

# AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILD & FAMILY WELL BEING ADVISORY COUNCIL

<b>DATE:</b> October 23, 2025	<b>TIME:</b> 5PM – 7PM
<b>LOCATION:</b> TEAMS	<b>ADDRESS:</b> <a href="#">Join the meeting now</a>

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** J. Blakey, J. Rogers, H. Yusuf, J. Williams, C. Washington, C. Devonish, T. Russell

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** D. Woods, N. Johnson-Lenoir, K. Porter, Y. Lee, A. Hill, L. Lewis

**DCYF STAFF PRESENT:** S. McPherson, D. Gilchrist, S. Greene, J. Williams, H. Burton, S. Timm, N. Thyden

## MEETING MINUTES

### Approval of Minutes

- Motion to approve meeting agenda; passed unanimously.
- Motion to approve previous meeting minutes; passed unanimously.

### AACFWB Unit Update Presentation

- Recent presentations emphasized how children’s trauma is often misdiagnosed as behavioral or mental health disorders such as EBD, OCD, or ADHD, underscoring the need to recognize system trauma and trust issues in case planning, permanency, and reunification.
- Father engagement is also a growing priority, with unit staff attending the *Fathers in Focus* conference in Madison and exploring the creation of a similar event in Minnesota.
- In partnership with the Minnesota Association for Children’s Mental Health, the team is revising the infant and early childhood practice guide, with a draft expected in January for Council feedback.
- Structured decision-making tools are being redesigned, with a new safety assessment already in use and the risk assessment paused due to concerns about bias raised in an OCR/NAACP complaint.
- Parenting supports are being expanded through the redevelopment of the African American Parenting Guide, last updated over a decade ago, with community and county engagement planned and a release targeted for 2027 to align with Families First implementation. Family First also allows counties to receive up to 50 percent reimbursement for approved services, including congregate care.
- Reviewer opportunities are open in the safety and prevention area, S.Walker is returning to grants management to oversee family preservation and direct support grants.
- Oversight and accountability are being strengthened through targeted case reviews of African American child welfare cases in Hennepin and Ramsey counties. Early findings highlight strong family engagement and kinship placements but also persistent disparities and gaps in culturally specific services. The review tool is being refined and expanded to cover permanency, independent living, and foster care, with quarterly updates and eventual annual reports planned. A compliance portal is also being developed to receive complaints and concerns about MAP CWDA practice. While the portal cannot override court decisions or county actions, it will provide a transparent process for reviewing cases, consulting with counties, and sharing aggregate data.

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## **Supervisor Updates Regarding Council**

- Council infrastructure is being formalized with the launch of a General Council website aligned with the Secretary of State's office for vacancies and applications, an Engagement HQ platform for secure collaboration, and a unit website with handouts and culturally authentic visuals.
- Recruitment is underway to expand Council membership, with applications due November 5.

## **Council Updates**

Council operations are also being strengthened. Planning is underway for a 2026 work plan that will set events, goals, and subcommittee structures. Subcommittee work is expected to resume in January with new members onboarded.

- The annual report draft is in progress.
- The retreat scheduling is being adjusted to align Council and unit priorities, and upcoming meetings in November and December have been moved earlier due to holidays.