

Preventing child maltreatment by promoting health and well-being for Minnesota families

Preventing child protection system involvement must start outside the child protection system. Promoting family and community well-being requires multi-system partnerships and common goals. Prevention strategies are built within a whole family framework. The Minnesota Department of Human Services' strategies for promoting family well-being start with how well the department can partner with and support the communities where families live, learn, work and play.

Promoting well-being through belonging and inclusion

Inclusion in the community and connections with one another enhance or weaken well-being and trust within communities. When people feel that they belong, their voices are heard, helping shape the conditions in the communities that affect their lives.

A significant cost of structural racism is the systemic exclusion of whole populations. [Structural racism](#) is the normalization of an array of historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal dynamics that routinely advantage white people while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color and American Indians.

Minnesota Department of Human Services preliminary estimates from 2023 indicate:

- American Indian and Alaska Native children and children of two or more races were four times more likely, and African American, Black, Hispanic and Latino children of any race were two times more likely to be reported to the child protection system compared to white children.
- American Indian and Alaska Native children were five to six times more likely; children of two or more races were five times more likely; and African American, Black children, Hispanic and Latinx children of any race were two times more likely to be screened into the child protection system compared to white children.
- American Indian and Alaska Native children were 16 times more likely; children identified as two or more races were eight times more likely; and African American, Black, Hispanic and Latino children of any race were two times more likely to be in out-of-home care compared to white children.

Additional information can be found in the most recent [Minnesota Child Maltreatment Report \(PDF\)](#).

A path forward: Engaging partners, communities to promote well-being

Engaging with families and communities, and creating avenues for feedback and partnership, are critical to expanding the understanding of what creates health and well-being for Minnesota children — especially those in families experiencing inequities due to race, ethnicity, health, wealth and geography. With a goal of well-being for all families, the department is focused on the following prevention strategies:

- **Building awareness and urgency** about the importance of unique opportunities to support individual and community protective factors
- **Supporting family and community relationships** that build and strengthen inclusion and belonging and help create community-driven solutions to foster family well-being
- **Making it easier for families** to get what they need by creating and maintaining culturally responsive access to concrete supports and other necessary programs and services
- **Advancing policy and systems change** to promote whole family systems, support individual and community protective factors, and narrow the “front door” to child protection and other system involvement.

Minnesota families have indicated that a web of services and supports are necessary for achieving and maintaining their health and well-being. Families and communities across Minnesota want state agencies, community organizations, counties and Tribal Nations to provide culturally appropriate, trauma-responsive, relationship-based services that help children thrive. The department and its partners are moving toward a system of prevention that supports families before they enter the child welfare system by making it easier for families to get what they need and increasing access to supports and services.

- [Community Resource Centers](#): The Minnesota Legislature awarded the department \$7.1 million in funding in 2023 to develop and implement a statewide network of community resource centers.
- Community resource centers are community-based coordinated points of entry that provide culturally responsive, relationship-based service navigation and other supportive services for expecting and parenting families and youth.
- [Parent Support Outreach Program \(PDF\)](#): This voluntary, early intervention program focuses on families' strengths and needs and helps parents access the resources they need. It aids families in maintaining economic stability, health and child development.
- [Help Me Connect](#): This navigation tool coordinates a broad range of services and resources for families and providers. The goal is to help families access physical and mental health services, early care and education, cash and food assistance, and housing.
- [Help Me Grow](#): This interagency initiative provides resources for families to identify and understand children's developmental milestones and concerns. It offers information and referrals for families for comprehensive, confidential screening at no cost, as well as special education and other services for children through the age of five who may have developmental concerns.

The department and its partners also promote family well-being by cultivating community engagement and leveraging community and parent-developed solutions.

- **Community Solutions Funds:** The Minnesota Department of Health offers grants to help communities improve child development outcomes related to the well-being of children of color and American Indian children from prenatal to third grade and their families.
- **Whole Family Systems Initiative:** A partnership among Minnesota state agencies, local organizations, families and communities to create system change across government and support whole-family approaches.



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