



December 31, 2014

Governor's Task Force on the Protection of Children  
Department of Human Services Commissioner Lucinda Jesson, Co-Chair  
Ramsey County Commissioner Toni Carter, Co-Chair  
Task Force Members  
Sent electronically: [dhs.child.protection.task.force@state.mn.us](mailto:dhs.child.protection.task.force@state.mn.us)

Dear Commissioners Jesson and Carter, and Members of the Task Force:

On behalf of the Minnesota Board of Social Work, we would like to extend our gratitude and sincere thanks to Governor Dayton's Task Force on the Protection of Children for inviting public input for improvements to the child protection system. The Board's mission is to ensure the residents of Minnesota quality social work services by establishing and enforcing professional standards. The Board is obligated and has the primary responsibility, which it takes very seriously, to ensure public protection as it relates to social work practice, serving as the regulatory and licensing agency for social workers in the human service delivery system. Our mission includes protecting all Minnesotans, including protecting the smallest voices of all children in the state of Minnesota.

#### Child Welfare Training and Supervision

To ensure and preserve public protection the Board recommends the following:

1. We recommend the Task Force consider mandating minimum necessary educational qualifications for workers who make screening decisions on child abuse and neglect. We recommend that these employees possess a minimum of a bachelor's degree from an accredited college/university with a major in social work or a closely related degree, such as sociology or psychology. Mandating these educational qualifications would create greater consistency in minimum competencies for Child Protection Workers.
2. We recommend that the Task Force consider that individuals employed as Child Protection Supervisors and Child Protection Workers who hold accredited bachelor's and graduate degrees in social work, and individuals who use the title of "social worker", be licensed with the Board. This would provide increased consistency in the workforce and increased safeguards for the public. In addition it would address the current double standard in public protection that exists for the residents of Minnesota who obtain services from county agencies, as county agencies are the only agencies in Minnesota in which social workers are not required to be licensed.

3. We recommend that the Task Force consider the feasibility of mandating uniform and standardized basic competency education upon hire and maintenance of continuing education that is focused on ensuring access to culturally appropriate services.
4. We support the Task Force recommendation to require ongoing continuing education for Child Protection Supervisors.
5. We recommend that the Task Force consider mandating specific areas of training including training on protected classes, ethics, mental health, chemical dependency issues, autism, fetal alcohol syndrome, as well as the ability for workers to select trainings based upon their need to improve practice skills and their professional interests. We also recommend the development of a plan for an infrastructure and funding for state-wide training opportunities. On-going continuing education and learning is critical to ensure ongoing competency.
6. We recommend the Task Force consider implementing a peer review role in screening and casework decisions. Supervisors should review cases that are screened out. There should also be random auditing of cases screened in to ensure cases are not being screened in erroneously.
7. We recommend the Task Force consider developing an audit oversight process.

#### Screening Reports of Child Abuse

There is a need for consistent standardized guidelines for screening reports of child abuse across Minnesota. It is also critical to ensure that when citizens have contact with the child protection screening system that it is not influenced by factors such as race, gender, class, socio-economic status, or other protected status.

#### Family Assessment and Adequacy of Resources

Access to culturally appropriate, competent and effective social work services, including ensuring families have access to services specifically designed for communities of color, sexual orientation, tribal, poverty and other diverse communities, are important factors to ensure the public protection of all Minnesota residents. There is a need to increase access to culturally appropriate services to improve outcomes for Minnesota families and to develop formalized programs focused on increasing the number of culturally informed providers in Minnesota.

We highly encourage the Task Force to utilize the number of Title IV E recipients from protected classes who are being employed by child welfare units across the state. We also encourage the child welfare units across the state to work with existing professional organizations or agencies with expertise in communities of color, tribal agencies, sexual orientation, poverty, and other protected classes.

We recommend that in all communities, families have access to professionals with appropriate core competencies to provide quality, effective services. These core competencies have been

established by professional social work organizations, which could be utilized as a resource for this work.

Early Intervention and/or Prevention Services

We encourage that the Task Force consider working with established early intervention and/or prevention service providers to develop a plan for a coordinated resource or clearinghouse to provide access to these services for child protection workers and families.

Transparency

In the interest of public protection there is a need for transparency, analysis, and assessment regarding the root causes and contributing factors of these disturbing trends and the effectiveness of evidence-based interventions and strategies. It is also important to recognize that a disproportionate number of individuals involved with the child protection system are living in poverty, communities of color, and with co-occurring disorders. It is essential that a family's right to privacy is maintained when involved in the child protection system, which can be more complex in small or rural communities. It is also necessary to balance these needs with appropriate transparency to gain the public trust.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input for this very important work. The Board appreciates the opportunity to present to the Training and Supervision of Practice Workgroup at its January 14, 2014 meeting.

Sincerely,



Ruth Richardson, Public Member  
Board Chair



Kate Zaehner-Pate, LSW  
Executive Director