

Note: The Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) surveyed county human services directors and tribal child welfare directors whose agencies administer child protection under Minnesota law. OLA administered the survey online. This document reflects the text of the online survey sent to county human services directors 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 tribal child welfare directors was very similar.

Respondent Information

First, please tell us something about yourself.

1. Name:
2. Job title:
3. Please select your county from the drop-down list below.
4. If you serve as the Human Services Director for multiple counties and you would like your responses to apply to more than one of them, please indicate one of the counties above and list the additional counties below.
5. From the drop-down list below, please select the range that includes the length of time you have worked in your current position.
 - Less than one year
 - One to five years
 - Five to ten years
 - More than ten years
6. From the drop-down list below, please select the range that includes the length of time you have worked in county or tribal human services in Minnesota.
 - Less than one year
 - One to five years
 - Five to ten years
 - More than ten years

Guidelines, Criteria, and Policies

The next several questions ask about guidelines, criteria, and policies for screening child protection referrals.

7. Does your agency use the *Minnesota Child Maltreatment Screening Guidelines* to assist with "screening" child protection referrals (i.e., allegations reported by mandated or voluntary reporters about possible child maltreatment)? By "screening" we mean the decision whether to accept a referral as a child maltreatment report.
 - Yes (skip question 8)
 - No
 - Don't know (skip question 8)
8. Why does your agency choose not to use the state screening guidelines to assist with screening referrals of suspected child maltreatment?

9. Please indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree with the following statements about the state screening guidelines. We would like your opinion even if your agency does not use the guidelines.

The *Minnesota Child Maltreatment Screening Guidelines*:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
Allow for the right amount of screener discretion.						
Provide the flexibility needed to accommodate community standards.						
Have increased consistency in screening decisions across the state.						
Give screeners too much choice when making screening decisions.						

10. *Other than the state screening guidelines*, please indicate whether your agency uses criteria, guidelines, or policies from the following sources to assist with screening child protection referrals.

	Yes	No	Don't know
<i>Minnesota Statutes</i>			
<i>Minnesota Rules</i>			
Written guidelines approved by the County Board (please send a copy)			
Other written criteria, guidelines, or policies (please send a copy)			

11. Please indicate whether the following factors affect *written or unwritten criteria* your agency uses to make child protection screening decisions.

	Yes	No	Don't know
County Attorney guidance			
County Board input			
Department of Human Services advice			
Budget considerations			

12. Please use the space below to share any comments you have about screening guidelines, criteria, or policies.

Staff and Financial Resources

The next set of questions asks about agency staff and financial resources.

13. Please indicate how each of the following has changed for your agency *over the past five years* by completing the statements below.

	Decreased a lot	Decreased somewhat	Not changed much	Increased somewhat	Increased a lot	Don't know	Not applicable
The amount of staff resources my agency assigns to child protection intake screening has <i>("Intake screening" begins with receiving a referral and ends with the decision whether to accept the referral as a child maltreatment report.)</i>							
Considering agency staffing, funding, and the volume of child protection referrals, my agency's ability to make screening decisions within 24 hours of receiving a referral has							
Considering agency staffing, funding, and the number of families who need child protective services (CPS), my agency's ability to provide (or contract for) needed CPS services has							
Considering agency staffing, funding, and the needs of families in my community, my agency's ability to provide (or contract) non-CPS services for families who might benefit from them has							

14. In some cases, the decision to screen in or screen out a child protection referral is clear. Between the clear-cut cases are those in a "gray area"—referrals for which a clear response is not indicated by statutes, rules, or guidelines. Please indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
For "gray-area" child protection referrals, screening criteria my agency uses vary depending on agency staffing and funding.						
Due in part to budget constraints, my agency has tightened its screening criteria to screen in fewer "gray-area" cases than in the past.						
Budget issues in my agency make it difficult to maintain consistent screening criteria from year to year (that is, screening in the same types and seriousness of child maltreatment referrals).						

15. If you have examples of ways in which agency staffing and funding have affected child protection screening criteria—in your agency or elsewhere—please share them below. (You need not name the agency, but we would like concrete examples of how, if at all, resource issues may be affecting child protection screening.)

Services for Families Who Are the Subject of “Screened-Out” Referrals

The following questions are about families who are the subject of "screened-out" child protection referrals. By "screened-out" we mean that child protection staff did not accept the referral of suspected maltreatment for a child protection assessment or investigation.

16. Which of the following best reflects your agency's policy for referring families of screened-out child protection allegations to other services? By "referring," we mean that agency staff inform the families of voluntary services they might find useful.

- Agency policy is, generally, to refer families of screened-out child protection allegations only to other government programs or services.
- Agency policy is, generally, to refer families of screened-out child protection allegations only to nonprofit or other private-sector programs or services.
- Agency policy is, generally, to refer families of screened-out child protection allegations to government or private-sector programs or services, whichever makes the most sense.
- Agency policy is, generally, to not refer families of screened-out child protection allegations to programs or services.
- My agency does not have a policy about referring families of screened-out child protection allegations to programs or services.
- Don't know

17. Does your agency have *written* criteria, policies, or guidelines that staff use to determine which families of screened-out allegations to refer to other (non-child-protection) programs or services?

- Yes (please send a copy)
- No
- Don't know

18. Does your agency have *unwritten* criteria, policies, or guidelines that staff use to determine which families of screened-out allegations to refer to other (non-child-protection) programs or services?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

19. Please indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
<i>County-administered</i> programs and services are sufficiently available to serve children and families of screened-out child protection referrals in my agency's jurisdiction.						
<i>Other government</i> programs and services are sufficiently available to serve children and families of screened-out child protection referrals in my agency's jurisdiction.						
<i>Nonprofit and other private-sector</i> programs and services are sufficiently available to assist children and families of screened-out child protection referrals in my agency's jurisdiction.						

20. Please indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
It is appropriate for county staff to contact families of screened-out child protection allegations.						
It is appropriate for county staff to refer families of screened-out child protection allegations to voluntary services.						

21. Please use the space below to share any comments you have about services for families and children of screened-out child protection referrals.

Mandated Reporters

The next set of questions is about mandated reporters of suspected child maltreatment.

22. Please indicate whether your agency has used the following methods in the past year to educate mandated reporters about their responsibility to report suspected child maltreatment.

	Yes	No	Don't know
Posted information on the county's Web site			
Referred reporters to the mandated-reporter training developed by the Department of Human Services (DHS)			
Referred reporters to the DHS publication <i>Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect: A Resource Guide for Mandated Reporters</i>			
Referred reporters to <i>Minnesota Statutes</i>			
Gave presentations to mandated-reporter groups			
Other (please specify)			

23. How frequently does your agency make presentations about responsibilities to report suspected child maltreatment to groups of the following mandated reporters?

	At least annually	Less frequently than annually	We have never presented to reporters from this group	Don't know
Doctors				
Nurses				
Mental health professionals				
Social service providers				
Teachers				
Other school personnel				
Child care providers				
Law enforcement				
Clergy				

24. Overall, how would you characterize your child protection division's relationship with the following mandated-reporter groups?

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Non-existent	Don't know or No opinion
Doctors						
Nurses						
Mental health professionals						
Social service providers						
Teachers						
Other school personnel						
Child care providers						
Law enforcement						
Clergy						

25. Please use the space below to share any comments you have about education of or relationships with mandated-reporter groups.

Department of Human Services

The final set of questions asks about the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

26. Please indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree with the following statements about the Department of Human Services (DHS) and child protection screening decisions.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
My agency would benefit from more DHS guidance on child protection screening decisions.						
Overall, DHS resources (e.g., staff, publications, training) have helped our child protection staff make screening decisions that are consistent with Minnesota law.						
Overall, DHS resources (e.g., staff, publications, training) have helped our child protection staff make more consistent screening decisions.						
Minnesota Child and Family Services Reviews conducted by DHS have been valuable opportunities for improving our child protection screening practices.						
DHS should take over child protection screening duties.						

27. Please indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree with the following statements about services provided by the Department of Human Services (DHS) related to child protection screening decisions.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know	Not applicable
DHS's foundation training for child welfare workers has helped improve the screening skills of our child protection staff.							
The DHS materials for mandated reporters have helped my agency inform mandated-reporter groups.							
The DHS Family Assessment Regional Meetings are a valuable forum for discussing child protection screening decisions.							

28. Please use the space below for any comments you have about DHS related to child protection screening, including telling us about resources we have overlooked.

Final Comments

This questionnaire has covered many topics, including:

- screening guidelines, criteria, and policies;
- staff and financial resources;
- services for families of screened-out child protection referrals;
- mandated reporters; and
- DHS.

Please use the space below to add any final comments you have about these or other topics related to child protection screening.

Please include your phone number or e-mail address (whichever you prefer) in case we have questions about your responses.

Reminder

If applicable, please remember to send copies of your agency's:

- **written guidelines, criteria, or policies for child protection screening and**
- **written guidelines, criteria, or policies for referring "screened-out" families to services.**

You may attach items to an e-mail to carrie.meyerhoff@state.mn.us.

Or, mail them to Carrie at:

Carrie Meyerhoff
Office of the Legislative Auditor, Room 140
658 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55155

If you are done with the questionnaire 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.