



Minnesota Judicial Branch Summary of HF3877/SF4015

Clarifying Notice in Divorces and Separations Without Children (section 1)

Proposal: Clarify public authority notice requirements in divorces and legal separations without children.

Background:

- Current statute requires parties in both divorces and legal separations to serve notice on the public authority if either party receives public assistance, whether or not minor children are involved.
- As a result, parties in cases without minor children are unnecessarily serving county child support agencies, which must then respond to confirm there is no IV-D case and that the county will not participate in the dissolution or separation.
- The Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families has reviewed the language and does not have any concerns.

Supreme Court Council on Child Protection and Maltreatment Prevention Report Due Date (sections 2, 3, and 4)

Proposal: Delay the Supreme Court Council on Child Protection's final report due date from January 15, 2026, to December 15, 2026, and allow the Council to continue using existing funding.

Background:

- In 2024, the Minnesota Legislature passed a bill inviting the Chief Justice to establish a Minnesota Supreme Court Council on Child Protection and Maltreatment Prevention. In its first 13 months, the Council heard from 30 subject matter experts, held 26 statewide focus groups, and collected nearly 1,800 survey responses.
- The extension provides additional time to ensure that the Council's final recommendations are data-informed, community-informed, prevention-focused, and designed to promote safety, permanency, and well-being for Minnesota's children and families.

Minnesota Supreme Court Council on Child Protection and Maltreatment Prevention

Status Report

March 2, 2026

Council Purpose: To develop a comprehensive blueprint to improve Minnesota's child protection system and prevent unnecessary entry of children and families into the system.

Council Composition: The Council is comprised of representatives from the organizations specified in the authorizing legislation, [Minn. Laws Chapter 115, Article 12, Section 30](#), as well as additional members who have a deep understanding of Minnesota's child protection systems' strengths, challenges, and ideas for improvement. See Council Membership List – Attachment 1. Collectively, Council members bring expertise in law, judicial administration, social services, tribal governance, policy development, research, and lived experience. See [Minnesota Supreme Court Order Establishing Council](#).

Supreme Court Council Charge: Consistent with the authorizing legislation, the Supreme Court [Order establishing the Council](#) directs the Council to fulfill the following tasks:

- Review policies, laws, practices, latest research, and data related to children in the child protection system;
- Gather information through surveys or focus groups, including consultation with individuals who have lived experience with the child protection system, and reviews of evidence supporting federal guidance and research on the child protection system and maltreatment prevention;
- Review research that evaluates the effects of child foster care placement and out-of-home placement on the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and that identifies and evaluates factors designed to ensure emotional and physical safety of children in the context of child placement and permanency dispositions, family preservation, and reunification;
- Make recommendations for changes in policies and law that are designed to improve outcomes for children and families in the child protection system or at risk of maltreatment; and
- Recognize the inherent sovereignty of Tribal Nations and the unique political status of their children and families.

Importantly, the Council's charge encompasses the full continuum of the system — from primary prevention and early intervention to juvenile court and social services agencies processes, placement decisions, and permanency outcomes — with the goal of preventing unnecessary system involvement whenever possible.

Presentations and Discussions: From its first meeting in August 2024 through October 2025, the Council met approximately twice per month, typically for three-hour evening sessions. In addition, the Council convened full-day meetings in November 2025 and January 2026. Additional meetings are scheduled for April and May 2026.

A wide range of presentations were made to the Council during this period, addressing prevention strategies, child safety practices, juvenile court and social services agency procedures, workforce challenges, funding structures, and national research. A comprehensive list of presentations and discussion topics from August 2024 through January 2026 is included as Attachment 2.

These discussions have informed the Council’s understanding of both the strengths of Minnesota’s current system and the areas requiring meaningful improvement.

Overarching Themes and Focus Areas: Based on presentations, research, data analysis, and Council deliberations from August 2024 through January 2026, three overarching themes have emerged:

- (1) Minnesota must strengthen efforts to prevent child maltreatment.
- (2) Certain aspects of Minnesota’s child protection system require improvement.
- (3) Limited public resources must be used more strategically and effectively.

Within those themes are six focus areas on which the Council has concentrated its work:

- Maltreatment prevention and early intervention
- Child safety and well-being
- Juvenile court practices and procedures
- Social services practices and procedures
- Workforce development and training
- Funding systems and resource alignment

These focus areas reflect a systems-level approach that recognizes the importance of upstream prevention alongside improvements in formal child protection and court processes.

Focus Groups: From April 2025 through November 2025, the Council conducted 26 facilitated focus groups (see focus group list – Attachment 3) for the purpose of obtaining direct feedback from stakeholders and community representatives. An additional 10 focus groups were scheduled but cancelled due to insufficient participation (fewer than four registrants). Each session was facilitated by a trained moderator who asked questions regarding the following general topics:

1. The role communities can play in preventing child maltreatment.
2. Perceived strengths and weaknesses of the current child protection and maltreatment prevention systems.
3. Promising practices and potential solutions to improve outcomes for children and families.

A written summary of information learned from each focus group was prepared by the focus group facilitator and presented to the Council for discussion. Both the individual summaries and an integrated thematic analysis of the focus group findings will be included in the final report.

Community Input Survey Results: The Council administered a statewide online survey from July 14 through August 18, 2025. The survey invitation was distributed to targeted stakeholder groups — including, parents and youth with lived child protection system experience, juvenile court judges, county attorneys, county and tribal child protection agencies, guardians ad litem, court administration staff, attorneys for children and parents, law enforcement, school social workers, county commissioners, medical providers, and other stakeholders, as well as organizations such as county Children’s Justice Initiative (CJI) teams, the Guardian ad Litem Program, the Minnesota County Attorney Association (MCAA), the Minnesota Association of County Social Services Administrators (MACSSA), and others — and was further shared by each recipient with their professional and community networks.

The survey was designed to capture perspectives from individuals with any level or type of experience with the child protection system. Key questions included:

- What is working well in Minnesota’s child protection system?
- What needs improvement?
- What can be done in your community to prevent child maltreatment?

Additional questions assessed perceptions regarding the training and preparedness of system actors and the effectiveness of specific prevention services.

The survey generated more than 1,700 responses from individuals across Minnesota and yielded approximately 302 pages of single-spaced written comments. A summary of the survey instrument and results will be included in the final report.

Development of Recommendations: Through an intentional and structured process, the Council is integrating legal and policy research, national and state data, and extensive stakeholder and community feedback into the development and refinement of recommendations that are fully aligned with its charge. Guided by the Supreme Court Order, the Council has reviewed policies, laws, practices, and research concerning prevention, child safety, placement, permanency, and processes of court and social services agencies, while also gathering direct input from parents, youth, professionals, Tribal representatives, and community members — including individuals with lived experience.

Emerging recommendations are organized around three overarching themes — strengthening maltreatment prevention, improving specific aspects of the child protection system, and using limited public resources more strategically — and six core focus areas spanning prevention, child safety, court and social services practices, workforce development, and funding alignment. In this way, the Council is developing a comprehensive, prevention-oriented blueprint that addresses the full continuum of the system, honors Tribal sovereignty and the unique political status of Tribal children and families and advances its purpose of improving outcomes while preventing unnecessary system involvement whenever possible.

Interim Progress Report: In July 2025, as required by the authorizing legislation and Supreme Court Order, the Council submitted an [Interim Progress Report](#) to the Chief Justice, the Governor, and the Legislature detailing its activities from August 2024 through July 2025.

Extended Due Date for Final Report: The due date for the Council’s final report was set for January 2026. However, in November 2025, the Council sought an extension of the due date from the Legislature and Chief Justice. The Legislature and Chief Justice granted the request to extend the due date and in January 2026 the Minnesota Supreme Court issued an order extending the final report due date to June 30, 2026. The extension allows the Council additional time to discuss community input received through the focus groups and survey and research maltreatment prevention efforts in other states.

The extension provides additional time to ensure that the Council’s final recommendations are data-informed, community-informed, prevention-focused, and designed to promote safety, permanency, and well-being for Minnesota’s children and families.

Please send questions to the Council at sccpc@courts.state.mn.us

Council Members, Advisors, Consultants, and Staff
Supreme Court Council on Child Protection and Maltreatment Prevention

No.	NAME	Title and Organization
	COUNCIL MEMBERS	
1.	McKeig, Hon. Anne (Chair)	Associate Justice, Minnesota Supreme Court
2.	Ahlstrom, Ann	Chair, Minnesota Guardian Ad Litem Program Board
3.	Bergman, Elizabeth “Libby”	Clinical Supervisor and Psychotherapist, Psychotherapy Partners
4.	Brave Heart, Lynn	ICWA Division Program Manager, State of Minnesota Guardian ad Litem Program
5.	Broskoff, Anne	Director, Human Services, Brown County
6.	Chitseko, Ethel	Lead Peer Recovery Specialist, Recovery is Happening; Parent with Lived Experience;
7.	Conway, Nikki	Director, Children and Family Services, Dakota County
8.	Coonce, Misty	Ombudsperson for Foster Youth, Office of the Foster Youth Ombudsperson
9.	Farago, Nikki	Deputy Commissioner, Agency Culture and Relations, Minnesota Department of Human Services
10.	Gaalswyk, Neal	Cass County Commissioner; President, Association of Minnesota Counties
11.	Gardner, Jeremiah	Contractor Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation
12.	Gueinzus, Anne Tyler	Managing Attorney, Children’s Law Center of Minnesota
13.	Hudson, Mark	M.D., Child Abuse Pediatrics; Medical Director, Midwest Children’s Resource Center; Children’s Minnesota
14.	Johnson, Erin	Assistant County Attorney, Washington County
15.	Kotschevar, Anthony	Investigator, Stearns County Sheriff’s Office
16.	LaLiberte, Traci	Traci LaLiberte, Director, Multidisciplinary Institute for Child Welfare at the University of Minnesota
17.	McPherson, Susan	Consultant, African American Child Well-Being Council, Child Safety and Permanency Division, Department of Children, Youth and Families
18.	Milliken, Marcia	Executive Director, Minnesota Children’s Alliance
19.	Nelson, Jennifer L.	Managing Attorney, State of Minnesota 9 th Judicial District Public Defender
20.	Randall, Erika	Guardian ad Litem Manager, 6 th and 9 th Districts, Guardian ad Litem Program
21.	Sanchez, Veronica	Life Coach/Housing Specialist with the STAY-C Program, Division of Indian Work, Minneapolis; Youth with lived experience

No.	NAME	Title and Organization
22.	St. George, Rebecca	Assistant Commissioner, Child Safety & Permanency, Minnesota Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF)
23.	Stoll, Mallory	Attorney for Parents; Blahnik, Prchal & Stoll, PLLC; Prior Lake
24.	Wang, Hon. Shan	Assistant Chief Judge, 7 th Judicial District, Stearns County
25.	Wright, Catherine	PsyD, LP, LPCC, IMH-E®(IV-C), National Register Health Psychologist; Early Childhood, Youth and Family Mental Health Systems Coordinator, Behavioral Health Division, Minnesota Department of Human Services
26.	York, Laurie	Executive Director, White Earth Nation
27.	Zuel, Timothy	MSSW, PhD, LICSW; Be@School Manager (retired), Hennepin County Attorney's Office; Adjunct faculty U of M School of Social Work
ADVISORS		
28.	Brindisi, Karen	Program Attorney, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges
29.	Chomilo, Nathan, MD, FAAP, FACP	Medical Director- Medicaid & MinnesotaCare, Minnesota Department of Human Services
30.	Palay, Melissa	Sr. Director, Strategic Consultant, Casey Family Programs
31.	Vieth, Victor	Chief Program Officer for Education & Research at Zero Abuse Project
CONSULTANT		
32.	Wahwassuck (Ret.), Hon. Korey	Focus group facilitator and consultant to Supreme Court Counsel
STAFF		
33.	Bendewald, Ellen	Judicial Research Assistant, Strategy, Performance, and Projects Office Division
34.	Kelly, Megan	MJB Legal Counsel Division
35.	Lauer, Aaron	Policy and Planning Consultant, Strategy, Performance, and Projects Office Division
36.	Nord, Judith	Sr. Staff Attorney, Supreme Court Council on Child Protection and Maltreatment Prevention, State Court Administrator's Office
37.	Shannon, Ava	Admin Assistant, Strategy, Performance, and Projects Office, State Court Administrator's Office

Attachment 2

Supreme Court Council Agenda Topics August 2024 – January 2026

- Discussion of Council role, process, and timeline (Aug. 2024)
- Reminder of Council’s goal to focus on child safety: children have the right to be safe (Aug. 2024)
- Public health crisis: Community responsibility for well-being of Minnesota’s children (Aug. 2024)
- High-level orientation to scope of project: A roadmap for the Council’s work (Sept. 2024)
- Principles for productive Council meetings (Sept. 2024)
- Primary focus of the Council: ensuring child safety, permanency, and well-being (Sept. 2024)
- Overview of the child protection system from maltreatment report to permanency for the child (Sept. 2024)
- Overview of the final report and recommendations of the 2015 Governor’s Task Force on the Protection of Children (Sept. 2024)
- Overview of child protection processes and procedures for social services agencies (Oct. 2024)
- Overview of juvenile court processes and procedures for child protection proceedings (Oct. 2024)
- Family assessment – Intended purpose and application – National research on intended purpose of “family assessment” (Oct. 2024)
- Family Assessment in Minnesota – intended purpose and application (Oct. 2024)
- The Council’s destination: Ensuring child safety, permanency, and well-being (Nov. 2024)
- Overview of Child Advocacy Studies (CAST) – an evidence-based academic major, minor, or certificate program that focuses on child maltreatment (Nov. 2024)
- Educational needs of children impacted by the child welfare system, including those in foster care or at risk of foster care (Nov. 2024)
- Federal reimbursement of Title IV-E funds for costs associated with eligible children who are in foster care or at risk of placement, including administrative costs for case management, costs to pay for legal representation for children and parents, and child welfare training (Nov. 2024)
- Overview of Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) (Dec. 2024)
- Overview of National Center for State Courts’ “Upstream” initiative – a court-led, community-based child maltreatment prevention initiative (Dec. 2024)
- Rep. Jim Nash’s child protection experience and discussion of suggested process revisions (Jan. 2025)
- When faith hurts: Developing effective multidisciplinary team (MDT) responses to spiritual impact of maltreatment (Jan. 2025)
- Overview of the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) 2025 Child Safety and Permanency legislative priorities (Jan. 2025)
- Overview of child maltreatment prevention options and child sexual abuse program evaluation (Jan. 2025)
- Minnesota child welfare funding sources, purposes, and unused funds (Mar. 2025)
- Overview of Council Roadmap: Getting to the July Progress Report and Beyond – plans for focus groups, statewide survey, and subcommittee work (Mar. 2025)
- Review of system challenges identified by subcommittees (Mar. 2025)
- Review of promising practices and potential solutions identified by subcommittees (Mar. 2025)
- Legislative update: Overview of pending child protection-related bills (May 2025)
- Overview of schedule for focus groups and survey (May 2025)
- Focus groups and survey – Review and revise proposed questions (May 2025)
- Overview of pending child protection legislation from 2025 session (May 2025)

- Panel of Fosters with lived child protection system experience (May 2025)
- Review draft of proposed Interim Progress Report to be submitted in July (May 2025)
- Overview of focus groups held through June 2025 (July 2025)
- Discuss recruitment plan for additional focus groups (July 2025)
- Review list of challenges/issues and proposed solutions identified by Council (July 2025)
- Council roundtable regarding preventing maltreatment and small group discussion regarding proposed solutions (July 2025)
- Panel of parents with lived child protection experience (August 2025)
- Summary of proposed solutions and themes from focus groups held since last meeting, followed by Council discussion (August 2025)
- Panel presentation by Child Welfare Coalition, followed by discussion with Council (August 2025)
- Economic/Concrete Supports and Community Pathways to Support Prevention of Maltreatment – presentation by researchers from Chapin Hall (Sept. 2025)
- Council small group discussions to debrief what was learned from Chapin Hall (Sept. 2025)
- Summary of proposed solutions and themes from focus groups held since last meeting (Sept. 2025)
- Community Based Prevention Work in MN: Community Resource Centers (CRCs) and Family Resource Centers (FRCs) – presentation by AMC and Agency Directors (Sept. 2025)
- Council small group discussions to debrief what was learned from CRC and FRC presentation (Sept. 2025)
- Summary of results of Community Input Survey – presentation by Council staff (Sept. 2025)
- Prevention Services: Overview of Family First Prevention and Services Act (FFPS) – presentation by DCYF staff (Oct. 2025)
- Conflicts Between MAAFPCWDA, MN Stat. § 260C, and Federal Law – presentation by county attorney Council member (Oct. 2025)
- Council exercise to identify prioritize challenges/issues and prioritize proposed solutions (Oct. 2025)
- Council exercise to identify prioritize challenges/issues and prioritize proposed solutions (continued) (Nov. 2025)
- Council small group discussions regarding challenges/issues and proposed solutions identified through 27 focus groups, statewide survey with 1,800 responses including 302 pages of written comments, Council recommendations following presentations, and Council members (Nov. 2025 – daylong, in-person meeting)
- Report-out of Council’s small group discussions regarding scores for challenges/issues and proposed solutions (Nov. 2025 – daylong, in-person meeting)
- Large-group discussion – refining and prioritizing the list of proposed solutions that will move forward (Nov. 2025 – daylong, in-person meeting)

Attachment 3

Focus Groups Conducted by Supreme Court Council

No.	Date/Time	Focus Group
1.	April 22, 2025	Guardians ad litem
2.	May 19, 2025	Law enforcement
3.	May 21, 2025	Mandated reporters
4.	June 12, 2025	Asian-Pacific community leaders
5.	June 30, 2025	County social services child protection workers
6.	July 14, 2025	Chemical health treatment providers
7.	July 15, 2025	County attorneys
8.	July 15, 2025	Black and African American community organizations
9.	July 16, 2025	Foster parents and providers
10.	July 21, 2025	Mental health treatment providers
11.	July 22, 2025	Attorneys for parents
12.	July 23, 2025	Attorneys for children
13.	July 24, 2025	MACCSSA Directors meeting
14.	July 31, 2025	Youth with lived experience
15.	August 6, 2025	Juvenile court judges
16.	August 20, 2025	Latino community organizations
17.	August 27, 2025	Coalition for Child Welfare
18.	Sept. 8, 2025	Formerly incarcerated mothers
19.	Sept. 11, 2025	Parents with lived experience
20.	Sept. 22, 2025	Agency directors
21.	Sept. 25, 2025	Agency supervisors
22.	Sept. 30, 2025	DCYF Staff - Prevention
23.	Oct. 1, 2025	DCYF Staff - Permanency
24.	Oct. 2, 2025	DCYF Staff - Systems
25.	Oct. 8, 2025	DCYF Staff - Safety
26.	Jan. 22, 2026	School social workers