AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILD AND FAMILY WELL BEING ADVISORY COUNCIL

Council Meeting Minutes – May 27, 2026

Present: J. Blakey, L. Lewis, J. Cannon, S. Brown, T. Russell, S. Hall, K. Kamara, K. Caston, S. Kabalan, L. Coleman, P. Fritz, H. Yusuf, L. Muhammad,

Absent: A. Hill, N. Lenoir-Johnson, K. Holliday, C. Fleming, A. Goff, L. Davis, P. Frye, M. Doward, K. Porter, S. Washington, A. Lamb-Onayiga

DCYF Staff: S. McPherson

Guest: S. Thompson, K. Booker, B. Potter

Chair Blakey convened the meeting and the agenda was approved. New members introduced themselves, including Charles Hurd, Sterling Brown, and Naima Hussein, each highlighting their professional backgrounds and commitment to African American children, families, and community well-being.

The meeting centered on implementation updates from Hennepin County and Ramsey County regarding the Minnesota African American Family Preservation and Child Welfare Disparities Act (MAAFPA-CWDA).

Hennepin County Implementation Update

Kwesi Booker, **Chief Children and Family Services Officer**, reported:

- Hennepin began phased implementation on January 1, 2025, reaching 100% implementation by March 30, 2026 for African American, Native American (non-ICWA), and multiracial families.
- Preparatory work included staff retraining, practice alignment, technology updates, and community coordination.
- Early outcomes show promising reductions in deeper system involvement:
    - 2,674 phased-in cases
    - 197 required ongoing case management
    - 112 children (4.2%) entered out-of-home placement
- Chief Officer Booker emphasized that early active efforts are contributing to family preservation.
- The primary barrier has been judicial rulings challenging the race-based eligibility criteria during phased rollout. Despite this, Hennepin continues to provide 100% active efforts to all eligible families.

Ramsey County Implementation Update

Ramsey County Deputy Director Bobbi Jo Potter and **Director Sophia Thompson** reported:

- Ramsey remains on its original phase-in schedule: 70% currently, moving to 80% in July, 90% in October, and 100% in January 2027.
- Implementation priorities include workforce stabilization, training, and practice alignment, with emphasis on early engagement and Family Group Decision Making (FGDM).
- 2025 data included:
  - 410 phased-in assessments
  - 41 cases moving to case management
  - 73 children entering out-of-home placement
- Primary drivers of involvement were caregiver substance use and mental health needs, underscoring gaps in early-stage, accessible services.

Shared Themes Across Counties

Council members noted alignment in county experiences:

- Early engagement and prevention reduce deeper system involvement.
- Father and kin engagement require strengthened processes and partnerships.
- Documentation systems need modernization to accurately capture active efforts.
- Culturally responsive services remain insufficient statewide.
- Cross-system training—courts, schools, hospitals, service providers—is a major unmet need.

Council Dialogue and Key Concerns

Members raised questions regarding:

- Training for county attorneys, judges, guardians ad litem, and mandated reporters
- The role of schools and hospitals as major reporters
- Use of MAAFA CWDA implementation funds
- Capacity challenges for smaller counties
- Need for statewide prevention funding, including PSOP and FFPSA expansion

Both counties expressed readiness for deeper collaboration with the Council, particularly around school engagement, community education, and advocacy.

Community Engagement and Future Planning

Hennepin announced the opening of its first Family Resource Center on June 10, designed as a prevention-first, community-rooted space developed with partners such as Mad Dads. Broader community engagement is expected to expand after January 1, 2027, when DCYF's phase-in oversight concludes.

Closing

Chair Blakey thanked county leaders for their transparency and commitment. Chief Officer Booker affirmed both counties' determination to ensure successful implementation despite legal and public pressures.

The Council concluded with internal business, including meeting frequency and preparation for the biennial report due in August and the annual report due in September.

Meeting Adjournment Approved