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## Agency Activities

Report to the Legislature

January 2026

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As required by Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 3.197: This report cost approximately \$5,148 to prepare, including staff time, printing and mailing expenses.

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# I. Executive Summary

Since its beginning on July 1, 2024, the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (the Department) has been focused on creating a smooth transition for all programs and people joining the new agency while simultaneously building the agency itself. The activities over the past 18 months reflect these two efforts. As recently as June 2025, the final group of staff and programs joined the Department. This report documents the ongoing work of the new agency.

During the transition year, the Department concentrated on ensuring a smooth and well-coordinated transfer of staff, programs, technology, and operational functions from four originating agencies. By June 30, 2025, the Department had fully integrated more than 700 employees, completing the final transition of staff from the Minnesota Departments of Education, Health, Human Services and Public Safety. At the same time, MNIT and agency business teams worked intensively to support the technical migration, moving hundreds of staff accounts, updating applications, shifting phone systems, and establishing new communication and support channels. These efforts enabled uninterrupted services for families while building the infrastructure needed for the Department to operate independently.

To support leaders and staff during this major organizational change, the Implementation Office, Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB), and Department leadership created multiple structures for communication, professional development, and relationship-building. Executive leadership positions were established, directors participated in Communities of Practice, and a transition toolkit helped supervisors prepare their teams for logistical and cultural shifts. As functional and proportional analyses were conducted, the Department worked closely with originating agencies to ensure continuity of operations and to determine what resources would be needed long-term. Together, these efforts laid the groundwork for a cohesive agency culture and aligned operational practices.

In parallel, the Department continued developing its new physical and administrative foundation. The agency is currently located at 444 Lafayette, with the Department of Administration leading the process to secure a permanent home. Interagency agreements were established to ensure program continuity and lawful data sharing, while early work began on the agency's first strategic plan. That plan—built through significant staff, community, county, and Tribal engagement—sets forward five priorities: strengthening agency culture, improving service coordination, modernizing technology and data systems, embedding a whole family approach, and cultivating strong partnerships statewide.

The Department also invested deeply in community relationships, Tribal and county engagement, and cross-sector partnerships. Hundreds of engagement activities were logged across 2025, reflecting ongoing collaboration with families, community organizations, Tribal Nations, advocacy groups, and county partners. The agency also developed a Philanthropy Table with the Bush and Graves Family Foundations to align public and private resources in support of children and families. At the same time, the Department expanded its fraud, waste, and abuse prevention efforts, strengthening compliance systems, standardizing contracting and monitoring processes, and building robust oversight through its Compliance Office and Office of Inspector General.

Finally, the Department continued to reimagine its organizational structure while advancing major modernization efforts. Four program administrations were established, along with new offices focused on systems change, transformation, Tribal relations, and county relations. The agency also began large-scale technology upgrades—including child welfare information system modernization, time-entry

transformation, and improved data governance—to reduce burdens on Tribal and county staff and improve service delivery. Collectively, these transition-year activities reflect the Department’s commitment to building an integrated, equitable, and responsive agency ready to support children, youth, families, and communities across Minnesota.

## II. Legislation

Laws of Minnesota 2024, Chapter 80 established the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth and Families.

[Laws of Minnesota 2024, Chap. 80, Article 1, Subd. 2\(w\)](#) requires a biennial report on agency activities:

**Subd. 2(w)** On or before January 15 in each even-numbered year, the commissioner shall make a biennial report to the governor concerning the activities of the agency.

The Minnesota Government Data Practices Act and [Laws of Minnesota 2023, Chapter 70, Article 12, Section 29](#), provide express authority for data sharing between the Department of Children, Youth, and Families and the agencies from which programs are transferring to the Department.

To document the agencies’ sharing of data, the Department of Children, Youth, and Families is operating under interagency agreements for the transition year with the Department of Human Services and the Department of Education. Each interagency agreement highlights the agencies’ obligations to comply with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act and Minnesota Session Law 2023, Chapter 70, Article 12, Section 29. In addition, the interagency agreements specify the anticipated data sharing needs to continue these programs and services without interruption.

## III. Introduction

This report is mandated by [Minnesota Statutes 142A.03, Subd. 2\(w\)](#) and requests the Department of Children, Youth, and Families’ Commissioner to provide an update on the activities of the agency. To fulfill the mandate, the Department collected information from agency leaders on key activities and initiatives their respective areas have been working on to continue building out the new agency.

## IV. Agency Activities

During the transition year July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025, the Department of Children, Youth, and Families' (the Department) activities were focused on several key areas to ensure an efficient and successful transition to the new agencies.

### A. Transfer experience

To ensure a smooth transition for all staff from originating agencies, collaboration between Minnesota Information and Technology Services (MNIT) and the various operations and business areas from each agency of origin have been critical.

**Staff and Program Transfer:** As of June 30, 2025, the department fully completed its staff transitions. Since its launch in July 2024, the Department has integrated 729 full-time and part-time employees, including the final transition in June of 2025 of 164 staff members who joined from the Department of Human Services (DHS) and nine from the Department of Public Safety (DPS). While this final transition of programs and staff has been completed, the department continues the work of building agency culture, process and structure that support the entire complement of its programs.

**Technology:** Ensuring a seamless transition for existing staff and onboarding new personnel to the Department necessitated careful evaluation and preparation of technical applications and resources. With thoughtful and intensive cross-enterprise planning during the year leading up to the launch of the new agency and throughout the 12-month transition period, the MNIT and business project teams successfully:

- Moved more than 800 staff accounts and identities to the Department (from DHS, DPS, and the Departments of Health and Education).
- Onboarded 16 executive leaders.
- Established the Department as a separate new agency in MNIT Enterprise systems for service delivery and billing.
- Designed and implemented on-site and offline MNIT Hypercare support for each wave of staff moves.
- Resolved more than 600 Hypercare tickets (see page 4 for more information about Hypercare).
- Assessed more than 260 technical applications to ensure continuity of access.
- Modified technical applications to support Department branding.
- Updated and created 210 distribution lists.
- Created or transitioned 160 shared mailboxes.
- Changed more than 500 phone numbers of staff to the Department's block of numbers [i.e. 651-539-xxxx].
- Established network trust agreement with the Department of Education (MDE) and new operating unit.
- Established communication channels across all impacted agencies and MNIT local offices.
- Created a user hub site to support staff messaging and tools needed for transitioning staff.

Effective communication played a crucial role in ensuring a smooth transition. The MNIT and Data team employed multiple channels and strategies to achieve this, including dedicated IT support also known as Hypercare:

- Convening a multi-agency cross-functional team of business leaders and MNIT staff to plan, manage and execute work plans.
- Creating online, virtual and in-person communication channels. This included weekly IT-focused updates as part of the broader communications plan and MNIT-focused messages, exclusively to MNIT staff. The team developed a Service Hub for transitioning staff to learn about the process and access necessary support. MNIT created user guides and online materials that were presented during office hours ahead of each of the six waves of staff transition to ensure staff understood what to expect the day before, day of and day after transition.
- Providing day of transfer support as well as dedicated enterprise teams and ticket submission options exclusively for staff transitioning to the Department.

**Fiscal Operations:** Accounting and reporting functions split from one agency (DHS) into three (the Department, DHS, and Direct Care and Treatment.) Applications and tools supporting payments to families, grantees, counties and Tribes were adjusted, all without disrupting service delivery. In addition, there is ongoing work incorporating the accounting and reporting tools from MDE and DPS.

**Executive Leadership Team Hire:** During the period from June 2024 through the transition year, the Department’s commissioner, Minnesota Management and Budget’s (MMB) Implementation Office, and the Governor’s Office focused on building an executive leadership team for the new agency. In addition to the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner positions, and the Inspector General, the executive leadership team includes the Department’s Chief Compliance Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Operations Officer, Chief Transformation Officer, Communications Director, Director of Community Engagement, Director of County Relations, Director of Tribal Relations, General Counsel, Government Affairs Director, and Human Resource Director. Information on Department leadership can be found on [the department's website](#).

**Leader Support:** To support managers and supervisors within the agencies of origin, MMB’s Management Analysis and Development hosted the Directors Community of Practice to update leaders on transition efforts and share experiences from other agencies. Materials were developed, including monthly newsletters and email updates, to support communications. Monthly meetings were available for all leaders and support staff transitioning to the Department or assisting with transition processes. These meetings allowed leaders from DHS, MDE, DPS, and the Department of Health (MDH) to build relationships and shape aspects of the Department.

A transition toolkit was developed with MMB’s Implementation Office and human resources for operations leaders from agencies coming into the new department to support team discussions about transferring or non-transferring staff, offer coaching tips, and provide logistics information such as parking, building access, technology, and equipment.

During the transition to the new agency, Department leadership hosted directors and leaders meetings to inform staff of upcoming transfers and their respective tasks to enable a smooth transition to the new agency. These meetings supported the transition as staff entered the new Department and allowed culture development and relationship building over the course of the year. Department leadership has continued many of these meetings since the transition and continues to refine leader support as we work on the agency transition.

**Central Operations Functional Analysis and Proportional Analysis Work:** The goal of the functional and proportional analysis was to equip the Department with the knowledge, skills and operational functions needed; statutorily, the Department was allotted a proportion of DHS’ budget and staff.

The Functional Analysis Tool walked operational teams through an exercise to:

1. Outline the current state functions and resources needed to fulfill teams' ongoing responsibilities,
2. Document each team's future state agency transition recommendations, and
3. Assess those recommendations in preparation for decision-making and planning efforts by agency transition leaders.

These transfer and transition related activities took place throughout Fiscal Year 2025 and continued into Fiscal Year 2026 finalize these the overall transfer. The Department continues to maintain close relationships with MDE, DHS, MDH, and DPS to ensure on-going collaboration and coordination.

## B. New Agency Location

The Department is currently housed on the third and fourth floors of the building at 444 Lafayette, via a lease agreement. The Department of Administration is leading the work to source a new location for the Department via a Request for Proposals (RFP) and other associated activities:

1. The RFP was posted Feb. 24, 2025.
  - o [Request for Proposal](#)
2. Proposal packets were due April 10, 2025, hard copies had to be delivered to the Department of Administration building by 2:30 p.m.
3. The Department of Administration received seven proposals. This is public information posted on the Department of Administration website.
  - o [List of Proposers Notice](#)
4. The Department of Administration’s Real Estate and Construction Services team will notify the Department when the new location can be announced. The selection of a location is non-public information until a lease is signed with a qualified proposer. The Department anticipates announcing a selection soon, dependent on the Department of Administration negotiating a fully executed lease document on behalf of the Department.

### Next Steps:

- Department of Administration Real Estate and Construction Services team negotiates lease
- Lease fully executed
- Winning proposer announced
- Space preparation timeline communicated
- Move team formed for planning

## C. Interagency and Data Sharing Agreements

To support the transition of programs to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families and ensure continued collaboration and sharing of critical data with originating agency partners, the Department entered into interagency agreements with originating agencies that define the agencies’ short- and long-term partnerships.

The agreements also include data sharing provisions that highlight agencies' needs to comply with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act and agencies' authorities to share data under [Minnesota Session Law 2023, Chapter 70, Article 12, Section 29](#) and other existing laws. Department interagency agreement highlights are as follows:

- A total of 40 agreements are currently in place.
- Agreements are in place with DHS, DPS, MDE, and the newly separated Direct Care and Treatment (DCT).
- Over 50% of the agreements are set to expire in June 2026, at which time the Department anticipates many of the agreements will no longer be needed.
- A monitoring and ongoing management process is being established to ensure collaborative work will continue and functions ready to transition fully to the Department do so in a timely manner.

## D. Strategic Plan Overview

In 2024, the Department began creating its first [strategic plan](#) to set a clear direction for the agency's future. Working with Wilder Research, the Department gathered broad input from staff, community partners, counties, and Tribal Nations to ensure the plan reflects real needs and aligns with Minnesota's statewide goals. The result is a mission that puts children, youth, families, and communities at the center—and a vision of an equitable Minnesota where every family can thrive.

The Department used a highly inclusive process to shape the plan.

- Nearly 300 people joined staff and community engagement sessions, and 250 more shared feedback through a survey.
- Additional county and Tribal sessions ensured local and sovereign perspectives were incorporated.
- This work builds on the Department's transition year, which included more than 200 community events and 2,800 participants statewide.

The plan is grounded in shared values such as equity, cultural responsiveness, clear communication, strong partnerships, and data-driven improvement.

### Five Strategic Priorities:

1. **Grow a strong agency culture:** The Department will strengthen its workforce by supporting continuous learning, improving collaboration across teams, and reinforcing shared accountability. The goal is to build a unified agency with the skills and capacity to serve families well.
2. **Integrate cross-agency service coordination:** The Department will break down internal and external silos, so families experience services as a single, coordinated system. This includes shared practices, better data connections, and closer collaboration with partners.
3. **Modernize technology, systems, and data practices:** The Department will upgrade outdated systems, streamline processes, and improve data quality. This work will reduce administrative burden and allow staff to focus more time on supporting children, youth, and families.
4. **Adapt and implement a whole family approach:** The Department will embed a holistic, strengths-based approach across programs. This includes elevating lived experience, expanding

trauma-informed practices, and aligning procurement, budgeting, and policy work around whole-family needs.

5. **Cultivate dynamic and effective partnerships:** The Department will deepen long-term partnerships with Tribes, counties, community organizations, providers, and families. These relationships will guide decision-making and fuel shared progress.

With the strategic plan now complete, the Department has begun putting it into action. The Department is aligning division and administration work plans with the five strategic priorities, launching new systems to monitor progress, and continuing engagement with staff, Tribes, counties, providers, and community partners. These early implementation steps will ensure the plan drives real, measurable improvements in how Minnesota supports children, youth, and families.

## E. Whole Family Foundations

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families is taking a Whole Family Approach to its work, fulfilling the Department's goals by approaching practice, program, and policy decision making in a way that recognizes and addresses the needs of children and adults in their lives simultaneously. The Vision for Policy and Equity Workstream, created during the Department's planning year, adapted the Aspen Institute's Ascend Framework to guide employees in answering the question: "What do people need to thrive?" While the agency influences many elements of family well-being, its scope is broader than the agency, offering a holistic perspective on human needs. Children, Youth and Families do not come in parts. When you serve one member, you impact the entire family unit. The Whole Family Systems approach is a key priority in the Department's strategic plan and guides planning across the Department.

In addition, to engage all staff, a set of training modules have been released to provide leaders and staff with a resource to broaden their understanding of the tenets of the Whole Family Approach. More information about the approach can be found at [the Department's website](#).

## F. Community Engagement

As a newly established agency, the Department has prioritized meaningful engagement with Minnesotans across the state. Engagement is essential to building trust, shaping responsive programs, and ensuring that policies reflect the needs and experiences of Minnesotans. The Department's approach emphasizes listening to people with lived experience, strengthening partnerships with community organizations, and maintaining strong, collaborative relationships with counties and Tribal Nations. This is also a core component of the agency's strategic plan.

The Department regularly engages with people who are directly impacted by its programs through listening sessions, community conversations, and advisory councils focused on child safety, family preservation, equity, and economic supports. These engagements create spaces for families, caregivers, and youth to share their stories and inform agency decisions. The Department also maintains ongoing relationships with community partners—including advocacy organizations, nonprofit providers, and grantees—through monthly coalitions, communities of practice, and networking convenings.

**County Relations:** Counties are core implementation partners, and the Department invests significant time in building strong government-to-government and intergovernmental relationships. The Department maintains regular communication and collaboration through the Association of Minnesota

Counties (AMC) and Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACSSA) meetings, convenings of local government leadership, legislative retreats, and program-specific work groups. These relationships help to align policy and implementation across urban, suburban, and Greater Minnesota communities.

**Tribal Relations:** Over the past 18 months, the Department has engaged with Tribes through a variety of methods including government-to-government consultation with 10 of the 11 Tribal nations, participation in quarterly meetings of the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, participation in the cross-agency Tribal and Urban Indian Legislative Summits, and meets with Tribal leadership and staff in the regular course of work. Department leadership and staff work to center the importance of strong Tribal relationships as well as Tribal Sovereignty in its programmatic and operational work.

**Intergovernmental Advisory Council:** As a component of the Department's development, included the creation of the Intergovernmental Advisory Committee. Co-developed by the Department, interested Tribal Nations, the Association of Minnesota Counties, and MACSSA, the committee brings human services leaders and elected officials together to advise the commissioner on the planning, design, administration, funding and evaluation of the Department's services for children, youth, and families.

**Engagement Tracking:** To support transparency and agency-wide coordination, the Department tracks engagement activities. To date, more than 450 engagement activities have been logged across all administrations in 2025, demonstrating the scale and consistency of the agency's outreach efforts.

The Department also participates in community events statewide—from back-to-school resource fairs and foster and adoptive family celebrations, to cultural gatherings and early childhood events. The agency also convenes partners and community members for milestone activities such as the Early Childhood Family Education 50th anniversary and Minnesota African American Family Preservation and Child Welfare Disparities Act implementation dinners. Efforts like the [Speak Up for SNAP](#) initiative and monthly SNAP Coalition meetings continue to strengthen partnerships focused on food security and family stability.

Across all divisions, engagement guides the Department's program development, legislative priorities, and long-term strategy. As the agency continues to grow, these relationships — and the ongoing commitment to track and learn from them — will remain central to ensuring that services are accessible, equitable, and responsive to the diverse needs of Minnesota's children, youth, and families.

## G. Philanthropy Partnerships

As a part of outreach efforts, MMB's Implementation Office and the Department connected with philanthropic partners during the planning year to discuss opportunities for relationship building and alignment. Partners recognized the opportunity that existed with the development of a new state agency. Often philanthropy and government support the same organizations and communities through their work. This overlap is an opportunity to align our efforts and maximize impact. Philanthropy can bring flexibility, innovation, and speed. Government can bring reach, resources, and stability. And when aligned, our collective strengths can make a big difference for Minnesotans.

Over the course of the transition year, the department worked closely with Bush Foundation and Graves Family Foundation to build out a Philanthropy Table — a cross-sector partnership that brings government

and philanthropy together. Its purpose is to align resources, share knowledge, and design sustainable solutions that improve the well-being of Minnesota’s children, youth, and families.

The Philanthropy Table will:

- Share timely knowledge about pressing issues facing children and families.
- Bring together community insights, evaluation findings, and best practices.
- Build trust and stronger working relationships between philanthropy and government.
- Create opportunities to align and coordinate resources intentionally.
- Speak with a more unified voice on behalf of children and families.
- Deliver measurable improvements in well-being across Minnesota.

The Department plans to provide both staffing and leadership capacity to the Steering Committee and Philanthropy Table activities and initiatives. It will use a grant from the Bush Foundation for a portion of these purposes.

## H. Fraud, Waste and Abuse

The Department was created to reimagine how Minnesota can support its youngest residents and their families, with the goal of making Minnesota the best place to live and raise a family. Part of that change includes a strong commitment to program integrity and responsible stewardship of public funds.

Program integrity and compliance are key to the success of our work.

The Department maintains a strong program integrity and oversight framework that includes audits, compliance checks, site visits, investigations, program reviews and regular collaborative partnerships with law enforcement officials.

All agency staff are responsible for efficient and effective use of state resources. The agency encourages reporting and prevention of fraud, waste, and abuse. Over the past 18 months, the Department has built out multiple areas to ensure it is able to effectively steward public dollars.

### **Staff engagement:**

- The Department observed Fraud, Waste and Abuse Week (Nov. 17-24, 2025) by engaging staff in-person to share information and answer staff questions.
- Required, Department-specific annual training is also part of the awareness and knowledge building for all staff.
- How to report fraud is also a part of the knowledge building for all staff.

**Contract and Legal Compliance Division:** The Department’s Contracts and Legal Compliance Division oversees the contracting process for all administrations and divisions within the agency. This team has pulled contracting processes from four different agencies (MDE, DHS, DPS and MDH) to create a new system that creates consistency for the Department’s contracting process – from risk assessment to contract execution. The division’s priorities include:

- Increasing oversight of potential grantees during pre-award risk assessment. This process includes additional compliance and limits on receiving public funds reviews.
- Grant contract template standardization to include compliance language and additional agency discretion to exercise authority according to limits on receiving public funds.

**Compliance Office:** The Compliance Office works across the agency to ensure the Department maintains comprehensive program integrity, auditing and compliance programs. It provides this oversight as the Department works with grantees, contractors, counties, and Tribes in the implementation of grants and public programs. This team assesses agency risk, compliance, and engages in auditing processes. They provide support in the following areas:

- 1. Grant management process standardization and oversight**
  - Work closely with the Grants and Legal Compliance team to support oversight on the contracting process.
  - Provide increasing visibility and development of procedures of sub-recipient monitoring; sub-recipient monitoring will be embedded into compliance auditing schedule.
- 2. Limits on Receiving Public Funds (LORPF) system and coordination**
  - Limits on Receiving Public Funds Coordinator position filled.
  - Coordination and integration with DHS on LORPF system to allow cross-agency collaboration to generate awareness and proactive mitigation steps.
- 3. Data analytics**
  - Data gathering to monitor risk trends and afford early prevention. Data includes hotline reporting, tips and complaints from external and internal sources, audit and preliminary review outcomes, and auditing standards.
- 4. Standardization of compliance reporting**
  - Establishing a consistent process to ensure timely responses to reports; reports will be triaged, escalating those serious reports for immediate review, while addressing those with less serious concerns.
  - Reviewing conflict of interest disclosures in detail to prevent employee abuse of resources to benefit another party.
- 5. Eligibility review**
  - Review eligibility for public programs as administered by counties and Tribes.

The Compliance Office has maintained relationships with the agencies of origin to ensure strong communication between compliance areas to ensure a smooth transition.

**Office of Inspector General:** The Department's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) oversees and regulates licensing and program integrity. In June 2025, OIG staff transitioned to the Department to strengthen and streamline program integrity oversight by centralizing these functions within the agency. Staff have maintained strong relationships and partnerships with the Offices of Inspector General at MDE and DHS.

Within the Office of Inspector General, the Program Integrity Oversight Division (PIO) identifies, prevents, and investigates fraud, waste, and abuse occurring in childcare programs. This division's oversight has teams devoted to the following primary activities:

- Investigation of Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) violations.
- Providing education to new providers in the CCAP program via the Early and Often Program.
- Auditing the Great Start grant program.

The Program Integrity Oversight Division also reviews program data for any concerning trends that would warrant further investigation. Additionally, PIO also has an interagency agreement with the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) to refer cases of suspected fraud.

The Early and Often Program is focused on prevention by educating new childcare providers on program requirements so providers can correctly claim funding. The division conducted 141 Early and Often visits in 2024 while it remained with DHS, and 121 in 2025, after the transition to the new Department, through Nov. 20, 2025.

The Program Integrity Oversight Division may take administrative actions ranging in severity based on their evaluations, which can include correction orders, stipulated provider agreements, monetary recovery, payment withhold or stop payments, suspensions and administrative disqualifications.

The Great Start Compensation Payments and Grants Investigations Unit acts proactively to identify improper payments and potential fraud, waste, and abuse in these programs through random audits of grant recipients and focused audits.

The Fraud Prevention Investigation unit supports efforts by counties and Tribes to combat fraud, waste and abuse in administering state funded programs. Fraud Prevention Investigation includes a grant program for counties to support counties' efforts to maintain integrity in the recipient eligibility process, make sure benefits are provided at the appropriate levels, and only provided to eligible applicants and recipients.

The Office of Inspector General employs an Analytics and Insights team to lead efforts to detect data anomalies that may indicate fraud, waste, or abuse.

## **I. Organizational Structure re-imagined**

The Department continues to develop its organizational structure through re-examining the alignment of business areas with staff needed to carry out assigned functions. Agency leadership is also reviewing the naming conventions that best explain the duties and responsibilities of each business area.

MMB's Implementation Office conducted research pre-transition to set the baseline for the current structure by engaging with staff, counties, and Tribal nations. The findings are listed below and are being used to re-imagine the Department's organizational structure.

Through the planning and transition year, the Department heard from counties, Tribes, and communities about the need for greater coordination, integration, and innovation. These themes guided the development of the four program administrations and continue to shape how the Department builds and organizes its structure.

During the planning year as well as throughout the development of the Department's strategic plan, staff and leadership heard about the:

- Importance of a structure that allows for collaboration and coordination.
- Need to structure administrations and divisions in a way that allows for cross-cutting sharing of information, best practices and ways of doing work, and relationship building.
- Need to break down silos, allowing for cross-division collaboration and coordination, including through the creation of intentional spaces for cross-functional teams and sharing, integration, and shared learning.

- Importance of taking advantage of this historic opportunity to improve how services are delivered and received.
- Desire for user experience for partners (counties, Tribes, schools, communities) and families to be considered throughout design.
- Need for innovation, prevention services and research, data, evidence-based practices and policy.
- Need for the Department to have visible leadership and coordination of:
  - Mental health services across state agencies to elevate and align priorities.
  - Systems and services across state agencies for children who have disabilities and their families.
  - Work to close disparities, with specific focus on the most significant disparities for Black and Indigenous children, across early learning, health and well-being, and youth justice.
  - Navigation for families, community partners, and service providers.
  - Equity strategies through leadership in an equity office.
  - Indian policy through a Tribal office.

The Department responded to these themes and needs identified by creating the following [structures](#):

**Program Administrations:** The Department is organized into four program administrations: Child Safety and Permanency, Early Childhood, Family Well-Being, and Economic Opportunity and Youth Services. Three of these administrations were formed by integrating programs from different legacy agencies, while one was created to streamline the agency’s organizational structure. Each administration is now exploring how to improve coordination across its services and planning for how this can work most effectively going forward.

**Office of Systems Change and Public Engagement:** This office focuses on both internal and external engagement to strengthen the Department’s work and support communities. Key areas include:

- Improving the effectiveness and reliability of service outcomes for all communities.
- Addressing barriers and inequities in policies, practices, and systems to ensure program outcomes meet community needs.
- Grounding decisions in the real experiences of Minnesota communities.
- Ensuring agency policies and programs reflect the actual needs and priorities of communities,
- Developing transparent and accountable practices.
- Using feedback and evidence to make agency operations more results-focused, consistent, and fair for all Minnesotans.

**County Relations:** This division focuses on partnership, alignment and support with counties, which are important implementation partners in the administration of human services programs. This office is focused on:

- Prioritizing relationships with county partners, including creating a dedicated county relations role within the agency.
- Maintaining regular connection with the DHS County Relations Director, through bi-weekly scheduled meetings and other engagements to strengthen partnership, alignment and collaboration across human services programs.
- Taking a co-development approach in developing the Intergovernmental Advisory Committee (IAC), consulting and planning with counties, interested Tribes, and Department staff and leadership at every step.

**Tribal Relations:** This division works closely with Tribal nations to conduct government-to-government consultations that support implementation of human services programs administered at the Department. This office is focused on:

- Building relationships with Tribes as a new state agency.
- Supporting alignment and shared work to serve communities.

**Office of Transformation:** As a result of community feedback, the Transformation Office was created to ensure Minnesota children, youth, and families are being well served by the agency through partnership with Department programs and operations as well as supporting intra- and inter-agency collaboration through project management, innovation development, and program coordination.

There are three unique work areas within the Transformation Office:

- The Complex Projects Team provides project management support for DCYF. This team of project managers are focused on projects that have both cross-agency and interagency requirements. Over the course of the Department’s transition year, this team provided project management support to help establish the new agency.
- The Family Programs Team is focused on program elements that don’t fit into one administration but span them all. The areas of focus for this team are Children’s Mental Health, Children’s Disability Services, and Family Navigation. The team provides cross agency connectivity and collaboration on each of these issues, as well as inter-agency connection with other state agencies similarly focused in these areas.
- The Office of Innovation supports cross-agency innovation to better serve children, youth, families and communities. It is focused on working with staff from various areas of the agency to uplift, support, and establish innovative policies, programs, and practices that center whole children and whole families to improve outcomes. Innovation lives across the Department, and this office is designed to support existing innovation highlights while working with staff and community to identify areas of needed innovation.

## J. Data and System Modernization

Over the past 18 months, the Department has taken on the primary responsibility of several of the human services’ IT systems. In partnership with Minnesota IT Services (MNIT), the Department is improving technology and systems to better support state program and delivery partners. These projects enhance Minnesotans’ access to vital services, reduce staff’s administrative burdens, and support equitable outcomes by ensuring that all Minnesotans can navigate and benefit from programs with dignity and ease. This past year the agency has been focused on the following activities.

### Child Welfare Information System modernization

The Department is creating a new child welfare information application to replace the Social Service Information System (SSIS) – the current tool that has been in place for more than 25 years. The Governor recommended investments in the system’s replacement and the Legislature approved this project in 2025, with support from the federal Administration for Children and Families.

The new application will align with federal requirements, improve data quality, make information sharing easier, and reduce duplicative work. It is designed to be simple to use, reduce paperwork, and save time

so caseworkers can focus on serving children, youth, and families. This new application will be built in conjunction with Tribal Nations, counties, community members, and state and federal partners.

**High-level project timeline:**

- **Planning phase (2025 to 2026)** - Requirements gathering and vendor selection via Request for Proposal. A readiness vendor is engaged in preparing the RFP.
- **Implementation phase (beginning in 2027)** - Build and roll out system in phases, conduct training for partners and federal review for the Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) compliance

The Department is also transforming the way caseworkers enter and record their work in Minnesota's child welfare case management system, which allows local agency staff to spend more time with children and families and less time at the computer. The time entry transformation initiative has launched with the Department, DHS, MNIT, and system users as partners.

Modernizing the Social Service Information System (SSIS) will provide better support to our workforce and the people we serve. Minnesota agency professionals, ranging from social workers, case aides, to clerical, fiscal and licensing staff, use SSIS to enter or update time information, case notes, and agency time sheet information.

Improving how caseworkers enter their time in SSIS will:

- Save caseworkers time by making it easier to enter data.
- Reduce paperwork and extra tasks for caseworkers.
- Provide a mobile version so caseworkers can use it in the field.
- Ensure correct and complete records.
- Improve the ease and reliability of the system.

**Data Governance**

The Strategy and Technology business area is developing a framework that ensures proper management of data. This is being done through collaboration with the Office of Transformation to develop a draft agency-wide data strategy designed to support and align with the strategic plan's measurements. This will include engagement with external partners, keeping in mind that the strategic plan is a public document.

**IT and Program Integrity Measures**

The Department and MNIT have been working together to ensure strong IT system security.

The Department's Early Childhood Administration, Office of the Inspector General, and MNIT have been working to establish a centralized, electronic Child Care Assistance Program attendance record system. Investments into creating an electronic attendance record system were included in the Governor's budget recommendations and the Legislature approved funding during the 2025 legislative session. This system will be phased in starting in June 2026.

## V. Ongoing Implementation

It has been productive 18 months since the agency launched on July 1, 2024. The Department's transition year was focused on program and staff transfers, technology integration, strategic

planning, organizational design and structure, compliance and program integrity as well as culture building. In the upcoming weeks and months ahead, we will continue to finalize aspects of transition and work on the goals and strategies connected to our strategic plan as the agency builds a culture focused on steadfastly serving the children, youth, families and community in Minnesota.