

Child welfare: Improving the well-being of Minnesota children

The state approved important measures in 2023 to improve the well-being of Minnesota children. A range of investments will help preserve families, support effective management of Indian Child Welfare grants and back Tribal child welfare agencies and the American Indian Child Welfare Initiative to address the chronic overrepresentation of American Indian children in the child welfare system. Other efforts will include more grant funding for community resource centers that connect families with supports and improvements in services for older youth who are at risk of entering foster care or currently in or exiting foster care.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services works with county and Tribal partners to protect children from abuse and neglect and to promote family and community well-being. Families who have what they need are less likely to be involved in the child protection system.

2023 legislation

Continuing to implement the Family First Prevention Services Act. Signed into law in 2018, this federal law focuses on keeping children safely with their families to avoid the trauma of out-of-home placements. Investments made this legislative session will support Kinship Navigator Services, evidence-based prevention grants, and prevention and early intervention services provided by counties and Tribes. A new statewide pool of trained and certified culturally appropriate individuals will help determine the level of care for a child in need of services. *FY2024-25: \$25 million; FY2026-27: \$26.6 million*

Supporting the well-being of American Indian families. New investments in culturally relevant services are aimed at reducing the disproportionate overrepresentation of American Indian children in the child welfare system. The Department of Human Services will add staff to develop collaborative prevention strategies to address this chronic disparity. Additional staff will support compliance with the federal Indian Child Welfare Act and the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act. These staff will provide real-time consultation and technical assistance to counties and ensure that the state has the capacity to investigate specific reports of noncompliance. Funding for Indian Child Welfare grants to Tribes and urban Indian organizations will triple, and new staff will help improve effective management of the grants, ensure compliance with grant requirements and provide timely consultation to grantees. *FY2024-25: \$11.4 million; FY2026-27: \$11.8 million*

Expanding the American Indian Child Welfare Initiative. The state will support the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe's ongoing efforts to build infrastructure and programming to join the initiative. More resources will go to Tribes that are already members of the initiative to ensure adequate funding for child welfare programs. Investments will also go to Tribes that are not part of the Child Welfare Initiative to hire staff to work with counties on state and federal child welfare laws and best practices for working with American Indian children and families. *FY2024-25: \$27.6 million; FY2026-27: \$15.9 million*

Strengthening protections for Native families. Changes to the Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act of 1985 will enhance child welfare protections. The law helps protect Native children from being separated from their families and cultural traditions. If child welfare interventions are necessary, the state requires priority to be put on placing Native children with family members or, if none are available, a member of their Tribe. Parts of the law that relied upon federal guidance are now codified, reinforcing Minnesota’s commitment to the sovereignty of Tribal Nations and Native families.

Supporting youth after foster care. Investments in the STAY (Successful Transition to Adulthood for Youth) in the Community program will help maintain current services for youth transitioning from foster care to adulthood. Other funding will support more adolescent services staff who work with youth in foster care, with a focus on hiring adults with recent lived experience in the foster care system. *FY2024-25: \$3.8 million in one-time funding for STAY in the Community; FY2024-25: \$1 million for adolescent services staff; FY 2026-27: \$1 million for adolescent services staff*

Reaching families through community resource centers. Grants will help establish a network of Community Resource Centers to promote family and community connectedness and well-being. The centers offer physical and virtual access points for families to support relationship-based and culturally appropriate programs, service navigation and case management. Better access at the community level makes it easier for families to get what they need to achieve economic stability and well-being, which are linked to lower rates of child welfare involvement and neglect reporting. *FY2024-27: \$7.1 million in one-time funding*

Related information

- [DHS 2023 session fact sheets](#)
- [American Indian Child Welfare webpage](#)
- [Indian Child Welfare Act](#)
- [Foster care: Temporary out-of-home care for children \(PDF\)](#) (May 2022)
- [Adoption support: Working together to help families \(PDF\)](#) (November 2022)