Continuing to improve Minnesota’s child welfare system

Issues:

- **American Indian Child Welfare Initiative expansion**: Compared to white children, American Indian children are five times more likely to be reported as abused or neglected and 18.5 times more likely to be placed in foster care. The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe and Red Lake Nation seek to participate in the Tribal Child Welfare Initiative to provide a full continuum of services, modeled after other Child Welfare Initiative tribes, for child abuse prevention, family preservation, 24/7 child protection intake and assessment, foster care, reunification services, transfer of custody and customary adoptions. Both tribes have begun planning to take over child welfare services for eligible children and their families. In addition, all tribes in Minnesota need support for early intervention services.

- **Child Welfare Training Academy**: The Governor’s Task Force on the Protection of Children recommended changes in training for child protection workers and decreasing their caseloads to 10 cases per worker. The 2015 Legislature appropriated $23 million for county social service agencies to hire more staff, but did not provide funding for training. Staffing increases resulted in significant demand for mandatory Child Welfare Foundation Training, which needs funding.

- **Family First Prevention Services Act**: When Minnesota fully implements the federal Family First Prevention Services Act, the state will no longer receive federal reimbursement for the costs of children’s placements in some group foster care settings. The department intends to delay opt-in provisions of the act until September 2021 to better analyze the impacts and work closely with counties and tribes to transition to the new requirements.

Proposal:

- **Tribal Child Welfare Initiative expansion**: Governor Tim Walz proposes increasing support for the two existing American Indian Child Welfare Initiative tribes, Leech Lake and White Earth Nation, and expanding the Initiative to Red Lake Nation and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. He also proposes establishing an American Indian Family Early Intervention grant program for all tribes in Minnesota.

- **Child Welfare Training Academy**: The governor’s budget would create a Child Welfare Training Academy and fund a study to recommend caseload guidelines for child protection workers and supervisors.

- **Family First Prevention Services Act**: Governor Walz proposes investing in infrastructure to implement new federal requirements. The infrastructure created in this proposal would enhance support to children and families and prevent foster care placements with evidence-based mental health and substance abuse prevention and treatment services, in-home parent programs and kinship services.
Benefits:

- **American Indian Child Welfare Initiative expansion:** Families in Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe and Red Lake Nation will benefit from receiving tribal services close to home by workers with a unique understanding of American Indian families, history and child rearing. The Leech Lake and White Earth Nation tribes will be better able to fund and staff their existing initiatives to build on that success. All tribes in Minnesota will benefit from funding to support early intervention services.

- **Child Welfare Training Academy:** Investing in training will improve the state’s ability to ensure consistent, quality practices statewide. This proposal will bring the training system into compliance with statutory timelines for new worker training; improve consistency and stability in child welfare evidence-based practices; and increase retention, stability and well-being in the workforce to improve outcomes for children and families.

- **Family First Prevention Services Act:** Bringing the state into compliance with the new federal requirements will ensure reimbursement for Minnesota’s foster care claims. It will also ensure the state assesses data on all qualified residential treatment programs to meet standards.

Fiscal impact:

- **American Indian Child Welfare Initiative expansion:**
  - Invests $15.4 million in FY 2020-21 and $25 million in FY 2022-23

- **Child Welfare Training Academy**
  - Invests $4.2 million in FY 2020-21 and $5.8 million in FY 2022-23

- **Family First Prevention Services Act**
  - Invests $1.9 million in FY 2020-21 and $1.4 million in FY 2022-23

Related information:


- Child abuse and neglect prevention: Well-being for Minnesota's families: [https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserv/Public/DHS-3922-ENG](https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserv/Public/DHS-3922-ENG)

- Child protection in Minnesota: Keeping children safe: [https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserv/Public/DHS-4735-ENG](https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserv/Public/DHS-4735-ENG)

- Foster care: Temporary out-of-home care for children: [https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserv/Public/DHS-4760-ENG](https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserv/Public/DHS-4760-ENG)

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