

Children and Family Services 2022 Annual Report

We are here for families.

Our mission is to promote safety, stability, healthy development and well-being of children and youth in Hennepin County. We get there by empowering and honoring families.

Child welfare is a data-rich field. Our organization believes in data-informed decision making, transparency, and accountability to the residents we serve. This annual report is grounded in those values.

Throughout this report, we offer reflections on prevention, safety, permanency, and well-being. Who is represented in these numbers? What does this mean for children and families experiencing county systems? How are we delivering on our promises and stated values?

As child welfare practitioners, it is our responsibility to serve the children and families of Hennepin County. But we share that responsibility with community members, schools, providers, courts, and many others.

We invite our residents and readers of this report to share in those reflections. Tell us how we're doing and consider your own role in strengthening families so children can thrive. Reducing racial disparities, engaging our community, preventing entry into the child protection system, wrapping families in care and support—these actions are our commitments.

In partnership,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kwesi Booker". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Kwesi Booker
Director, Children and Family Services

Child protection by the numbers

Focusing on prevention at every level of the system.

Our practice and the way we engage families has changed, as have families' needs. We want to see children safe at home, in healthy, stable families. That means we don't want to go back to pre-pandemic numbers of child protection reports, or children placed in foster care. For more on upstream supports to families, see page 9.

Reports declined for the third consecutive year.

Even with a return to regular in-person school and services—and with children in closer contact with providers who make most reports—we received fewer child protection reports than in the years before the pandemic. Most other system volume measures decreased as well, except for children entering out-of-home placement. Still, the total number of children in placement decreased. In 2022, we had 56% fewer children in foster care compared to 2019.

Measure	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total child protection reports (intakes)	17,361	13,850	13,874	13,323
% of total child protection reports coming from mandated reporters	81.9%	78.4%	76.1%	77.8%
Reports warranting investigation (total intakes screened in)	8,719	6,724	6,265	5,782
% reports warranting investigation (total % intakes screened in)	50.2%	48.5%	45.2%	43.4%
Intakes % screened in — Family Assessment track	60.9%	58.6%	63.0%	62.8%
Intakes % screened in — Family Investigation track	36.6%	39.1%	34.5%	34.9%
Intakes % screened in — Facility track	2.5%	2.3%	2.6%	2.4%
Out-of-home placement entries	1,078	815	604	656
Out-of-home placement exits	1,181	1,037	941	751
Out-of-home placement, unique child count	2,862	2,542	2,113	1,833

Note: To track complete intake volume, Hennepin County child protection report counts include all reports received. State reporting methodology excludes some of these to avoid duplication of reports across counties.

Child protection reports by allegation type

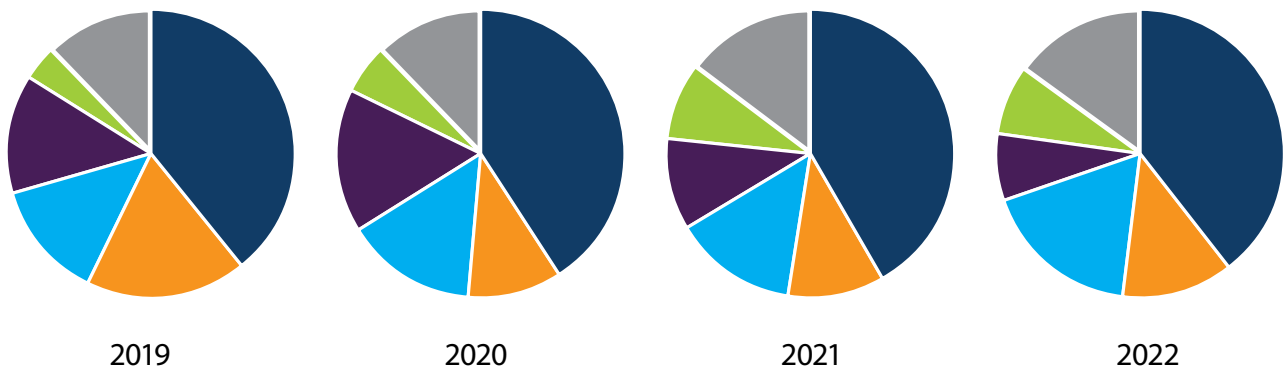
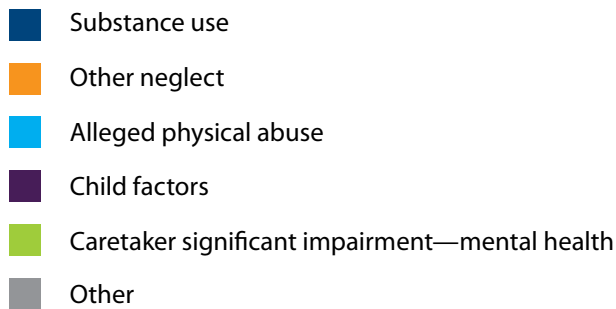
	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total child protection reports	17,361	13,850	13,874	13,323
Neglect allegation	46.2%	48.0%	47.5%	48.4%
Physical abuse allegation	27.5%	26.3%	28.6%	29.4%
Sexual abuse allegation	15.1%	16.5%	17.1%	16.9%
Threatened injury allegation	22.6%	23.9%	23.7%	21.9%
Mental injury allegation	3.5%	4.7%	5.8%	5.9%

Reasons for entering out-of-home placement

Challenges increasing and multiplying.

While we're encouraged to see fewer children in out-of-home placement, we're also seeing the families we serve faced with increasingly complex challenges. Parental substance use and mental health concerns continue to be prominent, and these factors can take substantial time and effort to resolve. We're partnering with our county colleagues and service providers to incorporate innovative, evidence-based best practices to better support families in achieving long-lasting health and recovery.

Reasons for entering out-of-home placement, by number of entries



Note: These categorized groupings do not represent all entry reasons. Child factors include aspects like behavior or disability.

Reasons for leaving out-of-home-placement

Children’s sense of permanency.

Permanency includes a legal relationship, emotional attachment, and cultural connection. All three ideas are important as children grow up and become adults. Our goal is to safely reunify families whenever possible, and going home remains the most common outcome for children. At the same time, we’ve had more youth “aging out” of the system—a 28% increase. Among those who aged out in 2022, more than 78% were children of color. Along with our system partners, we continue to focus on improving race equity in permanency outcomes.

Preserving relative and kin connections.

Other outcomes include adoption, transfers of legal custody, or living with a previously noncustodial parent. We bring a family-centered lens to our practice, all the way through to permanency. Segmenting outcomes by relatives and non-relatives shows how we’re preserving family relationships. In 2022, 78% of children left out-of-home placement to live with family or people who are like family.

Reasons for leaving out-of-home placement

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Reunification with parents/primary caretakers	53.6%	52.7%	43.8%	42.1%
Adoption finalized	19.0%	18.0%	23.0%	24.1%
Transfer of permanent legal and physical custody to a relative	9.1%	12.4%	15.8%	15.6%
Reached age of majority or emancipated	6.9%	8.2%	7.7%	12.8%
Living with other relatives	6.9%	5.0%	5.0%	3.7%

Note: These are the five most common exit reasons from 2018-2022.

Exits to a relative vs. non-relative

	2019		2020		2021		2022	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Reunification with parents/primary caretakers	633	53.6%	547	52.7%	412	43.8%	316	42.1%
Adoption or transfer of legal custody — relative	256	21.7%	248	23.9%	288	30.6%	245	32.6%
Reached age of majority or emancipated	81	6.9%	85	8.2%	72	7.7%	96	12.8%
Adoption — nonrelative	75	6.3%	68	6.6%	77	8.2%	53	7.1%
Living with other relatives	81	6.9%	52	5.0%	47	5.0%	28	3.7%

Racial disparities

When it comes to racial disparities in the child protection system, we have traditionally compared the population we serve to the total child population in Hennepin County.

This view generally shows the disparities becoming more pronounced within each stage of the system. At the deep end, more than 80% of children entering out-of-home placement are children of color.

That remains true. But to help us understand how we're getting there, we need another view.

The tables below show our starting population — children who are the subjects of child protection reports, by race — and what happens for those children at two subsequent decision points.

In 2022, 11,105 individual children were the subjects of child protection reports.

Children in child protection reports, by race

American Indian/ Alaska Native	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Black or African American	White	Multiracial	Unknown
4.7%	2.3%	36.7%	25.2%	19.5%	11.9%

Most child protection reports come from school personnel, law enforcement, medical providers, and social services workers.

At this point, children and families have not yet formally entered the child protection system—but the disparities are striking.

Children of color make up 43% of the child population in Hennepin County, but 75% of the population reported to child protection.

As a child protection report moves through the system, there are several “decision points.”

Using a cohort view, these two tables show what happened for the children represented in the table on page 5.

Reports about 5,764 children met criteria to be screened in and assessed. Of those children, 425 entered out-of-home placement.

Screening and out-of-home placement entry decisions, by race

	Children in screened-in reports	From those reports, children entering out-of-home placement
American Indian/Alaska Native	64.8%	14.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	58.7%	6.6%
Black or African American	58.0% A	7.3% B
White	52.2%	3.8%
Multiracial	59.7%	10.5%
Unknown	12%	1%

At decision points within the child protection system, we see more similar rates across racial groups.

- A** The screen-in percentage by race varies 12.6%
- B** The out-of-home placement entry percentage by race varies 10.6%

Compare this to the wide 34.4% variation in the populations reported to child protection.

This means we have an important new opportunity to reduce disproportionality in our system by working upstream, prior to a report being made.

Even more importantly, this is a community opportunity to support families.

Many trusted partners share our vision for reducing racial disparities and promoting child and family well-being. We look forward to intentional partnerships with key agencies to offer training, technical assistance, and new collaborative efforts to advance these goals.

Caseloads

Intentional approach to caseloads.

While our median caseloads remained within our target range through the end of 2022, any discussion of this measure must also acknowledge caseload distribution. We use a median to account for the intentional variation in caseload distribution among newer and more experienced workers. To support retention with gradual onboarding, we have newly hired staff carrying smaller caseloads as they build skills and capacities. That also means more experienced staff have caseloads outside our target range.

Manageable caseloads support social workers' positive engagement with families and reduces turnover. With additional recruitment and retention efforts underway, we hope to see the caseload range moderate in the years to come.

Caseloads per worker

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Ongoing child protection case management	13	10	10	10
ICWA ongoing child protection case management	12	9	8	10
Child protection assessment/investigations	12	7	7	7

Note: Caseloads in December of each year.

State and federal performance measures

Consistent accountability.

These state and federal performance measures hold us accountable to consistent measures over time and provide a benchmark across jurisdictions. Our use of relative care has continued to increase, demonstrating our commitment to reducing trauma for children who must be separated from their parents. Among other measures, we still have progress to make in meeting the standards.

Trends in permanency timelines.

Over the past three years, we've seen many more children achieve permanency in the 12- to 23-month timeframe, and fewer resolving in less than 12 months. We believe pandemic-era factors such as access to services and increasingly complex cases may be driving this shift. As always, our work is centered around children's best interests and well-being.

State measures	2019	2020	2021	2022	Performance standard
Overall timeliness	81.3%	77.4%	81.3%	80.4%	100%
24-hour response timeliness	80.9%	80.1%	80.8%	81.1%	100%
120-hour response: family investigation	84.5%	82.6%	83.3%	86.0%	100%
120-hour response: family assessment	81.0%	75.4%	81.2%	79.6%	100%
Caseworker visits	89.2%	89.5%	92.4%	91.4%	95% or greater
Relative care	64.7%	67.8%	69.4%	71.1%	35.7% or greater
Physical health	72.3%	64.3%	59.4%	59.4%	70% or greater
Maltreatment re-reporting	20.1%	18.9%	17.0%	17.3%	15.2% or less
Aging out of foster care	75.6%	69.2%	80.3%	84.1%	70% or less

Note: For explanations of these measures, see the [Minnesota Department of Human Services Child Welfare Data Dashboard](#).

Federal measures	2019	2020	2021	2022	Performance standard
Maltreatment recurrence	7.0%	6.3%	4.4%	4.8%	9.1% or less
Maltreatment in foster care	11.6	7.0	10.6	12.2	8.5 victimizations or less per 100,000 days in care
Foster care reentry	17.3%	16.3%	10.6%	10.4%	8.3% or less
Permanency: 12 months	40.4%	40.5%	39.4%	37.2%	40.5% or greater
Permanency: 12-23 months	48.9%	48.8%	57.7%	63.6%	43.6% or greater
Permanency: 24 months	33.6%	36.7%	42.1%	40.0%	30.3% or greater
Placement stability	3.60	3.20	2.89	3.10	4.12 moves or less per 1,000 days in care

Note: Data as of March 2, 2023.

Hennepin County priorities

Reducing entry into the child protection system.

We're building a prevention service area, which includes our Parent Support Outreach Program. PSOP is a short-term, voluntary program, driven by parents' goals. Assistance may include support for health, finances, and basic needs. We contract with four culturally specific agencies for PSOP services, and also have our own county-operated unit that expanded in 2022.

PSOP served more than 2,500 individual residents in 2022; more than half of those were children younger than 11. For the fourth consecutive year, we saw an increase in the percentage of families who received PSOP services and do not have a subsequent screened-in child protection report — up to 82.5%.

This is significant and sends a clear message: Prevention works.

Families served in PSOP, by race

Number (N) and percentage (%)	2019		2020		2021		2022	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
American Indian/Alaska Native	108	3.6%	86	3.4%	70	2.9%	121	4.8%
Asian/Pacific Islander	279	9.4%	133	5.3%	173	7.1%	101	4.0%
Black or African American	1,737	58.6%	1,552	51.3%	1,295	53.1%	1,336	52.6%
White	423	14.3%	392	15.6%	457	18.8%	460	18.1%
Multiracial	321	10.8%	260	10.3%	280	11.5%	372	14.6%
Unknown	97	3.3%	94	3.7%	162	6.6%	151	5.9%
Total	2,965	100%	2,517	100%	2,437	100%	2,541	100%

Sustained focus on family meetings.

Engaging and centering family voice is essential to our practice, and tracking our use of facilitated family meetings is one indicator of how we're doing. While the overall number of meetings declined last year,

we're especially focused on using these collaborative meetings at critical moments in the case continuum, such as when planning for children's immediate safety.

Family meetings and father involvement

	2020	2021	2022
Total meetings that took place	306	539	483
Father/paternal relatives invited	72%	60%	62%
Father/paternal relatives attended	64%	54%	55%

Note: Data only available from 2020 going forward.

Supporting and preserving relative placements.

Along with the relative care performance measure on page 8, we continue to track this point-in-time performance measure. Together, the two measures give us a sense of how often we're making relative placements, and if they're being sustained. Stabilizing relative placements reduces placement disruptions, which is another way to reduce trauma for children.

Youth in relative placements

Number (N) and percentage (%)	2019		2020		2021		2022	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
In relative placements	939	56.4%	949	58.0%	753	56.0%	723	54.7%

Note: Youth in relative placements on June 1.

A sustained focus on child well-being.

This report focuses on child protection system data, trends, and analysis, but Hennepin County's work to transform county services and supports for children and families is much broader. Each year, the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners receives an annual report on the county's progress to achieve our vision for child and family well-being.

Presented to the county board in December 2022, the Child Well-Being Annual Report covers major strategic and programmatic work underway across Hennepin County and within Human Services:

- Trauma-informed system transformation
- Disparity reduction efforts in education, health, and justice
- Engaging the community and families with lived experience
- Services for parental substance use disorder and child protection involvement

Read the [2022 Child Well-Being Annual Report \(PDF\)](#).



Hennepin County

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