



Board Workshop / Discussion Agenda

15 West Kellogg Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55102
651-266-9200

August 18, 2026 - 1:30 p.m.

Courthouse Room 220

WORKSHOP

1. **Minnesota African American Family Preservation & Child Welfare
Disproportionality Act: From Legislation to Practice**

[2026-287](#)

Sponsors: Social Services



Board Workshop / Discussion

Request for Board Action

15 West Kellogg Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55102
651-266-9200

Item Number: 2026-287

Meeting Date: 8/18/2026

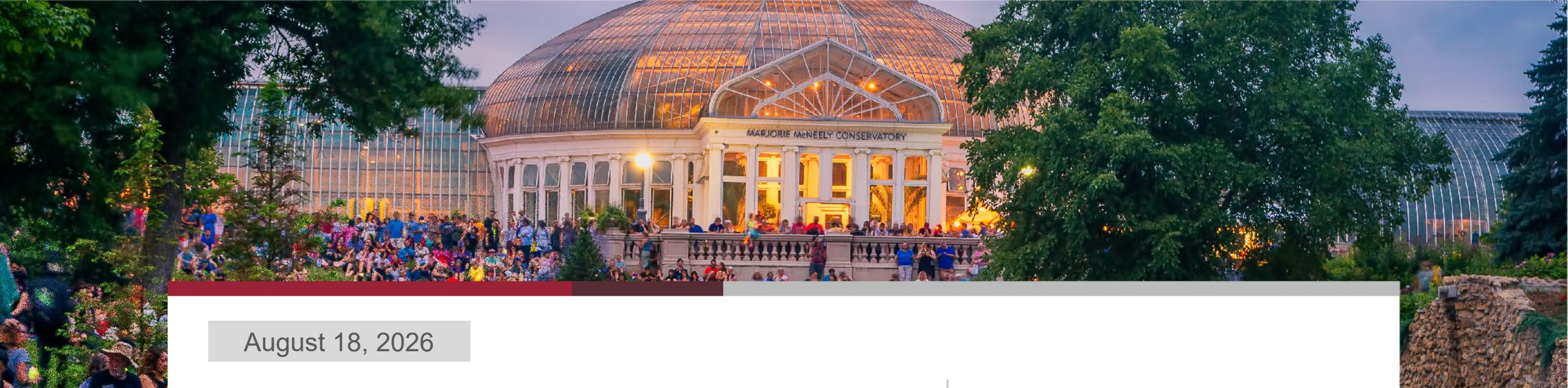
Sponsor: Social Services

Title

Minnesota African American Family Preservation & Child Welfare Disproportionality Act: From Legislation to Practice

Attachment

1. Presentation



August 18, 2026

MINNESOTA AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY PRESERVATION & CHILD WELFARE DISPROPORTIONALITY ACT: From Legislation to Practice

An 18-Month Implementation Update



Honoring Leadership & Partnership

The Minnesota African American Family Preservation & Child Welfare Disproportionality Act (MAAFPCWDA) reflects years of leadership, advocacy, and collaboration to improve outcomes for African American children and families.

We recognize and thank:

- **Legislative leaders**, including **Senator Bobby Joe Champion**, **Representative Esther Agbaje**, and legislative partners who championed MAAFPCWDA.
- **Community leaders, advocates, families, and organizations** whose partnership helped shape both the legislation and its implementation.
- The **Ramsey County Board of Commissioners**, with special recognition to **Commissioner Rena Moran** for her longstanding leadership and the Board's continued support of implementation.
- **Ramsey County executive leadership, cross-department teams, and implementation partners**—including Department of Children Youth and Families (DCYF), Hennepin County, and Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACSSA)—for their collaboration and shared learning.
- **Ramsey County Attorney's Office and Courts** for their partnership and ongoing contributions.
- **Children & Family Services leadership and staff**, whose commitment brings this legislation to life every day.

Introduction & Presenters

- I. **Introductions & Opening:** Sophia Thompson, Director, Social Services
- II. **Why This Matters:** Bobbi Jo Potter, Children and Family Services Deputy Director, Social Services
- III. **From Legislation to Practice:** Nikki Newman, Manager, Social Services
- IV. **What Change Looks Like:** Bobbi Jo Potter, Children and Family Services Deputy Director, Social Services; Elder Atum Azzahir; Elder Mary K Boyd; and Elder Gevonee Ford
- V. **Where We Go Next:** Mynea Yah, Manager, Social Services
- VI. **Questions and Discussion**



Section 1

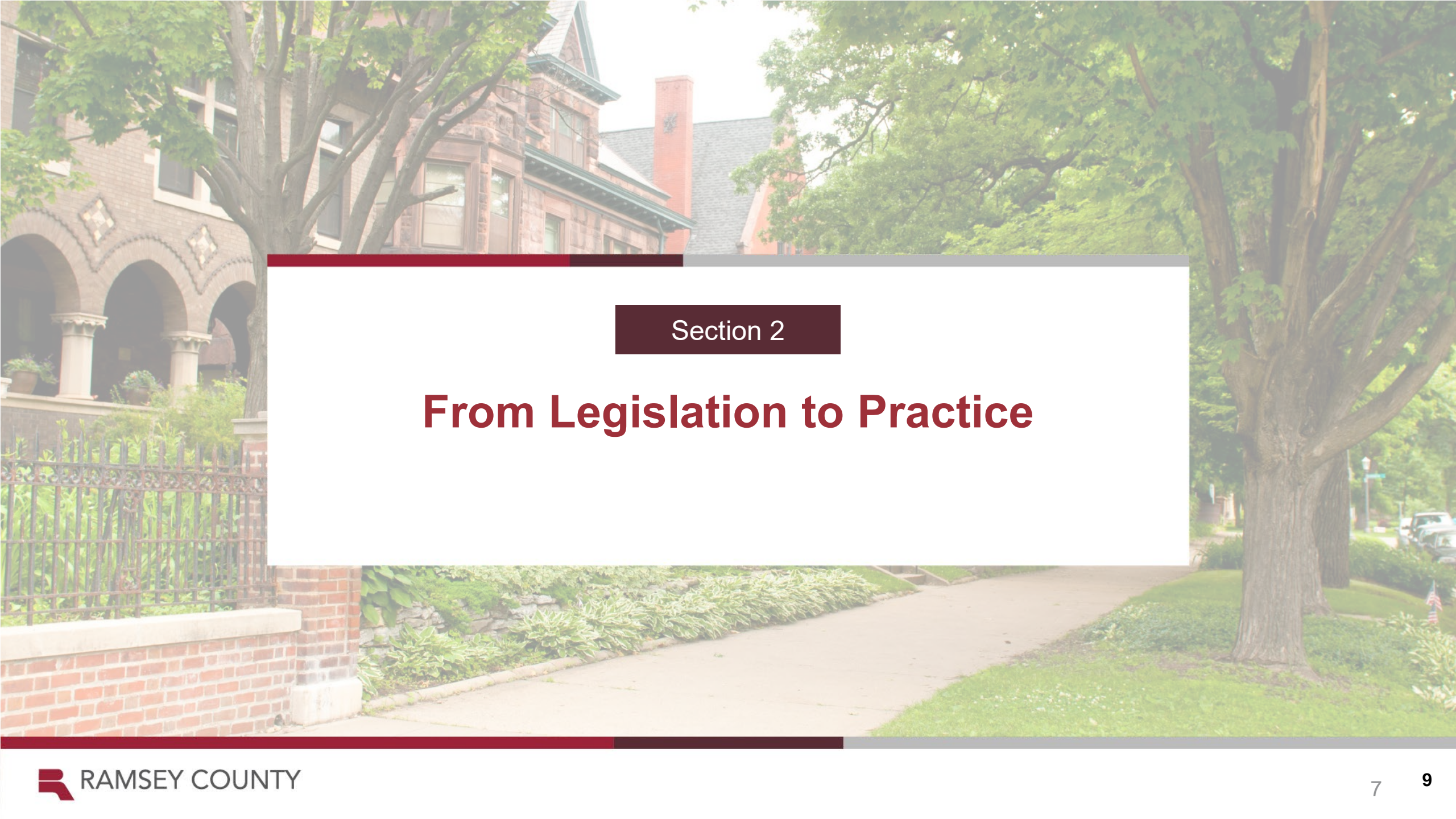
Why This Matters

Why This Matters: Disproportionality Still Persists

- Disproportionality continues: African American and American Indian children still experience higher rates of reports and removals.
- Removals increased for these groups from 2024→2025.
- Average monthly removals across all races increased (20.9 → 25.8).
- Disproportionality is still present statewide.
- MAAFPCWDA aims to correct longstanding inequities and improve family preservation.
- Ramsey County performance measures continue to monitor disparities in out-of-home placement.

Workforce + Caseload + Complexity Snapshot (2025–2026)

- Children and families are presenting with **increasingly complex needs** across behavioral health and stabilization supports.
- **Workforce vacancies** have contributed to higher caseloads and increased workload intensity. *Caseload sizes remain above preferred levels.*
- Despite this, staff completed thousands of assessments and supported hundreds of ongoing cases in 2025–2026 — reflecting sustained demand.
- **New positions were approved in 2026** to stabilize workloads, reduce caseloads, and support full implementation of MAAFPCWDA.



Section 2

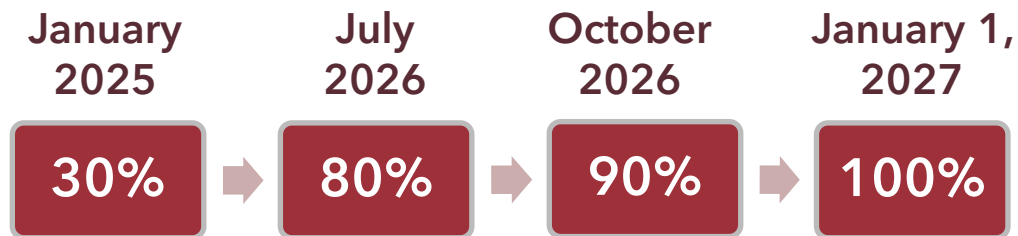
From Legislation to Practice

From Legislation to Practice: Understanding MAAFPCWDA

Purpose:

- Reduce Disproportionality
- Strengthen Family Preservation
- Expand Active Efforts
- Increase community Partnership And Culturally Specific Support

Who it currently serves: African American / Black, American Indian (non-Indian Child Welfare Act), and eligible multiracial children.



What MAAFPCWDA Changes in Practice

MAAFPCWDA establishes statutory expectations across the life of a case:

- **Active efforts and prevention:** Persistently address barriers to prevent out of home placement or reunify with their family safely.
- **Family voice and Family Group Decision Making (FGDM):** Requires that families be included and make decisions in safety and case planning.
- **Father and Relative Engagement:** Early identification and notification to fathers, non-custodial parents, and relatives about child protection involvement. They also must be considered as placement options.
- **Family and Cultural Connections:** Preserve relationships and provide culturally-specific or responsive support.
- **Accountability:** Case reviews and audits, identification of disparities, improvement of practice, and Termination of Parental Rights restrictions.
- **Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) Restrictions:** Termination of parental rights is limited to cases involving severe harm; agencies must demonstrate sustained active efforts prior to any TPR consideration.

Reasonable Efforts vs. Active Efforts

Reasonable Efforts	Active Efforts
Refers a parent to parenting classes.	Helps identify the right class, addresses barriers (transportation, childcare, scheduling), follows up, and adjusts the plan as needed.
Documents that services were offered.	Documents the actions taken to actively engage the family and support success.
Asks, “Did we offer help?”	Asks, “What did we do to help this family succeed safely?”
Example: Here’s a list of parenting classes. Let us know when you’ve enrolled.	Let’s identify a class that fits your schedule. If transportation or childcare is a barrier, we’ll work with you to address those challenges. We’ll check in regularly and adjust the plan if it’s not working.

Active efforts are more than referrals. They are intentional, persistent, and collaborative actions to support child safety and family success.



MAAFPCWDA Implementation Snapshot Jan 1, 2025 – June 30th, 2026.

- **791 cases** assigned to MAAFPCWDA phase-in
- **718 families** served through MAAFPCWDA
- **1,711 children** served
- **96 percent** of MAAFPCWDA children remained safely at home
- As of July 1, 2026, the phase-in includes 80% of eligible families

Case Reviews: Building Accountability and Learning

BUILD

*County-developed
review tool*

*Definitions and
workflow*

Trained staff reviewers

LEARN

*550 cases
reviewed*

*375 cases reviewed in
2025*

*175 cases reviewed in
2026 so far*

IMPROVE

*Earlier support and
family group decision
making referrals*

*Stronger father and
relative engagement*

*More consistent
documentation
practices and standards*

**Review findings inform remediation, training, supervision, and
practice improvement**



2026 Legislative Updates

Statewide Working Group - Extended until Dec. 2026

Case Review - Delayed for 6 months

Definitions clarified - Definitions for determinations and disproportionality clarified

Funding - One-time appropriation of \$15M for counties to implement MAAFPCWDA . Hennepin and Ramsey phase-in funding extended through December 31, 2026.



Section 3

What Change Looks Like

What Change Looks Like: Community Voice and Partnerships

- Community and elder guidance
- Lived experience shaping planning and projects
- Community involvement in hiring
- Earlier access to family support and services
- Expanded community-based responses and intensive safety planning
- Stronger cross-system collaboration

We saw the need for deeper community partnership and a cross-system approach, so we created an advisory committee made up of elders, impacted community members, and cross-system leaders to help guide implementation.

Elder Workgroup: Co-Design Project – Structure

Structure

- Elders facilitate four community meetings (June–Oct) to introduce MAAFPCWDA, gather definitions, review recommendations, and deliver a final report.
- ~35 community members.

Purpose

- Create **culturally-rooted** guidance for how MAAFPCWDA should be practiced.
- Define community perspectives on safety, active efforts, family well-being, maltreatment, prevention, stability, and appropriate intervention.
- Establish how the **21 Standards for a Healthy African Community** should guide screening and assessment decision-making.
- Develop community-informed mandated support options.

Elders' Perspective: The Work in Action

- **Phases of Change:** Evolved through conversations and experiences toward a more community-defined and led approach.
- **Evolution of “The Black Table”:** A community-defined space bringing cultural knowledge and lived experience into child protection and family well-being.
- **Reflections from Community:** Perspectives on culture, authority, accountability, disproportionality, and access continue to shape the work.



Section: 4

Where We Go Next

Community, Staff, and Family Voice

- Need earlier FGDM
- Need consistent father/relative engagement
- Provide and Document active efforts more clearly
- Strengthen cultural connections



Takeaways & Where We Go Next

Priorities:

- Continue Implementation
- Strengthen Workforce
- Deepen Partnerships
- Measure Outcomes
- Expand Voluntary Services
- Identify and address barriers to implementation - Active Efforts, Court Orders, Increased Costs, and Challenges in Court

What It Will Take to Sustain Change

Sustain

- Workforce capacity, infrastructure, and resources needed for meaningful implementation.

Champion

- Voluntary, culturally responsive services that support families before crisis.

Partner

- Continue to elevate families, Elders, and community as partners in shaping practice.

Advocate

- Use the board's voice to advance policy, funding, and system changes that support family preservation and equitable outcomes.



Questions & Discussion