

Title: Minnesota Child Welfare Research Agenda

Since social work practice in child welfare is often guided by research, a need was perceived to identify topics of immediate concern and to prioritize them in order to provide a reference for research projects. The Minnesota Child Welfare Research Agenda is intended as a guide for planners, researchers, funders, directors and managers as they consider new and continuing projects. The research priorities identified in the agenda reflect the thoughts of many people engaged in child welfare practice and research. The research agenda represents the perceived needs of the child welfare community in Minnesota. It is not intended to mandate research projects but rather to guide research to advance knowledge about issues of immediate interest within the State.

The Office of the Gamble-Skogmo Land Grant Chair in Child Welfare & Youth Policy in the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota, in collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS), the Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare (CASCW), and the Children, Youth and Families Consortium (CYFC), led the effort to develop and publish the Child Welfare Research Agenda. Interviews were conducted with child welfare experts and practitioners across the state. A conference was held in which child welfare providers, advocates and educators participated in identifying areas of interest and research questions of concern. Information was collected through face-to-face interviews, panel discussions, and workgroups. Prioritization of the research priorities was based on the results of a mailed survey.

Those who participated in the creation of the research agenda identified seven areas of interest: Program Planning & Administration, Prevention of Child Maltreatment, Child Protection, Child and Family Services, Out-of-Home Care, Reunification, and Adoption/Relative Custody. More than 150 research questions raised by the participants were prioritized, and the top five questions in each interest area are featured in the research agenda. (All the questions may be seen in Appendix B of the agenda.). The Child Welfare Research Agenda for the State of Minnesota was published in October 2003.