



Overview of Child Well-Being Practice Models in Minnesota

Minnesota’s child welfare system is state-supervised and county-administered, so counties often develop specific approaches to their practice. This document provides a brief overview of the strategies and practice models being used throughout the state to promote child well-being. **The counties included on this document responded to an invitation to submit information, this is not an exhaustive list.** (*Note: This summary information was current as of May 2017.*)

Minnesota Child Welfare County Model: A Brief Comparison

| MN County | Has Written Practice Model | Primary Practice Tools Used | Additional Info |
|-----------|----------------------------|--|---|
| Anoka | No | Signs of Safety (not required) | Strong focus on placement prevention |
| Carver | No | Signs of Safety (Required) | Requires written safety plan for each family that is measurable Detailed truancy program |
| Hennepin | Yes (in progress) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs of Safety • Structured Decision Making • Family Group Decision Making | Model includes sections on trauma, using data, CQI and child well-being framework |
| Olmsted | Yes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differential Response • Family Group Conferencing • Parallel Protection Process • Rapid Response • Signs of Safety | Utilizes RED team approach: review, evaluate and direct) Integrates domestic violence intervention Strong CQI component Understands the importance of data |
| Ramsey | Yes | Comprehensive Family Assessment | Family assessment model has been evaluated |
| Scott | Yes | Signs of Safety | Managers and supervisors expected to promote Signs of Safety throughout the system Works closely with law enforcement to prevent placement |

Anoka County

Anoka adopted the Signs of Safety model in 2009, but it is not required. The county does require that staff include a safety plan in their reports.

Anoka lacks a well-defined practice model that details how they will deliver services to children and family. They do list a number of practice tools to prevent placements.

1. Parent support outreach program (TOPS) – voluntary services for parents with children under age 12 with risk of child protection involvement
2. Teen outreach parenting services – offers same services as TOPS
3. Family assessment
4. Family preservation
5. Short-term voluntary case management and housing assistance
6. Strong achieving permanency framework

Note: the county's re-entry rates (15 – 20%) are higher than the federal mandate (9.9%) but lower than the states average.

Carver County

This county has strong practice expectations that all staff will utilize the full complement of the Signs of Safety model. They emphasize well-written safety plans that are transparent and available to families.

They also provide a Parent Support Outreach Program for parents with substance abuse issues, financial problems, potential domestic violence issues, homelessness and abuse and neglect. In collaboration with community services, specific kinds of help is available. It appears to be voluntary.

In addition, the Public Health Department offers a program called Carver Healthy Families. This is a voluntary home visitation program for parents having their first baby.

Caseload and Supervisor Information

Child protection workers carry an average between 10 and 14 cases. New workers average around 8 cases. Hiring of new staff has been helpful in reducing caseloads. Also, some caseloads are a mix of children's mental health, child welfare and child protection.

They added one new supervisor to child protection with a request for more in their 2017 budget. Currently, staff to supervisor ratio is 1:12. The state recommendation is 1:8.

Workplace Culture

The county implemented Signs of Safety using the PDSA model they acquired in a Breakthrough Series Collaborative. Staff were allowed to implement at their own pace and focused on an appreciative culture. They asked workers Solution Focused Questions and maintained a curious and inquisitive culture. This allowed the county to parallel group and individual supervision with

the Signs of Safety model. Management practiced along with their staff – they were vulnerable and transparent during the learning process. Successes were praised.

They began to learn what made things better for families and staff and from that knowledge was about to build expectations around the work. As an example, every family had to have a safety network with people the children felt safe with. These people knew and understood the agency's worries about the families. In addition, it was required that every child protection case have a written safety plan that was observable and measurable.

Carver County did not receive additional funding. They used their training funds. As a result, their placement budget has been reduced and staff retention has increased. The county states that children are safer, families are happier and workers love their jobs.

Carver County Truancy Program

They have a detailed truancy prevention program on their website.

<http://co.carver.mn.us/departments/health-human-services/child-family/child-welfare/truancy>

Hennepin County

Hennepin County's model (linked below) is still in development. It includes a set of practice principles, a brief list of trauma-informed practice elements, a section on using data to make decisions and a CQI component, and a framework on child well-being. An appendix section includes Minnesota's vision, values and strategic directions. The section also gives an overview of three practice strategies: Signs of Safety, Structured Decision Making and Family Group Decision Making.

[Hennepin County Practice Model](#)

Olmsted County

The document (linked below) offers details about the county's case work, caseload sizes, their supervision practice and their culture. It also includes a one-page practice model. This county's funding comes from a mix of federal, state and the largest amount from county levy. They also offer emersion opportunities that allows participants to observe the RED Team work, group consult, CHIPS, etc.

[Olmsted County Practice Model](#)

More in-depth articles feature their use of differential response, the county's Parallel Protection Process in high-risk court cases, and narratives describing ways of practice.

Differential Response in Child Protection: Selecting a Pathway

In this first article, the county describes how they created the RED team (review, evaluate and direct) to "provide both structure and process in review of alleged reports of child maltreatment,

evaluation of the available information, and direction regarding the agency response.”¹ They engage three critical pathways in their child protection model.

1. Strong integration of domestic violence intervention (provides assessment that may result in provision of social services w/o formal finding of child abuse)
2. Alternative response (offers a family assessment process instead of a traditional forensic investigation.)
3. Traditional response (reports of sexual abuse, licensed facility reports, egregious and serious harm)

<https://www.co.olmsted.mn.us/cs/cspublications/Documents/CFSPublications/differentialresponse.pdf>

Integrating Domestic Violence Intervention into Child Welfare Practice

In this second article, they discuss in deeper detail step number one: domestic violence intervention.

<http://www.co.olmsted.mn.us/cs/cspublications/Documents/CFSPublications/integratingdventervention.pdf>

Creating a Constructive Practice: Family and Professional Partnership in High-risk Child Protection Case Conferences

Olmsted developed a family case conferencing model as a justice intervention that uses alternative dispute resolution and family group decision making in the court context. **Parallel Protection Process (P3)** is defined in the PDF below. This article gives the background/context to the model, describes its use of a comprehensive risk assessment, lays out the format of the family case planning conference, and shares the results of case settlements over two years of using P3.

<http://www.co.olmsted.mn.us/cs/cspublications/Documents/CFSPublications/creatingaconstructivepractice.pdf>

Ways of Working in Child Welfare: A Perspective on Practice

This final article gives narrative descriptions of direct work with families as well as decisions made by the county.

<http://www.co.olmsted.mn.us/cs/cspublications/Documents/CFSPublications/waysofworkinginchildwelfare.pdf>

¹ Sawyer, R., Lohrbach, S. *Differential Response in Child Protection: Selecting a Pathway*. Protecting Children. Vol.20. pp.44-53.

Ramsey County

Ramsey County's Comprehensive Family Assessment was first developed in 2007. An evaluation of this practice model has been done and the results can be found along with an overview of the model and training resources via this link. <http://cascw.umn.edu/community-engagement-2/research-projects-2/cfa/>

The County provided two PowerPoint training documents for this report:

The Golden Thread – Part 1

The Golden Thread – Part 2

Scott County

This county has identified Signs of Safety as its practice framework. It has a detailed guide for managers and supervisors with the expectation that they will integrate Signs of Safety throughout their system. Scott also has a brief placement philosophy and the county attorney's office and law enforcement have made commitments to those tenets. They are:

1. Placement is the last resort
2. May not place for reasons other than safety
3. Law enforcement must ask the question: What action can be taken to reduce/eliminate the current risk/concern without placing the child and must document what actions were taken to try to prevent placement.
4. Actions to prevent placement include, but not limited to: de-escalate the situation, call parent/relative/family friend, remove the parent-not the child, POP, Crisis Team, ESS/Central Intake.
5. Law enforcement is not required to remove a child from a school at school request unless the student is an immediate danger to self/others.

They also include in their framework toolbox a placement philosophy and process guide.

Scott County Truancy Program

The Scott County Truancy Diversion Program is a youth centered community collaborative approach that involves Social Services, Community Corrections, County Attorney's Office, Scott County Mental Health Center and Scott County Schools. The Diversion Program first assists the student, family and school in developing a support plan to improve school attendance. The best chance for success begins at the school level with the school offering support to the student and guardian. When the efforts between family and school are unsuccessful in increasing school attendance, the school may refer the case to the Scott County Attorney's Office for intervention from the Scott County Truancy Diversion Team.

Scott County Practice Guidelines Link

Children's Services Placement Philosophy and Process Link