



Minnesota Department of **Human Services**

Guidelines for completing the Vulnerable Children and Adults Act Service Plan

Unless otherwise noted, questions or feedback on these guidelines should be submitted to:

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SECTION I: BACKGROUND

Vulnerable Children and Adults Act

The 2011 Minnesota Legislature created the Vulnerable Children and Adults Act (VCA), establishing a fund to address the needs of vulnerable children (including adolescents) and adults. This new act revised and renamed the Children and Community Services Act (2011 Laws of Minnesota, First Special Session, Chapter 9). As a future reference note for this act, the Minnesota statute citation will remain the same ([§256M](#)) after 2011 legislative revisions are made.

Services

Services under the act are to be provided or arranged for by county boards for vulnerable children (including adolescents) and adults under [Minn. Stat. §260C](#) (child protection), [§626.556](#) (reporting of maltreatment of minors), [§626.5561](#) (reporting of prenatal exposure to controlled substances) and [§626.557](#) (reporting of maltreatment of vulnerable adults), who experience dependency, abuse or neglect, and services for family members to support those individuals. Services may be provided by professionals or nonprofessionals, including the person's natural supports in the community. They do not include services under the public assistance programs known as the Minnesota Family Investment Program, Minnesota Supplemental Aid, Medical Assistance, General Assistance, General Assistance Medical Care, MinnesotaCare, or Community Health.

Service Plan

The act requires an approved service plan between the county board and the commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Human Services (hereafter, department) in order to receive funds. The primary purpose is to keep vulnerable children and adults safe and improve their well-being. The service plan provides a summary of ongoing needs of vulnerable children and adults, resources available to address these needs, budgeting of allocated resources, and community participation in the planning and development of the service plan.

Approved plans will be effective January 1, 2012. Subsequently, counties must inform the department of any updates to the plan to reflect current county policy. Further information and instructions will be provided on procedures regarding requirements and use of funds under the act.

The department encourages and supports sharing of useful information across counties and between counties and tribes. Counties, tribes and stakeholders are encouraged to share with department staff any efforts and strategies that are leading to improved outcomes for vulnerable children and adults.

Types of Service Plans

County administrators may choose to submit individual or multi-county service plans. Individual and multi-county agreements must indicate that the agreement is approved by the respective county board by completing the Certification for Submission box in the service plan. Responses to the service plan should be individualized, concise, and suitable for public distribution.

Public Input

Counties must allow for public input for the use of federal Social Services Block Grant (Title XX) funds and state funds, as required by federal and state laws provided through this act. Counties may integrate public input participation with their ongoing quality of service evaluations and feedback processes with other program requirements. **Upon receipt of these instructions, a county may begin the public input**

solicitation process for input and participation in the development and review of the contents of the plan in fulfillment of the statutory 30-day requirement. Counties do not have to wait until a draft is ready before seeking public input; an invitation for public participation can begin as counties start developing their plans.

After plans are approved, counties must determine how to involve the public in the review of the county's continued use of federal and state funds as required under the act. This can be incorporated in the on-going quality control and public input processes counties have in place.

Deadline

Statute requires that plans be submitted to the department by Oct. 15, 2011. If a county cannot meet this deadline, a brief email request for an extension should be submitted to the department prior to the Oct. 15 deadline.

Fillable Form

The service plan form can be accessed by clicking on the link below. The form is in a Microsoft® Word format that can be saved on a local drive, preferably using the county's name (e.g., Marshall County Vulnerable Children and Adults Act Service Plan). Use this fillable form to provide responses.

[Vulnerable Children and Adults Act Service Plan](#)

Submission

Upon approval by the county board(s) or authorized designee(s), submit the Microsoft® Word document as an email attachment to: paul.ramcharit@state.mn.us. For questions, inquiries, or technical assistance, contact him at the email link above, or (651) 431-3877.

Approval

Department staff will inform county agencies by Dec. 31, 2011, if their service plan has been approved. If the plan is not approved, department staff will inform counties of any revisions or additional information needed for approval. Counties must have an approved service plan to receive funds under this act.

SECTION II: UPDATES

Funding Reductions

The 2011 Legislature in a special session (2011 Laws of Minnesota, First Special Session, Chapter 9), enacted the Vulnerable Children and Adults Act, revising and renaming the Children and Community Services Act. State funding under the new act was reduced by \$11 million in calendar years 2011 and 2012.

Change in Allocation Formula

The revised language changes the allocation formula over time from a historical formula to a needs-based formula. For CYs 2011 and 2012, the allocation will be in proportion to the county's share in CY 2010 (historical spending). In 2013 to 2016, the allocation of funds to counties will be based on the following formula:

<i>County proportion of ...</i>	CY 2011	CY 2012	CY 2013	CY 2014	CY 2015	CYs 2016+
Historical spending	100%	100%	75%	50%	25%	-
State population			5%	10%	15%	20%
Vulnerable children reports			10%	20%	30%	40%
Vulnerable adult reports			10%	20%	30%	40%

Public Input

County staff report that they wait until a draft plan is ready before inviting the public for feedback. As noted earlier, upon receipt of these instructions, a county may begin the public solicitation process for input and participation in the development and review of the contents of the plan in fulfillment of the statutory 30-day requirement.

SECTION III: GUIDELINES

Funding Decisions

The Vulnerable Children and Adults Act ensures services to vulnerable children and adults who experience dependency, abuse or neglect, and services for family members to support those individuals.

If reasonable efforts are made to provide services according to the service plan, but the Vulnerable Children and Adults Act funds are insufficient, the county may limit services that do not meet the following criteria while giving the highest funding priority to items one and two:

1. Services needed to protect individuals from maltreatment, abuse and neglect
2. Emergency and crisis services needed to protect clients from physical, emotional or psychological harm
3. Services that maintain a person in their home or least restrictive setting
4. Assessment of persons applying for services and referral to appropriate services when necessary
5. Public guardianship services

Goal and Measures

Goal

The overall goal for the Vulnerable Children and Adults Act is “keeping vulnerable children and adults safe and improving their well-being.”

Vulnerable adult measures

Beginning in fall 2011, the commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Human Services will work collaboratively with counties to develop vulnerable adult performance measures. The performance measures will reflect federal, state and county standards, and will include implementation strategies and integration into VCA service plans. Counties will be informed when such activities are completed, with instructions for integration into the Vulnerable Children and Adult Act Service Plan.

Vulnerable children measures

Most of the children and adolescent measures used in the former Children and Community Services Act will continue under the Vulnerable Children and Adult Act. Future modification, change or adoption of new children’s measures will be made in consultation and collaboration with counties and recommendations from the statewide Steering Committee on Performance and Outcome Reforms authorized under [Minn. Stat. §402A.15](#).

The overall expectation is that counties attain and surpass the national or state standard and/or show improvement on each measure. As required under the act, counties should include target-setting in their planning while developing and implementing strategies to improve or maintain high performance on federal and state measures. Outcomes, measures and standards are provided below.

1. Reduced recurrence of maltreatment

Of all children who were victims of substantiated child abuse/neglect during the last six months of the prior calendar year, what percentage did not have another substantiated/determined report within six months? This standard is met if 94.6 percent or more children did not have another determined report within six months.

2. Reduced return to out-of-home placement

Of all children who were discharged (discharged to live with parents, primary caretakers or other relatives) from foster care to reunification in the 12-month period prior to the target year, what percent re-entered foster care in less than 12 months from the date of discharge? This standard is met if 9.9 percent or fewer children did not re-enter foster care within 12 months.

3. Timeliness to reunification

Of all children discharged from foster care to reunification in the target year, and who had been in foster care for eight days or longer, what percent were reunified (reunification with parents, primary caretakers or other relatives) in less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home? This standard is met if 75.2 percent or more children were reunified in less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from the home.

4. Timeliness to adoption

Of all children who were discharged from foster care to a finalized adoption during the target year, what percent were discharged in less than 24 months from the date of the latest removal from home? This standard is met if 36.6 percent or more children exited out-of-home placement to adoption in less than 24 months from the time of the latest removal from the home.

5. Placement stability

Of all children who were served in foster care during the target year, and who were in foster care for at least eight days, but less than 12 months, what percent had two or fewer placement settings? This standard is met if 86.0 percent or more children had two or fewer placement settings.

6. Received adequate services to meet physical needs

What percentage of children in out-of-home placement longer than 30 days during the reporting period received a health exam within one year? This standard is met if 63.5 percent or more children received a health exam.

Integrating MnCFSRs

The Minnesota Child and Family Service Review (MnCFSR) process includes three distinct phases that result in a comprehensive and thorough assessment of a county's child welfare system. These include a county self-assessment, an on-site case review, and development of a program improvement plan. Approximately 20 counties per year complete a MnCFSR to address the child welfare practices and systemic issues that need improvement.

Results from MnCFSR evaluations can be integrated into the service plan as a unified approach to improve outcomes for children. Although counties may need to approach integration efforts differently because of the unique timing of these two processes, minimally, elements of the county self-assessment, findings from case reviews, and goals of the program improvement plan should be incorporated into the statement of needs, strengths, resources, and strategies to improve outcomes. These activities lead to consistency of efforts across program areas, and fulfillment of applicable statutory requirements.

SECTION IV: ALLOCATIONS AND BUDGETS

2012 Allocation

The calendar year (CY) 2012 allocation under this act totals \$84,709,071; 62.3 percent state funds (\$52,814,000) and 37.7 percent federal funds (\$31,895,071). Click on the link below to review CY 2012 county allocations. Use this allocation to complete the budget section of the service plan.

[Vulnerable Children and Adults Act CY 2012 Allocations](#)

2013-2016 Allocations

As noted in Section II, Vulnerable Children and Adults Act statutory provisions changed the county allocation formula. Beginning in 2013, allocations to counties will progressively change from a historical spending formula to county proportions of the state population, counts of vulnerable children that are subjects of reports under [Minn. Stat. §260C](#), sections [626.556](#) and [626.5561](#), and counts of vulnerable adults that are subjects of reports under [626.557](#) as determined by the most recent data of the commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Human Services. In anticipation of these changes, county staff should examine and refine their data reporting processes to ensure accuracy in vulnerable children and adult reports.

Budgets

County staff must complete and submit a budget for funds covered under this act. Because the service plan will be on file for several years, counties are asked to identify the proportion (percent) of dollars they are budgeting for each line item. Department staff will apply these proportions to the most currently available Vulnerable Children and Adults Act allocations. When changes to these proportions are made after plans are submitted, counties are required to inform the department of such changes; the service plan on file must have the most recent proportion of dollars budgeted. Submit changes to paul.ramcharit@state.mn.us.

SECTION V: MISCELLANEOUS

Federal Certifications

The federal Office of Community Services (OCS) requires the following certifications for the use of federal Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funds (CFDA # 93.667, federal award numbers 0901MNSOSR, 1001MNSOSR, 0601MNSOS2). They include certifications for a drug-free workplace, environmental tobacco smoke, lobbying and debarment, suspension and other responsibility matters. Follow the links for a complete description of each certification. Counties must comply with these requirements for use of SSBG funds administered through the service plan and county sub-contracting processes.

Drug Free Workplace

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/ssbg/procedures/drug_free.html

Environmental Tobacco Smoke

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/ssbg/procedures/tobacco.html>

Lobbying

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/ssbg/procedures/lobbying.html>

Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/ssbg/procedures/debarment.html>

Client Appeals

Under the Vulnerable Children and Adults Act, before a county denies, reduces, and/or terminates services to an individual due to fiscal limitations, the county must meet requirements related to fiscal limitations. The county must notify the individual and the individual's guardian, in writing, of the reason for the denial, reduction, and/or termination of services, and must inform the individual and the individual's guardian, in writing, that the county will, upon request, meet to discuss alternatives before services are terminated or reduced.

Services, programs and funds that are denied, reduced and/or terminated for clients under the act are subject to client appeal. The department's appeals staff will continue to hear these appeals. The general statutes which govern all human services appeals can be found in [Minn. Stat. §256.045](#) and [§256.0451](#). The role of the Appeals and Regulations Division is to ascertain the pertinent facts, and apply the governing law to those facts to determine a person's proper entitlement to benefits, payments or services.

Data Sharing

For concerns regarding sharing of data within county agencies, staff should refer to the Government Data Practices Act, [Minn. Stat. §13](#).

Records Retention

Counties must retain a copy of approved VCA service plans six years after the last effective date of the plan.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Advisory

This information is available in alternative formats to individuals with disabilities by calling (651) 431-4671 (voice). TTY users can call through Minnesota Relay at (800) 627-3529. For Speech-to-Speech, call (877) 627-3848. For additional assistance with legal rights and protections for equal access to human services programs, contact the agency's ADA coordinator.

Appendix: Vulnerable Children and Adults Act Service Plan Form

Vulnerable Children and Adults Act (VCA)

Service Plan



Minnesota Department of **Human Services**

Type of Service plan

Individual county plan

Multi-county plan

County name:	County names:
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Contact Information

Contact person:	
Title:	
Address:	
Telephone:	
Email address:	

Part A: Needs and Priorities

State the type of needs that the county will be addressing for vulnerable children and adults who experience dependency, abuse or neglect using VCA funds?

Vulnerable children

Vulnerable adults

Part B: Strengths and Resources

A county has many strengths and resources to address the diverse social services needs of vulnerable children and adults. Briefly state what strengths and/or resources will be engaged (continued or implemented) to address the needs stated in Part A above?

Vulnerable children

Vulnerable adults

Part C: Measures and Performances

Access the link below to review the county’s CY 2010 performance on VCA measures.

[CY 2010 Performance Summary on VCA Federal and State Measures](#)

Use the county’s performance summary to complete the table and questions below. In the table, enter the county’s performance on each of the measures and enter a “✓” if the standard was met, or an “✗” if the standard was not met in CY 2010. In the last two columns, set practical performance targets the county will work towards achieving in 2012 and 2013.

Federal and State Measures

Measures (abbreviated)	Standard (STD)	2010 State/County Performance			Anticipated Targets	
		State	County	STD Met? (✓ or ✗)	2012	2013
1. No repeat maltreatment w/in six mths.	≥ 94.6 %	✓ 95.1%	%			
2. Re-entered foster care w/in 12 mths.	≤ 9.9 %	✗ 24.4%	%			
3. Reunified w/in 12 mths.	≥ 75.2 %	✓ 84.5%	%			
4. Adopted w/in 24 mths	≥ 36.6 %	✓ 48.2%	%			
5. Two or fewer pl. settings w/in 12 mths.	≥ 86.0 %	✓ 86.8%	%			
6. Health examination w/in 12 mths.	≥ 63.5%	✗ 56.4%	%			

≥ = Greater than or equal to; ≤ = Less than or equal to; ✓ = Standard met; ✗ = Standard not met

For each measure for which the county did not meet the standard, identify the measure below and discuss what plans are in place to improve performance on the respective measure. Include what issues/barriers/challenges are hindering the county from meeting the standard, and what may need to be changed or be done differently to achieve the stated targets (add more boxes, if needed).

Measure #:	
Measure #:	

Part D: Budget

Access the link below to review the county’s CY 2012 allocation. Use the county’s allocation to complete the budget table below.

Vulnerable Children and Adults Act CY 2012 Allocation

Fill in the proportion (percent) of the county’s VCA allocation that will be budgeted for vulnerable children and adult services for CY 2012 and beyond. Because VCA funds are directed at vulnerable children and adults, only two budget line items are listed. Subsequently, the department will apply these proportions to the most currently available allocation data. If the county changes these proportions at any time, the department should be informed by sending an email to: paul.ramcharit@state.mn.us.

VCA budget	CY 2012 and beyond
Children services	%
Adult services	%
Total	100%

Part E: Certification and Assurances

Federal Certifications

The federal Office of Community Services (OCS) requires the following certifications for the use of federal Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funds (CFDA # 93.667, federal award number 0901MNSOSR, 1001MNSOSR, 0601MNSOS2). Follow the links for a complete description of each certification. Checking these boxes certifies that the county complies with these requirements for the use of SSBG funds administered through the service plan and county sub-contracting process.

- Drug Free Workplace
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/ssbg/procedures/drug_free.html
- Environmental Tobacco Smoke
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/ssbg/procedures/tobacco.html>
- Lobbying
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/ssbg/procedures/lobbying.html>
- Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/ssbg/procedures/debarment.html>

Public Input

Prior to submission, did the county facilitate a process for soliciting public input for at least 30 days on the contents of the agreement? Yes No Was public input received/used? Yes No

Assurances

It is understood and agreed by the county board that funds granted pursuant to this service plan will be expended for the purposes outlined in [Minn.Stat.§256M](#); that the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Human Services has the authority to review and monitor compliance with the service plan, and that documentation of compliance will be available for audit; and that the county shall make reasonable efforts to comply with all VCA requirements including documenting annual public input processes.

Service Plan Certification

Checking this box certifies that this service plan has been prepared as required and approved by the county board(s) under the provisions of [Minn. Stat. §256M](#). In the box below, state the name of the chair of the county board of commissioners or authorized designee, their mailing address and the name of the county.

Name (chair or designee)	Mailing address	County

Date of Certification: