Hennepin County
Child and Family Service Review Program Improvement Plan

I. General Information

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Hennepin County Program Improvement Plan

II. Narrative

The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) conducted an external review of Hennepin County in June and October of 2003. The on-site review consisted of an intensive examination of 30 cases of children in the child welfare system. Hennepin County did not meet substantial conformity on any of the safety, permanency or well-being outcomes but did have ratings of strength on 10 out of the 23 performance items. In addition, Hennepin County was found deficient in two system factors – the case review system and supervisory and social work caseload.

Hennepin County's Child Protection services are organized in a matrix system. That is, six Human Services Program Managers are jointly responsible for managing child protection investigations, intensive home-based, permanency, long-term foster care, ICWA, child services, community based first response (CBFR), family group conferencing, legal services, kinship services and adoption. In response to the external review, Hennepin County developed a program improvement plan to address the performance items and systemic factors that need improvement. These Human Services Program Managers, in conjunction with managers from Foster Care, Juvenile Corrections, Community Based Long-Term Care (Children's Developmental Disabilities), Children's Mental Health and Children, Youth and Families, will be responsible for implementing the strategies described below.

The attached matrix delineates the goal, action steps, methodology for measuring change, and target dates for the 13 performance items that Hennepin County is addressing in its program improvement plan. In this matrix are reflected a number of overarching strategies for improving practice and measuring improvement across Child Protection. They are as follows:

1.a. Methodology of Measurement – Hennepin County will implement both a quantitative and qualitative approach to measuring progress in program improvement

- Qualitative Methods
  (a) The primary tool for reviewing progress on Hennepin County's program improvement plan will be a quarterly review of a random selection of cases. Hennepin County will develop a modified version of the CFSR case review instrument and process. A total of 30 cases will be reviewed quarterly, with each case reviewed by a supervisor together with a worker from his/her unit. Supervisors and social workers will not review cases from their own units, in order to maximize objectivity. Included in the case review document will be the specific outcomes, items and action steps identified in the attached matrix which are indicators of program improvement, including:
  - assurance that services provided match assessment and documented needs;
  - documentation of referrals and barriers to follow-through;
  - use of SDM tools;
  - use of case planning meetings that involve all interested parties;
  - documentation of parent visits;
  - use of the visitation center;

- involvement of fathers;
- use of mental health screening and child well-being tools;
- use of timelines for tracking permanency events

A database of all case reviews will be maintained and reports run periodically in order to determine areas of strength and weakness and measure improvement. Case closing checklists will be developed and piloted as part of this process

The case review will also be used to measure progress toward addressing the systemic factor of "Case Review System" with regard to the six month administrative or court review and the timeliness of the permanency hearing.

(b) Other tools – Safe Measures is a quality assurance tool used by Child Protection that will support the case review system. Other program areas outside of Child Protection have tools that are similarly used (HSIS by Community-Based Long-Term Care and YLSI by Juvenile Corrections).

- Quantitative Methods
  DHS SSIS Charting Reports - These reports generated by the State of Minnesota enable us to measure improvement on Item 1, Timeliness of investigations; Item 5, Foster care re-entries; Item 6, Stability of foster care placement; Item 17, Needs and services of child, parents, and foster parents; Item 18, Child and family involvement in case planning; Item 20, Worker visits with parent(s).

1.b. Description of Overarching Strategies – The following strategies will be implemented across Child Protection to improve performance on all audited items:

- Practice Standards - Hennepin County will develop written practice standards and protocols with regard to use of contracted parenting and alternative response providers to optimize use of culturally-appropriate services; use of the visitation center; visit/contact standards; domestic violence safety plans; use of family group conferences; involvement of adjudicated fathers; initiation of investigations. Changes will be made to contracts with residential providers as appropriate. Performance items relevant to this strategy are: Item 1, Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment; Item 4, Risk of harm to children; Item 5, Foster care re-entries; Item 15, Relative placement; Item 17, Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents.

- Training - Social Workers & Juvenile Probation Officers will be trained on the use of assessment tools, use of new SSIS service plan, appropriate documentation of reasonable efforts, father's policy, use of provider database, SSIS naming protocol, practice standards and other expectations for integrating the program improvement plan into practice. Performance items relevant to this strategy are: Item 1, Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment; Item 5, Foster care re-entries; Item 8, Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives; Item 15, Relative placement; Item 16, Relationship of child in care with parents; Item 17, Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents; Item 20, Worker visits with parents.

- Case Planning Involvement – Hennepin County will make greater use of service delivery models that increase the level of case planning involvement by parents, foster parents, kin, age-appropriate children, service providers, and other affected parties. These models include joint case planning meetings as early as possible after a family begins receiving child protection case management or children are placed, Family Group Conferences, Youth Transition Conferences, and crisis planning meetings specific to the Community Based Long-Term Care placement area. These case planning involvement models are intended to expand the family group conferencing approach, which has proven successful in Hennepin County and nationwide, beyond those situations where a child is at risk of placement. This approach will be used at both ends of the continuum, for early intervention purposes early on in the life of a case, as well as when a child or family is transitioning out of the child protection system.

  Performance items relevant to this strategy are: Item 3, Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal; Item 4, Risk of harm to child(ren); Item 5, Foster care re-entries; Item 6, Stability of foster care placement; Item 8, Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives; Item 15, Relative placement; Item 16, Relationship of child in care with parents.

- Stakeholder communication - Hennepin County will enhance communication with key stakeholders to align efforts and resources to achieve CFSR outcomes in areas needing improvement. This will include continued participation in the Children's Justice Initiative, and monthly meetings with the County Attorney's Office, DHS, and state and county staff involved in implementing the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) process. Hennepin County Child Protection will continue its dialogue with the Juvenile Court Bench that is proposing its own court improvement plan. In addition, we will continue to hold stakeholder meetings with community providers and foster parents for purposes of information sharing and feedback.

  Hennepin County also will continue collaborative efforts with the University of Minnesota and the Department of Human Services to refine and implement child and caregiver matching tools. Performance items relevant to this strategy are: Item 6, Stability of foster care placement; Item 8, Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives; Item 17, Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents; Item 18, Child and family involvement in case planning.

1.c Limiting Factor – In 2004, the entire Human Services system, both government agencies and contracted agencies, are experiencing significant cuts in resources. These reductions in resources, which are outside the direct control of the county social service agency, present significant challenges to the goal of improving outcomes for children.

1c. Outcomes and System Factors Failing Compliance

Outcome or Data Indicator Area	Percent Substantially Achieved	Percent Strengths	National Standard	County Standard
S1: Children are first & foremost protected from abuse and neglect	61%			
Recurrence of maltreatment			6.1%	7.0%
Incidence of child abuse/neglect in foster care			.57%	.4%
Timeliness of initiating investigations of report of child maltreatment		76%		
Repeat maltreatment		78%		
S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate	65%			
Services to family to protect children in home & prevent removal		76%		
Risk of harm to child		74%		
P1: Children have permanency & stability in their living situations	65%			
Foster care re-entries		78%	8.6%	22.2%
Stability of foster care placement		74%	86.7%	77.0%
Reunification, guardianship or permanent placement with relatives		67%		
P2: The continuity of family relationships & connections is preserved for children	83%			
Relative placement		76%		
Relationship of child in care with parents		83%		
WB 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs		53%		
Needs and services of child, parents & foster parents		60%		
Child & family involvement in case planning		69%		
Worker visits with parents		69%		
WB 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs	88%			
WB 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical & mental health needs	83%			
Physical health of child		83%		
Systemic Factors Needing Improvement				
Case review system				
Supervisory and social work caseloads				

2. **Goals and Action Steps:** Refer to the matrix for specific goals, action steps, methods of measurement, and achievement dates.

   - Lead Persons Responsible: All items listed on the Matrix are assigned to Human Services Program Managers in Child Protection, Community Based Long-Term Care, Children Youth and Families, Foster Care and Children's Mental Health, and managers in Juvenile Corrections for implementation during 2004 – 2005.

   - Technical Assistance Resource Needed from DHS Quality Assurance Staff – We will work with DHS to continuously refine our action steps and methodology for measuring improvement.

Submitted 9/15/04 Hennepin County Program Improvement Plan Matrix

1			2	3	4	5
Outcome and Item(s) Contributing to Non-Conformity			**Goal/ Percent of Improvement**	**Action Steps**	**Method of Measuring Improvement**	**Goals Dates of Achievement**
	A[1]	**N/A[2]**				
Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect	X					
Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment	X		Performance level at 76%	1. Request and hire additional FTEs in order to meet SDM standard of initiating all investigations btwn 24 hrs & 5 days depending on response priority 2. Develop & implement protocols after DHS committee defines standards for initiating an assessment. HC will participate on DHS's committee. Clarification is particularly needed on what counts as *initiating* an assessment. 3. Investigation Supervisors will review a sample of investigation cases quarterly using case review instrument to determine trends/barriers to timeliness.	2. Qualitative Case Review & SSIS report: Time to Initial Contact With Victim/Other 3. Qualitative Case Review	Projected Performance Level: 80% Actual: 1. Note: Implementation is dependent upon County Board approval 2. Date of achievement conditional on DHS committee 3. January 2005

[1]Applicable
[2]Not Applicable

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	A[1]	**N/A[2]**				
Item 2: Repeat maltreatment	X		Performance level at 78%	1. Supervisors will review cases at closing for: a. completion of SDM risk assessment to determine if supervisory over-rides are necessary for open ongoing Child Protection services. b. documentation of community referrals and family's response/decline of services.	1. Qualitative Case Reviews & SSIS Charting on repeat maltreatment to identify cases of repeated maltreatment and target for supervisory review; use for case review to examine factors that may have contributed to repeat maltreatment	Projected Performance Level: 80% Actual: 1. September 2004
Recurrence of Maltreatment (Data indicator relating to Item 2)	X		Performance level at 7.0%* *National standard is 6.1%.			Projected Performance Level: 6.5% Actual:
Incidence of Child Abuse and/or Neglect in Foster Care (Data indicator relating to Item 2)		X	Performance level at 0.4%			Projected Performance Level: 0.4% Actual:
Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate	X					
Item 3: Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal	X		Performance level at 76%	1. Make greater use of family group conferencing model 2. Maximize use of available contracted parenting resources 3. Use SDM tools to match frequency of worker contact with family to level of risk; monitor CP worker contacts to assure compliance with SDM contact standards	1. SSIS reports: Service Plan Report, Work Groups Without Open Service Plans & Qualitative Case Review	Projected Performance Level: 80% Actual: March 2005

[1]Applicable
[2]Not Applicable

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	A[1]	**N/A[2]**				
Item 4: Risk of harm to child(ren)	X		Performance level at 74%	1. Assure SDM tools are used to match frequency of worker contact with family to level of risk; monitor CP worker contacts to assure compliance with contact standards 2. Assure thorough and consistent assessment of needs, access to service & service delivery by use of SDM strength & needs tools in both AR & traditional cases 3. Develop & document safety plans for children receiving in-home CPS when domestic violence is a risk 4. Develop SSIS Chronology requirements to include domestic violence safety plan 5. Make greater use of family group conferencing model	Qualitative Case Review & Safe Measures	Projected Performance Level: 78% Actual: 1. March 2005 2. September 2004 3. September 2004 4. September 2004 5.March 2005
Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situation	X					

[1]Applicable
[2]Not Applicable

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	A[1]	**N/A[2]**				
Item 5: Foster care re-entries	X		Performance level at 78%	*1. Define clear expectations, develop practice standards, and train social workers with regard to use of parenting providers, standards for referral, & follow-up, particularly when substance abuse or mental illness are risks* *(a) develop standardized parenting report that meets case plan needs for use by contracted agencies; train providers on standards* (b) implement strategy for open post-reunification cases to assure that contracted services are delivered *2. Increase early intervention & prevention services for families with children who are at risk of out of home placement* *(a) explore use of family/team decision making model* *(b) increase use of family group conference in pre-placement situations* *(c) maintain use of*	1. SSIS reports: Children In Placement By Date Range, By Removal Episode, Continuous Placements By Client; SSIS Charting on foster care re-entry & Qualitative Case Review	Projected Performance Level: 80% Actual: 1. March 2005 2. June 2005

[1]Applicable
[2]Not Applicable

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	A[1]	**N/A[2]**				

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	A[1]	**N/A[2]**				

Item 5, Foster Care Re-Entries, Con't.

				3. Improve family connections for children in placement by monitoring workers' use of existing standards with regard to: --culturally appropriate services --use of visitation center --use of family group conferencing --involvement of adjudicated fathers 4. Enhance family capacity to provide for the needs of children in out-of-home placement (a) implement out-of-home placement planning meetings (a variation of family group conferencing, piloted in April 2003) at initial placements,	3. Qualitative Case Review 4. Qualitative Case Review	3. September 2004 4. January 2005

[1]Applicable
[2]Not Applicable

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	A[1]	**N/A[2]**				
				every 6 months or at change of placement, and at reunification (b) implement reunification transition conferences with child services worker, foster parents and parents to assure needed services are understood and in place (c) assure assessment of needs both initially & at the time of reunification *(d) monitor worker practice standards around frequency and quality of visits* *(e) assure services provided match assessment* *(f) increase father involvement (g) increase use of family group conferencing model*		
Foster Care Re-entries (Foster Care re-entries data indicator)	X		Performance level at 22.2%			Projected Performance Level: 20%* Actual:

* Note: Hennepin County's rate is lower than the State's (22.2% vs. 28.5%). Because of the way Minnesota defines this data element, it is unlikely that Hennepin County will be able to show improvement unless DHS addresses the method use to count foster care re-entries and adjusts the method to be consistent with how other states that meet the standard count.

[1]Applicable
[2]Not Applicable

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	A[1]	**N/A[2]**				
Item 6: Stability of foster care placement	X		Performance level at 74%	1. Assure consistent relative/kinship searches 2. Explore implementation of senior mentoring project in concert with DHS 3. Explore use of DHS curriculum for training foster parents of youth in transition 4. Continue use of foster parent mentoring program 5. Educate the Bench through CJI & other opportunities on the need for a variety of tools to determine best match of child & foster parent 6. Work with U of M to refine and implement child & caregiver matching tools in adoption cases 7. Standardize use of CBFR to provide crisis support to foster parents to prevent foster care disruptions	SSIS report: Continuous Placements By Client, SSIS Charting & Qualitative Case Review	Projected Performance Level: 80% Actual: 1. Under discussion 2. Pilot in October 2004, implement fully by January 2005 3. September 2004 4. September 2004 5. June 2005 6. January 2005

[1]Applicable
[2]Not Applicable

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	A[1]	**N/A[2]**				
Stability of Foster Care Placement (Data indicator relating to Item 6)	X		Performance level at 77%			Projected Performance Level: 80% Actual:
Item 7: Permanency goal for child		X	Performance level at 86%			Projected Performance Level: 86% Actual:

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	A[1]	**N/A[2]**				
Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives	X		Performance level at 67%	1. Monitor provision of targeted kinship & relative search 2. Make greater use of family group conferencing 3. Monitor adherence to fathers policy 4. Conduct joint planning with the County Attorney's Office through monthly meetings to ensure (a) timeliness in filing petitions, (b) that parents are made aware of the meaning & purpose of the kinship study at time of court hearing; and (c) that they provide necessary kinship information to the worker at that time 5. Develop new internal data reports to track timelines for permanency events 6. Continue dialogue with Bench through Child Safety Managers/CAO monthly meetings & CJI regarding timelines & PIP 7. Engage in ICPC barrier busting through quarterly meetings with County Attorney, DHS, ICPC staff 8. Refer eligible teenage state wards to DHS homecoming project for adoptive resources	Qualitative Case Review & SDM reunification tool	Projected Performance Level: 70% Actual: 1.-4. September 2004 4. January 2005 6.-8. September 2004

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[2]Not Applicable

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	A[1]	**N/A[2]**				
Length of Time To Achieve Permanency Goal of Reunification (Data indicator relating to Item 8)		X	Current performance at 89%			Projected Performance Level: 89% Actual:
Item 9: Adoption		X	Performance level at 100%			Projected Performance Level: 100% Actual:
Length of Time to Achieve Permanency Goal of Adoption (Data indicator relating to Item 9)		X	Performance level at 40.4%			Projected Performance Level: 40.4% Actual:
Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement		X	Performance level at 89%			Projected Performance Level: 89% Actual:
Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children	X					
Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement		X	Performance level at 95%			Projected Performance Level: 95% Actual:
Item 12: Placement with siblings		X	Performance level at 100%			Projected Performance Level: 100% Actual:
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care		X	Performance level at 95%			Projected Performance Level: 95% Actual:

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	A[1]	**N/A[2]**				
Item 14: Preserving connections		X	Performance level at 91%			Projected Performance Level: 91% Actual:
Item 15: Relative Placement	X		Performance level at 76%	1. Monitor implementation of standards for relative search & documentation with the goal of consistent service across all cases & equal treatment of both parents 2. Monitor adherence to the fathers policy 3. Continue to provide targeted kinship & relative search for ICWA families 4. Make greater use of family group conferencing	Qualitative Case Review & SSIS Naming Protocol	Projected Performance Level: 80% Actual: 1,2, 3, 4. September 2004
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents	X		Performance level at 83%	1. Monitor engaging fathers, especially with regard to visitation; if this is not possible, document why not 2. Monitor documentation of visits 3. Implement out-of-home placement planning meetings piloted in April 2003 at initial placements, every 6 months or change of placement, at time of reunification	Qualitative Case Review & SSIS Naming Protocol	Projected Performance Level: 85% Actual: 1., 2., 3. January 2005

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	A[1]	**N/A[2]**				
Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents	X		Performance level at 60%	1. Assure consistent use of SDM tools & other assessment tools 2. Monitor adherence to the fathers policy 3. Implement use of SSIS case plan 4. Work with U of M to refine and implement child and caregiver matching tools for adoption cases 5. Explore use of DHS curriculum for training foster parents of youth in transition. 6. Implement use of joint out-of-home placement plan meetings (variation of family group conferencing) 7. Implement MN Court Information System & Data Sharing System; resolve access issues so SWs know when PO is involved in case	SSIS reports: Service Plan Report, Work Groups Without Open Service Plans, Placements Without Open Out-of-Home Placement Plans & Qualitative Case Review	Projected Performance Level: 70% Actual: 1. September 2004 2. September 2004 3. January 2005 4. June 2005 5. January 2005 6. January 2005 7. January 2005
Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning	X		Performance level at 69%	1. Conducted Foster Parent Dialogue (trainer: Lorrie Lutz, National Permanency Center) 2. Make greater use of family group conferencing 3. All Items in #17	SSIS reports: Service Plan Report, Work Groups Without Open Service Plans, Placements Without Open Out-Of-Home Placement Plans & Qualitative Case Review & SSIS Naming Protocol	Projected Performance Level: 75% Actual: 1. September 2004 2-3. January to June 2005

[1]Applicable
[2]Not Applicable

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	A[1]	**N/A[2]**				
Item 19: Worker visits with child		X	Performance level at 87%			Projected Performance Level: 87% Actual:
Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)	X		Performance level at 69%	1. Assure that SDM contact standards are adhered to for all placement and non-placement cases, documentation why visits are not possible if applicable 2. Monitor adherence to the fathers policy	SSIS report: Work Groups That Need Contact & Qualitative Case Review & Safe Measures &SSIS Charting & SSIS Naming Protocol & Monitor that content of chronology notes are focused on case plan goals	Projected Performance Level: 90% Actual: September 2004
Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs	X					
Item 21: Educational needs of the child		X	Performance level at 88%			Projected Performance Level: 88% Actual:
Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs	X					
Item 22: Physical health of the child	X		Performance level at 83%	1. Implement use of SSIS case plan	SSIS Naming Protocol & Qualitative Case Review	Projected Performance Level: 90% Actual: January 2005

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[2]Not Applicable

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	A[1]	**N/A[2]**				
Item 23: Mental health of the child		X	Performance level at 86%			Projected Performance Level: 86% Actual:

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[1]Applicable
[2]Not Applicable