

Minnesota Child Welfare Training Academy

February 2020

In 2019, the legislature enacted provisions as part of the Health and Human Services omnibus bill ([Laws 2019, 1st spec. sess. ch. 9](#), art. 1, secs. 37 and 38) to develop a new child welfare training framework, called the Child Welfare Training Academy. The new framework aims to address high child protection worker caseloads and decrease worker turnover, in order to better serve children in Minnesota.

Current Child Welfare Worker Training Requirements and Caseloads

Currently, Minnesota child welfare workers are trained through the Child Welfare Training System, and are required under [Minnesota Statutes, section 626.559](#), to complete foundational training within the first six months of employment. There is currently no training curriculum for child welfare supervisors.

In recent years, the number of child maltreatment reports, county and tribal assessments and investigations, and children entering and continuing in the child protection system have increased substantially.¹ With more children in the child protection system and higher rates of employee turnover,² the increased number of child welfare workers needing initial training has led to a waiting list that makes it difficult or impossible for new workers to complete training within the required time.

In 2015, the Governor's Task Force on Child Protection published a list of [recommendations](#), several of which focused on improving training for child welfare workers and supervisors. In 2016, the University of Minnesota's Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare conducted a [child welfare workforce stabilization study](#), which revealed that most responding child welfare workers felt overwhelmed by job duties, experienced secondary traumatic stress, and feared for their personal safety.

To address these workforce issues and improve outcomes for children in Minnesota, the 2019 law instructs the Department of Human Services to modify the current system and rename it as the Child Welfare Training Academy.

Child Welfare Training Academy Requirements and Implementation

The Child Welfare Training Academy will be phased in over four years, beginning in July 2019, and will be administered through five regional hubs throughout the state. Each hub will provide training based on the particular needs of the region.

¹ According to a [fact sheet](#) from the Department of Human Services, 38,751 children were the subject of child maltreatment reports screened in for further assessment or investigation in 2018, an increase of 23 percent since 2015. Similarly, the number of children experiencing out-of-home placement increased 10.6 percent between 2016 and 2017. For more information on children in out-of-home placement, see the 2018 Department of Human Services [Out-of-home Care and Permanency Report](#).

² Employee turnover increased from 5 percent in 2013 to 20 percent in 2017, according to the [Governor's 2020-2021 Biennial Budget Recommendations](#) (pages 49-53).

The Child Welfare Training Academy will provide training to county and tribal child welfare workers and supervisors, and staff at private child placing agencies that contract with tribal and county child welfare agencies.

Each worker and supervisor must complete a competency-based knowledge test and skills demonstration to receive a certification at the end of initial training, and every other year thereafter. Ongoing training requirements will be determined at a later date.

Training Delivery. The commissioner will partner with the University of Minnesota to deliver the new Child Welfare Training Academy content, using multidisciplinary approaches and national best practices in adult learning methodologies. The training content must:

- focus on both child safety and maintaining family relationships by preventing out-of-home placement, when possible;
- reflect the different communities served by the child welfare system in Minnesota;
- emphasize racial disparities in child welfare outcomes in Minnesota; and
- include information on recognizing and addressing implicit bias.

The training must include input from stakeholders, including but not limited to:

- child welfare professionals;
- resource parents;
- biological parents and caregivers; and
- other community members with expertise in child welfare racial disparities and implicit bias.

Funding. The legislature appropriated \$4.2 million in fiscal years 2020-2021, and \$5.8 million in 2022-2023 to develop the training and hire necessary additional staff, and \$400,000 in onetime funding to conduct the child welfare caseload study.

Child Welfare Caseload Study

In connection with the Child Welfare Training Academy, the legislature also directed the Commissioner of Human Services to conduct a child welfare caseload study to collect data on:

- 1) the number of child welfare workers in Minnesota; and
- 2) the amount of time child welfare workers in Minnesota devote to the various components of child protection work.

The commissioner must complete the study by October 1, 2020, and report the results of the study to the governor and the legislature by December 1, 2020. The law also requires the commissioner to work with counties and other stakeholders to develop a process for ongoing monitoring of child welfare workers' caseloads.

