provide a sound basis for appropriate adolescent referrals?	0	0	1	2	2
17	How can we reduce recidivism in foster care?	0	2	0	0	1
18	Are the current permanency time lines a true measure for those families who need longer treatment? (Six months doesn't give the parent much time to change their behavior when mental health or chemical dependency issues are a factor.)	0	0	1	2	2
19	What happens to children who "age out" of the system? How many return to their birth families for support?	0	1	1	0	1
20	How can we deal most effectively with large sibling groups?	0	1	1	0	0
21	Early intervention is important. Are there any multi-systems that can be used to reduce abuse or neglect?	0	1	0	1	1
22	At what rate are children reentering the system after transfers of custody, early reunification, or adoption?	0	0	0	3	1

23	Is it effective to treat older adolescents?	0	1	0	0	0
24	Is the standard of two children per home valid, i.e. can more than two foster care children live in a home successfully?	0	0	1	1	0
25	What is the rate of continued need for services after transfers of custody?	0	0	1	1	0
26	Is it possible to support more effective foster care recruitment to provide foster care/adoption conversion homes?	0	1	0	0	0
27	What should factor into the decision-making process in sibling separations, e.g. attachment to the caregiver or attachment to the sibling?	0	0	1	0	1
28	What is the role that education level of the parent plays on child abuse and neglect?	0	0	1	0	0
29	Relative to the alleged disparities in the placement of ICWA children, what is the impact of tribal placement on the total number of children placed? How many of these children are living with extended families and should these extended family placements be considered foster care placement?	0	0	1	0	0
30	at is the most effective treatment for victims?	0	0	0	1	0
31	In what ways can we better understand what services work for diverse population in group homes?	0	0	0	1	0
32	If one sibling is being disruptive, what is the best intervention for the sibling group?	0	0	0	1	0
33	Are we meeting the goals of concurrent permanency planning?	0	0	0	0	2

6.1 Additional Out-Of-Home Care Questions Presented by Respondents

How can we ensure a positive educational experience in foster care?

Can we have an impact on families who don't use in-home services? How can we best address the child's needs?

Has there been follow-up of states' Rule 5's to compare success rates?

Would it be worth it to convert the majority of treatment beds into a day treatment concept, eliminating the cost and ineffectiveness of 24/7 care? Foster care homes are not included in the conversion

What do foster parents say about how much voice they have in partnership with parents regarding plans to meet the family's and child's needs?

What incentives exist for facilities to keep current with best practices?

With respect to concurrent permanency planning, how can we give children a healthy message that "yes, you are going to live here forever," or "yes, we are going to work toward you going home"?

7 REUNIFICATION

Rank	Research Questions	Number of respondents who ranked question as: Top Priority 1	2	3	4	Lower Priority 5
1	Can we identify risk factors that predict poor reunification outcomes? Can we identify protective factors and services that facilitate a safe return to family?	7	6	5	3	2
2	Should the specified timelines be waived if adequate resources are not provided (including court time to issue timely orders; common "marching" orders to defend county attorneys; etc.)?	8	2	2	3	2
3	What are the cost effects of reunification vs. preventing placement in the first place?	5	3	2	4	5
4	To what extent are reunification services available to families to whom the children are returning?	1	4	5	2	0
5	Is there a magic number of times where the chance for a "successful" reunification is unlikely?	2	3	1	4	2
6	What are the functioning outcomes of children returned to parents care from a CHIPs petition (voluntary, court-ordered return) vs. those adopted or transferred custody?	2	3	2	0	3
7	Are AFSA timelines appropriate for non-English speaking families?	0	4	3	1	4
8	What happens to a child after permanent legal custody has been transferred to his/her relatives?	1	2	2	4	3
9	What is the optimal length of reunification service after the child's return?	2	1	3	3	0
10	What do we do when parents are reluctant to reunite with a child after s/he has been removed from the home? Sometimes the child is better off in foster care where they are shown care and respect.	1	0	0	3	2

8 ADOPTION/GUARDIANSHIP

Rank	Research Questions	Number of respondents who ranked question as: Top Priority 1	2	3	4	Lower Priority 5
1	What factors improve successful adoptions of older children?	3	1	5	9	3
2	Is it advantageous with respect to adoption rates and fiscal responsibility to subsidize adoptive and guardian homes through a Title IV-E waiver as alternatives to foster care?	8	2	1	0	2
3	What are the effects of time limits (especially for children under age 8 and for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/FAE infants)?	7	3	0	0	0
4	What are the characteristics of families receiving TPR's (role of social class, quality of their attorney, etc.)	3	6	2	0	2
5	Is the lower payment of adoption assistance (vs. foster care) a deterrent for adoptive or foster adoptive families?	1	5	5	0	0
6	What is best for kids when they are making the transition to adoptive homes after they have bonded with foster parents? Should there be a gradual or rapid transition and transfer of attachment? What is best for the adoptive parents and other children in the adoptive family?	3	2	3	2	1
7	What is the chief reason for disrupted adoptions?	1	3	3	3	1
8	What are the characteristics of adoptions that succeed versus those that fail?	0	3	1	5	7
9	Is concurrent planning being carried out to the extent possible (especially for children under age 8 and FAS/FAE infants)?	1	2	0	2	2
10	Is there a better way to screen relative homes?	1	0	2	2	3
11	Does age factor into whether an adoption is successful?	0	1	4	0	0
12	Should we offer post-adoption services for six months, twelve months, or as long as wanted, and what are the outcomes?	0	1	1	2	3
13	How do custody transfers and adoptions compare with permanence?	1	0	1	2	0

APPENDIX C

"DEVELOPING A CHILD WELFARE RESEARCH AGENDA" MEETING PARTICIPANTS JUNE 3, 2002

Name	Organization
Susan Alt	Ramsey County
Shirley Baugher	University of Minnesota College of Human Ecology
Linda Berglin	Minnesota Senate
Dawn Blanchard	Office of the Ombudsperson for Indian Families
Judy Bolar	Growing Home Minnesota
Judith Brumfield	Scott County Government Center
Gail Chang Bohr	Children's Law Center of Minnesota
Cynthia Conley	Minnesota Senate
Patrick Coyne	Dakota County Social Services
Glenda Dewberry-Rooney	Augsburg College Department of Social Work
Glenace Edwall	Minnesota Department of Human Services
Byron Egeland	University of Minnesota Institute of Child Development
Donald Fraser	Ready 4K
Priscilla Gibson	University of Minnesota College of Human Ecology
Harold Grotevant	University of Minnesota College of Human Ecology
Susan Haigh	Ramsey County Board of Commissioners
Beth Haney	Children's Defense Fund of Minnesota
C. David Hollister	University of Minnesota College of Human Ecology
Marcie Jefferys	University of Minnesota College of Human Ecology
Helen Kivnick	University of Minnesota College of Human Ecology
Joe Kroll	North American Council on Adoptable Children

Margaret Langfeld	Anoka County Board
Dottie Liszka	Stearns County
Joseph Loftus	Youth Campus
Christine Maziar	University of Minnesota Graduate School
Jess McDonald	Illinois Dept of Children & Family Services
Peter McLaughlin	Hennepin County Board of Commissioners
Meghan Kelley Mohs	Association of Minnesota Counties
Samuel Myers	University of Minnesota Hubert H. Humphrey Institute
Bauz Nengchu	Office of the Ombudperson for Asian American Families
Alba Olmedo	Office of the Ombudperson for Hispanic Families
Daniel Papin	Washington County Community Services
William Pinsonnault	Anoka County Social Services
Jane Ranum	Minnesota Senate
Patricia Ray	Minnesota Department of Human Services
John Red-Horse	University of Minnesota Duluth
Mary Regan	Minnesota Council of Child Caring Agencies
Joan Riebel	Family Alternatives
Ronald Rooney	University of Minnesota College of Human Ecology
David Sanders	Hennepin County Social Services
Jerry Soma	Anoka County
Erin Sullivan Sutton	Minnesota Department of Human Services
Mark Testa	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Leo Vos	Mille Lacs County Family Services
Esther Wattenberg	University of Minnesota College of Human Ecology
Susan Wells	University of Minnesota College of Human Ecology
Janet Wiig	University of Minnesota Law School