

Note: The Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) surveyed a child protection screener in each county and tribal agency “who (1) participates in child protection screening decisions and (2) can provide a single response to represent screening decisions” in the agency. OLA administered the survey online with two parts. This part contained general questions. The other part included ten vignettes for respondents to “screen.” This document reflects the text of the online survey sent to county screeners but, due to the different medium, does not reflect what individuals who completed the survey saw or experienced. The version of the survey sent to screeners in tribal agencies was very similar.

Section 1: Introduction

This section asks basic questions about you and your agency.

1. Please enter your name. We will keep your identity confidential.
2. Please enter your job title.
3. Please select the county in which you work from the drop-down menu below.
4. If you work in more than one county and you want your answers to apply to all of them, please indicate one of the counties above and type the names of the additional counties in the space below.
5. Approximately how long have you served in your current position?
 - Less than 1 year
 - 1-3 years
 - 4-5 years
 - 6-10 years
 - More than 10 years
6. Approximately how long have you been involved in screening child protection referrals in your current agency? By "referrals," we mean allegations reported by mandated or voluntary reporters about possible child maltreatment (sometimes called "intakes" or "reports"). By "screening," we mean the decision whether to accept a referral as a child maltreatment report. You are involved in screening if you make the screening decisions or supervise decisions made by others.
 - Less than 1 year
 - 1-3 years
 - 4-5 years
 - 6-10 years
 - More than 10 years
 - I am not directly involved in screening.
7. Please complete the following sentence by selecting one of the options.

I make the screening decision - or supervise decisions made by others - for approximately ____ of child protection referrals my agency receives.

 - 0%
 - 1-25%
 - 26-50%
 - 51-75%
 - over 75%

Section 2: Intake and Screening Staffing and Process

This section asks you to describe intake and screening in your agency.

8. From the list below, please select the option that reflects how your agency generally staffs child protection intake. By "intake," we mean the process of collecting and recording information regarding a child protection referral. Intake does not include the decision to accept (i.e., screen in) or reject (i.e., screen out) the referral.
- Child protection intake is completed by child protection social workers whose primary work responsibility is child protection intake.
 - Child protection intake is shared among child protection social workers who have other responsibilities besides intake, such as conducting family assessments and/or investigations.
 - Child protection intake is rotated among social service social workers, not just social workers in child protection or intake.
 - Child protection intake is completed by intake social workers who do not specialize in child protection.
 - Child protection intake is completed by clerical staff.
 - Don't know
 - Other (please specify)

9. Assume that a person contacts your agency with concerns about a child's welfare. If during intake it becomes clear to staff that the referral is not a child protection issue, how frequently would staff use the following options to record the referral in SSIS? Please respond to each statement.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Don't Know
Staff would record the referral as a child protection intake to be screened.						
Staff would record the referral as another type of intake, such as Information and Referral or Child Welfare.						
Staff would not record the referral in SSIS.						

10. If you would like to explain your responses above, please use the space provided below.

11. Screening decisions for some referrals are clear-cut. Other referrals fall into a "gray area" for which a clear response is not indicated by statutes, rules, or guidelines. For each category of referral listed in the column to the left, please indicate who generally makes screening decisions in your agency.

	Decisions are made by a child protection staff person working alone.	Decisions are made by a supervisor.	Decisions are made by a child protection staff person in consultation with a supervisor.	Decisions are made by child protection staff working in teams.	Decisions are made by multi-disciplinary teams.	Other
Clear-cut screen-in referrals						
Clear-cut screen-out referrals						
"Gray area" referrals						

12. If you would like to explain your responses above, please use the space provided below.

13. If your agency uses a screening team or multidisciplinary team to screen referrals, please tell us what disciplines and/or child protection staff are represented on the team.

14. How does your agency handle intake for child protection referrals during non-business hours (for example, after standard work hours, on weekends, and during holidays)?
- On-call staff answer these calls.
 - Calls are directed to law enforcement.
 - Don't know
 - Other (please specify)

15. How does your agency handle intake of child protection referrals from non-English speakers? (Please check all that apply.)
- Staff who are competent in the foreign language assist with these referrals.
 - On-call workers or contractors who are competent in the foreign language assist with these referrals.
 - We use a language line and/or another agency to provide interpreting services.
 - We are not able to accept these referrals.
 - Don't know
 - Other (please specify)

Section 3: Screening Decision-making

Up to this point, we have asked general questions about your agency's process for screening child protection referrals. In this section, we ask about how screening decisions are made and whether different factors affect screening decisions.

16. To what extent do you consider input from the following sources when making screening decisions?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
<i>Minnesota Statutes</i>					
<i>Minnesota Rules</i>					
<i>Minnesota Child Maltreatment Screening Guidelines</i>					
Department of Human Services Bulletins					
County screening guidelines					
Written office guidelines					
Unwritten office custom					
Community expectations					
Other (please specify)					

17. Please indicate the extent to which you have found the following helpful in making screening decisions.

	Unhelpful	Somewhat helpful	Very helpful	Not Applicable
<i>Minnesota Statutes</i>				
<i>Minnesota Rules</i>				
<i>Minnesota Child Maltreatment Screening Guidelines</i>				

18. Please use the space below to discuss any specific provisions in *Minnesota Statutes*, *Minnesota Rules*, and/or the *Minnesota Child Maltreatment Screening Guidelines* that you have found particularly helpful or unhelpful in making screening decisions.

19. Please indicate the extent to which you use the following methods to inform screening decisions. Do not include actions taken after a referral has already been screened.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Not Applicable
Search records for child protection history						
Search records for previous screened-out referrals						
Search SSIS for prior or current receipt of social services other than child protection						
Initiate a check of law enforcement records						
Attempt contact with alleged victim and/or perpetrator						
Attempt contact with collateral sources of information						
Visit the alleged perpetrator, victim, or family home						

20. If you would like to explain your responses above, please use the space provided below.

21. To what extent do you screen in allegations that meet the definition of maltreatment, but...

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Are made by anonymous reporters?					
The reporter has no first-hand knowledge of the alleged maltreatment?					

22. Assume you have received a "gray area" referral (one for which a clear response is not indicated by statutes, rules, or guidelines). How, if at all, would the following factors affect your screening decision?

	Much more likely to screen in	More likely to screen in	No impact	More likely to screen out	Much more likely to screen out
The referral came from a mandated reporter.					
The referral came from an anonymous reporter.					
The referral came from a person with no first-hand knowledge of the alleged maltreatment.					
The family has several prior screened-out referrals.					
The family has no prior contact with child protection.					
The referral came from a non-custodial parent who was the source of past unsubstantiated reports.					

23. If you would like to comment on your responses, please do so here.

Section 4: Rating Statement

The following three pages ask you to rate specific statements.

24. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding child protection screening at your agency.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Screening decisions for "gray area" referrals vary based on the workload of child protection staff.					
Screening decisions for allegations of lesser seriousness vary based on the workload of child protection staff.					
Screening decisions for "gray area" referrals vary based on the availability of non-child- protection services for children and families.					
My agency screens in allegations of serious maltreatment whether we have the resources to handle the cases or not.					
My agency screens in more allegations of lesser seriousness than it used to because of the availability of family assessment response.					

25. If you would like to comment on any of your responses, please do so here.

This is the second of three pages where we ask you to rate statements.

26. Please indicate how often you think the following situations occur at your agency.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
My agency screens out allegations of lesser seriousness because the child would be better served by voluntary services in our community.					
Publicity surrounding child protection cases affects my agency's subsequent screening decisions, at least for a while.					
The expectations of our County Attorney affect my agency's screening decisions.					
The expectations of our county board affect my agency's screening decisions.					
My agency screens in referrals where the sole allegation is that the child was within sight or sound of domestic violence.					
My agency screens in allegations of parents using an illegal substance, even if specific harm to the child is not alleged.					
My agency screens out allegations of educational neglect made at the end of the school year.					
My agency screens out allegations of physical abuse if there are no marks on the child.					
My agency screens out allegations of neglect if poverty is a known factor in the neglect.					

27. If you would like to comment on any of your responses, please do so here.

This is the final page of rating statements. Thank you for completing these!

28. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about child protection.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Child protection referrals should be screened in whenever a child is at risk of harm.					
Child protection referrals should be screened in only in the most serious cases.					
At times, child protection interventions can be more harmful than helpful to families.					
It is appropriate to screen out allegations that meet the definition of maltreatment if the alleged behavior is acceptable in the family's culture.					
When other services are not available, it is appropriate to screen in child protection referrals to help high-risk families even if no maltreatment is alleged.					
A family's ethnicity and culture should inform the screening decision.					
Sometimes it is appropriate for counties to screen in referrals that the state screening guidelines suggest are not maltreatment.					
Sometimes it is appropriate for counties to screen out referrals that the state screening guidelines suggest are maltreatment.					
Child protection referrals should be screened in whenever the allegations meet statutory definitions of maltreatment.					

29. If you would like to comment on any of your responses, please do so here.

Section 5: Screened-Out Referrals

This page asks about your agency's handling of screened-out child protection referrals.

30. Please indicate how often your agency takes the following actions with screened-out child protection referrals.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Contact the family informing them of the referral					
Send the family information about relevant screening criteria and/or agency policy					
Offer non-child-protection services					
Give the family information about non-governmental services					
Forward the referral to a non-governmental agency to follow up with the family					

31. Please use the space below to comment on the handling of screened-out referrals in your agency.

Section 6: Reporters of Alleged Child Maltreatment

This page asks about reporters of alleged child maltreatment.

32. For each source of maltreatment report listed in the column to the left, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement.

I think these reporters generally expect a child protection response for children in need even when no maltreatment is alleged in the referral.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know or No Opinion
Health professionals						
School professionals						
Child care providers						
Social workers						
Clergy						
Voluntary reporters						

33. Please make any comments you wish to make on reporters of alleged child maltreatment here.

Section 7: DHS

This is the final section of this part of our survey. This section asks about the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS).

34. Have you ever contacted DHS staff for advice on screening decisions?

- Yes
- No (*skip to question 36*)

35. Please indicate the extent to which DHS advice on screening decisions...

Not at all Somewhat Very

Has been helpful.

Has been consistent.

(skip to question 37)

36. Please tell us why you haven't contacted DHS staff for advice on screening decisions.

37. Do you think there is a need for DHS to provide additional assistance with child protection screening decision-making?

— Yes

— No *(skip to question 39)*

38. What types of assistance with child protection screening decision-making do you think DHS needs to provide?

39. Please make any comments about DHS assistance on screening below.

Thank you!

Thank you for your participation.

You have completed the general screening part of our survey. If you have not already done so, please complete the vignette part of our survey. Once you submit this part, you will be directed to a link to the vignette part. You can also access the vignette part of the survey by following the directions in the e-mail you received.

If you are done with this part of the survey and are ready to submit it, please click the "Submit" button. Once you click "Submit," you will be unable to make changes to your responses.

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Welcome

This is the vignette part of the child protection screeners survey. It includes ten vignettes of child protection referrals. Each vignette asks how you would screen the referral and gives you an opportunity to (1) comment on your reasoning and (2) indicate if you would offer or refer a screened-out referral to other resources. We would prefer that you screen these vignettes in the same way that your agency makes child protection screening decisions. For example, if you use a screening team to make screening decisions, please consider having the team review these vignettes. Agencies' screening decisions may vary. **We do not have a "right" answer in mind for any of the vignettes.**

For each vignette, please assume:

- You have enough identifying information,
- The referral is in your jurisdiction,
- The allegations have not been previously assessed,
- There is no conflict of interest in your agency,
- There is no child protection history for the family unless stated otherwise, and
- You have received the referral within the past 24 hours.

Since you will be submitting the vignette part of the child protection screeners survey separately from the other part, please provide identifying information below.

Please select your county from the drop-down menu below.

If you work in more than one county and you want your answers to apply to all of them, please indicate one of the counties above and type the names of the additional counties in the space below.

Vignette 1

Sam North calls about his cousin, Johnny Maker. Sam says that Johnny was evicted from his apartment last month and is now staying in a trailer on private land with no plumbing or electricity. Sam says Johnny's two sons – ages ten and twelve – use the woods for a bathroom. Sam says Johnny does not have permission to stay on the land. Sam would like someone to check on the kids and their living conditions.

- Screen In - Family Assessment
- Screen In - Family Investigation
- Screen Out

If screened in, respondent saw: If you would like to comment on your screening decision, please do so here.

If screened out, respondent saw: Would your agency offer or refer the family to non-child-protection voluntary services?

- Yes
- No

If you'd like to comment on your screening decision or actions your agency would take, please do so here.

Vignette 2

Dr. Jones calls to report that Emily Blackdeer tested positive for marijuana after giving birth to a baby boy yesterday. He says the child's meconium was not tested due to a mix up. Jones reports that Emily also tested positive for marijuana during her pregnancy. Jones said Emily told him she smoked marijuana during her pregnancy to help her with her appetite.

- Screen In - Family Assessment
- Screen In - Family Investigation
- Screen Out

If screened in, respondent saw: If you would like to comment on your screening decision, please do so here.

If screened out, respondent saw: Would your agency offer or refer the family to non-child-protection voluntary services?

- Yes
- No

If you'd like to comment on your screening decision or actions your agency would take, please do so here.

Vignette 3

Police fax the following report: I responded to a report of five-year-old Davie Michaelson wandering in town. I met with Ann Johnson, a passerby who had found this child. While I was speaking with Ann, a man approached who said he knew the child. He directed me to a house at the end of the block. The yard was fenced, but the gate and front door were open. I entered the house and found Tammy Michaelson (Davie's mother) sleeping on the couch. I awakened her and she explained that she had worked the third shift at the gas station last night and had left the boy to watch cartoons while she napped. The TV was on with a children's DVD playing. Tammy said she had locked the door, but Davie must have unlocked it and left.

An SSIS search shows that Tammy, age 21, received children's mental health services as a child.

- Screen In - Family Assessment
- Screen In - Family Investigation
- Screen Out

If screened in, respondent saw: If you would like to comment on your screening decision, please do so here.

If screened out, respondent saw: Would your agency offer or refer the family to non-child-protection voluntary services?

- Yes
- No

If you'd like to comment on your screening decision or actions your agency would take, please do so here.

Vignette 4

Marcus calls with concerns regarding his four-year-old son Andrew. Marcus says friends have told him that Andrew's mother, Amber, is drunk every day to the point of throwing up and has withdrawal tremors from alcohol. Marcus reports that he and Amber are not together, but share custody of Andrew. He says Amber's friends brought Andrew to him the other day and told him Amber was too drunk to take care of Andrew. Marcus says that Andrew saw him smoking a cigarette the other day and said that his mom and her friends smoke a different kind of cigarette which his mom calls her "medicine." Marcus believes that this is marijuana. Marcus says he is caring for Andrew beyond what is ordered in the custody agreement because Marcus won't give Andrew to Amber when she is drunk.

An SSIS search shows a child protection report made by Amber's cousin four years ago alleging that Amber was drinking while pregnant.

- Screen In - Family Assessment
- Screen In - Family Investigation
- Screen Out

If screened in, respondent saw: If you would like to comment on your screening decision, please do so here.

If screened out, respondent saw: Would your agency offer or refer the family to non-child-protection voluntary services?

- Yes
- No

If you'd like to comment on your screening decision or actions your agency would take, please do so here.

Vignette 5

A high school counselor calls to report that Shaniqua Thomas, age 15, said she was afraid to go home and was going to run away. Shaniqua told the counselor that her father, Dante Thomas, "hates me" and that he pulls her hair, punches her on the back, slaps her on the back of the head, throws things at her, yells at her, and flicks her in the face. The counselor says she asked Shaniqua if she had any bruises or marks on her body and Shaniqua said she did not. The counselor says she has never seen marks on Shaniqua. Shaniqua told the counselor that she and her dad often fight about curfew and how well she is doing in school. The counselor states that Shaniqua is an "average" student and missed six days of school last year.

- Screen In - Family Assessment
- Screen In - Family Investigation
- Screen Out

If screened in, respondent saw: If you would like to comment on your screening decision, please do so here.

If screened out, respondent saw: Would your agency offer or refer the family to non-child-protection voluntary services?

- Yes
- No

If you'd like to comment on your screening decision or actions your agency would take, please do so here.

Vignette 6

Trooper Mansfield reports that he pulled over a car for weaving and found Angelica Martinez drunk at the wheel with her two grandchildren, Martin (8) and Elias (5), in the back seat. Mansfield says he brought the children home to their father, Oscar Martinez. Oscar told Mansfield that his mother had watched the children overnight and was returning them to him. Oscar told Mansfield that he did not know that his mother would drink and drive with his children and was very upset. Mansfield is calling in this report because of the condition of Oscar's house. He says the home was cluttered and there was a large amount of dirty dishes on the counter and in the sink. Mansfield says there were copious amounts of dog hair and dust, as well as a pile of dirty laundry in the living room. Oscar told Mansfield that his wife is away with the National Guard and that he is working full time and trying to take care of the children. Mansfield reports that the children appeared healthy and clean, although they appeared to be afraid of Mansfield.

Please check all that apply.

- Screen In Dad - Family Assessment
- Screen In Dad - Family Investigation
- Screen In Grandma - Family Assessment
- Screen In Grandma - Family Investigation
- Screen Out Both Grandma and Dad

If screened in anyone, respondent saw: If you would like to comment on your screening decision, please do so here.

If screened out both, respondent saw: Would your agency offer or refer the family to non-child-protection voluntary services?

- Yes
- No

If you'd like to comment on your screening decision or actions your agency would take, please do so here.

Vignette 7

The police forward the following report: Police received a call about a domestic at 20:50 last night. Officers arrested Michael for assault on his wife, Susie. Susie stated Michael choked and punched her and that he was intoxicated. Michael and Susie's two children, ages 5 and 7, reportedly were playing video games upstairs at the time of the alleged assault, which occurred downstairs. Susie was not sure whether the children heard or witnessed the alleged assault. The children were visibly upset and crying for officers to not take their daddy away.

- Screen In - Family Assessment
- Screen In - Family Investigation
- Screen Out

If screened in, respondent saw: If you would like to comment on your screening decision, please do so here.

If screened out, respondent saw: Would your agency offer or refer the family to non-child-protection voluntary services?

- Yes
- No

If you'd like to comment on your screening decision or actions your agency would take, please do so here.

Vignette 8

Cathy Long, a neighbor of 16-year-old Martha Eagle, calls. Long states that she has witnessed Martha's mother (Alice) emotionally abuse Martha. She says Alice calls Martha a "fat bitch" daily and frequently tells Martha she is a "loser" and "will never amount to anything." Long has also heard Alice tell Martha that Martha's father never cared about Martha. Long says Martha's father died in a car accident last year. Long states that the family is poor and Alice does not keep much food in the house. Long says Martha does all the housework and chores and frequently cares for her brothers and sisters when Alice works third shift or is sleeping. Long states that Martha does a good job feeding and caring for the kids, but seems very depressed. Long says Alice recently gave birth to her sixth child. Long does not know the ages of the other children.

SSIS shows that another child protection agency previously screened out a referral from Martha's school counselor who reported that Martha was depressed and that her mother seemed callous and unresponsive.

- Screen In - Family Assessment
- Screen In - Family Investigation
- Screen Out

If screened in, respondent saw: If you would like to comment on your screening decision, please do so here.

If screened out, respondent saw: Would your agency offer or refer the family to non-child-protection voluntary services?

- Yes
- No

If you'd like to comment on your screening decision or actions your agency would take, please do so here.

Vignette 9

A man who prefers to remain anonymous calls regarding seven-year-old Jason, one of his son's friends. The caller says he is concerned that Jason's father (Frank) may abuse Jason. The caller has heard Frank threaten Jason saying, "If you don't clean up, I'll whup you so bad you'll wish you were dead." The caller says that Jason seems afraid of his father, but that he (the caller) has not seen any marks or bruises on Jason. In addition, the caller reports Jason told him his father "lost it" and shot the dog the other day in front of Jason. The caller says Jason was upset over losing the family dog. The caller does not know how Frank stores his shot gun, but notes that Frank is a hunter.

- Screen In - Family Assessment
- Screen In - Family Investigation
- Screen Out

If screened in, respondent saw: If you would like to comment on your screening decision, please do so here.

If screened out, respondent saw: Would your agency offer or refer the family to non-child-protection voluntary services?

- Yes
- No

If you'd like to comment on your screening decision or actions your agency would take, please do so here.

Vignette 10

The probation officer (PO) for Kyle Knox calls. The PO states that Kyle is currently required to register as a Level II sex offender. The PO states that Kyle appears to be frequently staying with his girlfriend, who has two kids, Shayna (12) and Michael (3). The PO says Kyle has two convictions for sexual offenses, both for raping his former wife. According to the PO, Kyle completed treatment after the first offense then reoffended. The officer says Kyle's probation does not include any conditions regarding children.

- Screen In - Family Assessment
- Screen In - Family Investigation
- Screen Out

If screened in, respondent saw: If you would like to comment on your screening decision, please do so here.

If screened out, respondent saw: Would your agency offer or refer the family to non-child-protection voluntary services?

- Yes
- No

If you'd like to comment on your screening decision or actions your agency would take, please do so here.

Contact Information

You have finished screening the vignettes. Please provide the information requested below.

Please select how these vignettes were screened.

- An agency staff member (may be a supervisor) screened the vignettes alone.
- My agency's screening team screened the vignettes.
- An agency staff member screened the vignettes with a supervisor.
- Other (please specify)

Please provide the name and contact information for a person we may contact about this part of the survey.

Thank you!

Thank you for your participation.

You have completed the vignette part of the child protection screeners survey. If you have not already done so, please complete the general screening part of the survey. Once you submit this part, you will be directed to a link to the general screening part. You can also access the general screening part of the survey by following the directions in the e-mail you received.

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