

MFIP TEEN PARENT PROJECT

CROSS POLLINATION, INNOVATION AND REFLECTION TEAM MEETING

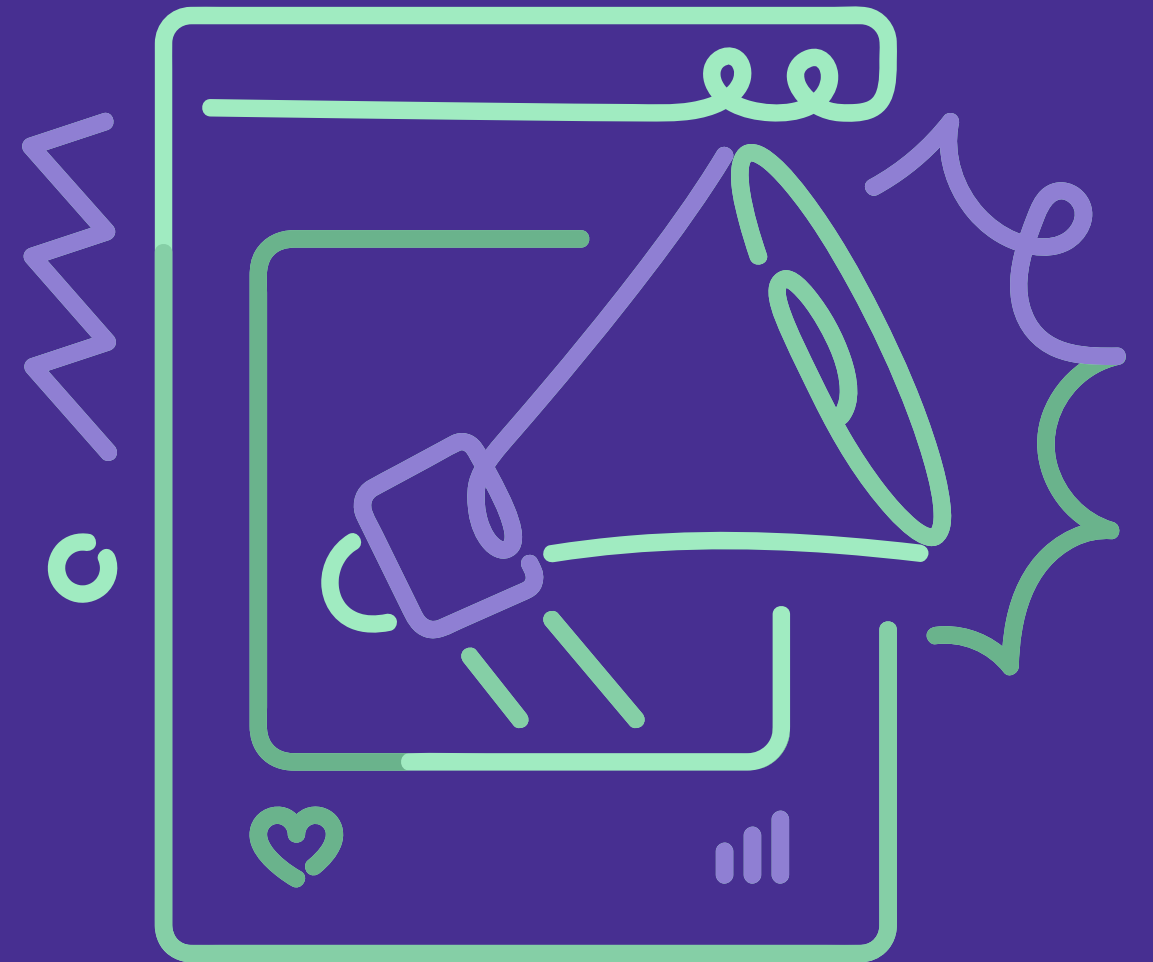


September 2025



SHARED CONNECTIONS

Type in the Chat: What is
your favorite season of
the year?



WELCOME!

Purpose of Today

Reflect and Design Together

Our Agreements

Understanding and Shared Voice

This meeting will be recorded!



Schedule

Welcome

Engagement Session Recap & Reflections

Data Summary

Design Solutions Overview

Feedback & Input

Closing & Looking Ahead

FACILITATORS



MJ
MAYA Consulting



Roshelle
MAYA Consulting



Ada
Community Advisor



Chasity
Community Advisor



Celia
MAYA Consulting

PROJECT OVERVIEW & TIMELINE

Phase # 1

March - July

Planning

- Recruit Community Design Advisors (CDAs)
- Co-design full-day community engagement sessions
- Complete research application (IRB) with the State of Minnesota

Phase # 2

August -
September

Discovery

- Review data on existing resources and services available
- Review data on what works to move young families out of poverty (Economic Mobility)
- Facilitate two full-day design sessions with current/former teen parents to develop recommendations for state-level supports and resources for young parents

Phase # 3

September -
November

Action

- Facilitate loop-back sessions with teen parents, sharing back the findings outlined in the Summary of Learning report
- Outline findings and recommendations into a "Summary of Learnings" report
- Write and release a "Request for Proposals" (RFP) that invites organizations to deliver services we've designed together

ENGAGEMENT SESSION RECAP



**We built
connections.**



**We reviewed
and reflected on
data.**



**We shared the
challenges of our
experiences with
MFIP/TANF.**



**We split into
small groups to
discuss our
needs and ideas.**

CDA REFLECTIONS



Minnesota Family Investment Program

ENGAGEMENT SESSION FINDINGS

ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS



Host: Red Lake Nation
Date: August 19, 2025
Participants: 9



Host: Connections to Independence (c2i)
Date: August 22, 2025
Participants: 10



WHAT THEY'RE STRIVING FOR

Hopes and aspirations teen parents reported having for their children and themselves.

They **know**
what they
want and are
good at.

Examples of shared hopes and aspirations include:

- Career plans that are flexible *and* allow for future growth.
- Reliable childcare that fits their schedules and is not always full-time.
- Deep need for sense of community and belonging.
- Assurance that their children will have what they need every day so they can focus on growing their futures.

WHERE THEY FEEL SUPPORTED



What teen parents reported **working well**:

1. Public health nurses
2. Programs like Think Small, PICA, Head Start and Young Lives
3. Caseworkers who communicate, are proactive, listen, and act quickly
4. Supportive family and friends

Characteristics of a Good Supporter:

They shared that a good supporter:

- Listens without judgement,
- Is positive and motivating,
- Is empowering,
- Is loving,
- Is helpful with kids,
- Has open arms,
- Is available, and
- Has high expectations.



ROADBLOCKS THEY FACE

Barriers and gaps teen parents reported experiencing in the current system.

#1

Unresponsive
Caseworkers

#2

Barriers and
Gaps in MFIP

#3

Limited
Reliable
Childcare

#4

Need for **more**
Information

#5

Lack of
Supports

EXPERIENCES WITH CASEWORKERS



What Works:



- Caseworker initiated communication
- Meeting in-person
- Consistency
- Providing career supports
- Referring to other programs
- Treating teen parents with respect
- Caseworkers who “look like me”
- Caseworkers with lived experience

What Doesn't:



- Lack of communication
- Unresponsiveness
- Lack of follow-up
- Lack of interest in supporting
- Constant turnover
- Feeling talked down to
- We vs. you mentality

“Talk to me like I’m a **person, rather than just a client.**”

“Make me feel like I’m a **problem and a burden** to a job that you signed up for and are getting paid for.”

CHALLENGES WITH MFIP

Communication

- Lack of communication and information on MFIP
- Confusing paperwork
- No one to call besides caseworker who is unresponsive

Funding Amount

- Inconsistent amounts creates instability especially if cut off
- Not enough with high cost of living
- Extra money would be “weight off shoulders”
- “Hard to save when you have kids”

Other

- Programming varies drastically by county
- Would prefer to not be on MFIP
- Don’t feel welcome or comfortable trying to use these services

There are “a million people touching your case, **causing errors that we are then penalized for.**”

“State normally tells us the **bare minimum** [related to MFIP].”

CHILDCARE BARRIERS

- Limited availability and long waitlists
- Often only accessible to MFIP recipients
- No overnight options
- Unreliable care
- Concerns about quality

“Rather them be with my family than **worry about who’s watching my kids.**”

GAPS IN EDUCATION

- Need for financial literacy, early childhood education, and sex education
- Regular school doesn’t teach the skills that are needed once the baby arrives
- Shrinking resources over time

“If you have the correct guidance, you can **make the right decisions.**”

NEED FOR BELONGING & SUPPORT



Sense of Belonging

- Often feel isolated
- “A lot of teen parents, we don’t have villages.”

Supports Needed

- Self-care
- Teen-parent specific mental health supports
- Teen parent groups
- Spaces to gather with other teen parents
- Value one-on-one supports and people who listen without judgement

“We’re **not meant to be alone.**”

“Reminding monthly to take care of ourselves would **boost confidence and help with insecurity.**”

REALITIES OF CO-PARENTING



“Even though [we are] not together, we are **still in a partnership.**”

What we Heard:

- Having a co-parent doesn't always mean they are present or supportive.
- Successful co-parenting requires trust, shared responsibility, and being “on the same page.”
- The child's wellbeing depends on both parents being emotionally, mentally, and physically stable.
- Childcare payments and financial obligations create stress and tension.



IDEAS TO MAKE THE SYSTEM BETTER

#1 Caseworker accountability

Regular feedback, tracking of performance, independent complaints office and call center, and “secret shopper” style checks.

#2 Caseworkers who “look like me”

Caseworkers closer in age, with shared live experience, who “look like me”. Ability to select the caseworker will work with based on who “best fits us”.

#3 Alternative communication methods

Utilize text, on-demand chat support, and email for both caseworker and program communication.

#4 Policy driven by lived experience

Legislators meet directly with teen parents to understand lived experience



IDEAS TO MAKE THE SYSTEM BETTER

#5 Create teen-parent community

Create and host teen-parent specific groups within designated community spaces.

#6 Alternative childcare options

Offer more flexible and overnight childcare options.

#7 Provide preparation courses

Offer financial literacy and real-life skills courses.

HOW THEY WANT TO STAY ENGAGED



Why they showed up in August

- Learn more about MFIP and how it works
- Need for financial clarity and support
- “Feels good to not be alone”

What would keep them engaged:

- More groups of teen moms
- Sharing across counties to see differences in experiences
- Offering spaces for others (teens, workers, and legislators) to hear voices and experiences

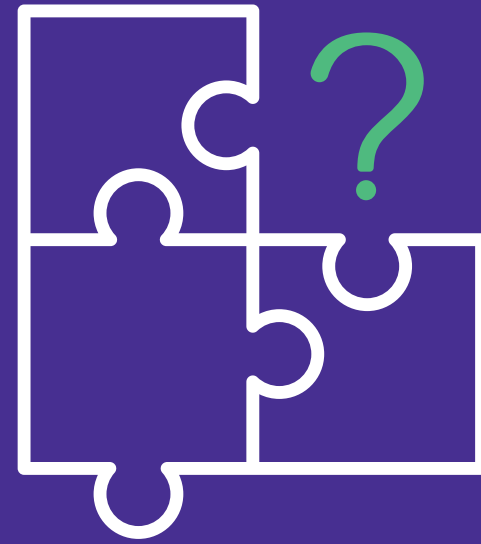
Logistics that matter:

- After-school timing
- Early morning and evenings
- Transportation support
- Spaces where people listen, understand, and are not judgmental

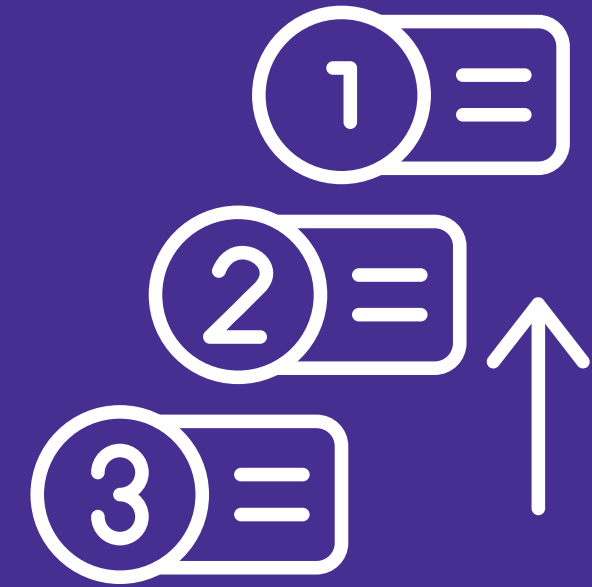
SMALL GROUP REFLECTION



Where do you see alignment between what our participants have shared and your own work?



Is there anything that's on your heart that is missing from this data summary?

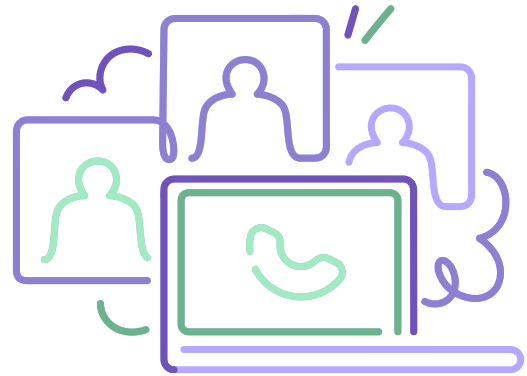


What matters to you the most in the data?

Use the google form to share your notes!



DEEPEN SERVICE DELIVERY



SOCIAL CAPITAL BUILDING



**ONGOING FAMILY
ENGAGEMENT & SUCCESS
TRACKING**

DESIGN SOLUTIONS OVERVIEW

**DISCLAIMER:
THESE ARE
EARLY IDEAS!**



Focus Area #1

DEEPEN SERVICE DELIVERY

Deepen the impact of MFIP program supports. Ensure sure case workers are well equipped to provide **responsive** care that meets each family's needs and **effectively partners** with parents to move toward stability and growth.



Providing trauma-informed training that also equips case workers to builds on parents' strengths

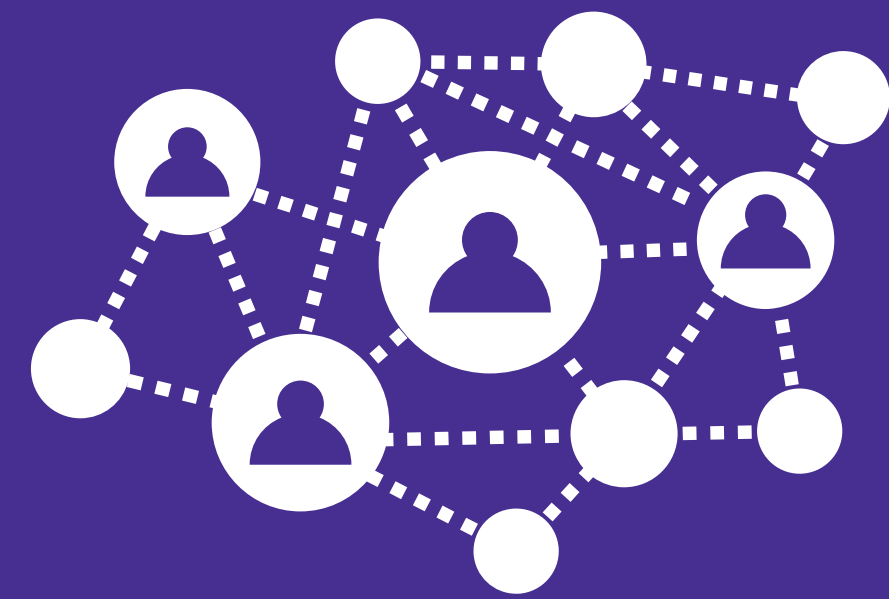
Career advancement, entrepreneurship, and long term economic mobility goal planning

Single Point of Contact approach for teen parents

Focus Area #2

SOCIAL CAPITAL BUILDING

Connect teen parents with **people and resources that can support** them like mentors, friends, community programs, or networks



Connection opportunities and virtual gatherings for teen parents across the state

This could include small groups for learning personal & professional development

Build connections between teen parents and established professionals with lived experience

Focus Area #3

ONGOING FAMILY ENGAGEMENT & SUCCESS TRACKING

Keep and reflect on detailed **data** to determine **how the program is** working toward **really helping families**.



Regularly check in with teen parents to share data, hear their feedback, make changes when needed, and keep sharing back what we've learned.

SMALL GROUP REFLECTION



What do we think about these proposed solutions?

What feels most important to you?

What else should we know, based on your experience, in order for each of these strategies to be successful?

CLOSING & NEXT STEPS



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