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# Minnesota Permanency Demonstration

## Interim Evaluation Report

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*Prepared for the*  
**Minnesota Department of Human Services**

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## Executive Summary

The Minnesota title IV-E child welfare waiver project, called the Minnesota Permanency Demonstration (MnPD), is a single-benefit, assisted guardianship program. Its purpose is to determine whether a single (or continuous) benefit program, which does not decrease financial support for foster caregivers who adopt or assume permanent legal and physical custody of the foster children in their care, increases permanency rates and shortens foster care stays among children in long-term foster care. Any child who is title IV-E eligible and for whom reunification has been ruled out and who has been living in a safe and stable foster home at least six months is eligible for MnPD project. Certain children who have historically been more difficult to move into permanent living situations are targeted by the project. These include children with special needs who have serious psychological, physical and behavioral problems, children who are older, children with siblings in foster care, and children who are American Indian and African American. The MnPD project began on November 17, 2005 and was authorized for five years. This is the Interim Evaluation Report of the project at its half-way point.

**Study Population.** The study population at the midway point includes 494 children assigned to the waiver group, the experimental condition, and 473 control group children. The waiver group children are in the care of 298 foster caregivers (a mean of 1.7 per family) and the control group children live with 330 foster caregivers (1.4 per family). The single benefit offer is made to foster caregivers of waiver group children and includes all eligible children in their care. In the two larger counties in which the assignment to study groups is randomized, there are 385 waiver group children and 367 control group children. In the other three participating MnPD counties, 109 children have been assigned to the waiver group and 106 matching cases have been selected as their control group equivalents.

**Case Characteristics.** The mean age of waiver group children is 9 years. Forty-six percent are African American, 28 percent white and 24 percent American Indian. Forty-four percent have one or more disabilities, whether physical, emotional or behavioral; 36 percent attend special education classes, half of all waiver children are in school. Nearly two out of three are a part of a sibling group in foster care placement. More than half (53 percent) are in the care of relatives. The mean number of days in foster care at the time of waiver group assignment was 1,064 days. Altogether, 92 percent are in one or more population groups being targeted by the MnPD project.

**Evaluation Methodology.** The evaluation consists of an impact study, a process study and a cost effectiveness study. The Interim Report provides results of the process and impact study over the first two and a half years of the project. The cost study will be undertaken during the final year of the MnPD project. Evaluators are not conducting the cost neutrality analysis, which is being done by the Financial Operations Division of the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

The impact study utilizes a mixed experimental design: an experimental field study in the metro counties of Hennepin and Ramsey and a quasi-experimental field study in the non-metro counties. In Hennepin and Ramsey counties, children are assigned randomly either to the experimental (waiver) group or the control group. Prior to random assignment local offices

screen children for eligibility. Random assignment is done through a web-based procedure designed by the evaluator. In the other, non-metro counties, any child determined eligible may be assigned to the MnPD waiver group. For each waiver group child from a non-metro county, evaluators find a similar child in the state's Social Service Information System (SSIS) to serve as a matched comparison/control group case. Control group children in the two metro counties and matching children from non-MnPD counties serve as points of comparison for analyzing impact study questions, for the cost-effectiveness study, and the cost neutrality analysis.

There are six core research questions guiding this evaluation: 1) What impact does the MnPD single benefit have on moving children from foster care into permanent living arrangements? 2) What effect does the MnPD single benefit have on the well-being of children and the stability of their living situations? 3) Does the MnPD single benefit improve the permanency and well-being of children who have been historically difficult to move out of long-term foster care? 4) Why do foster caregivers accept or reject the MnPD single benefit? 5) What are the primary challenges faced by participating counties in implementing the MnPD single benefit program? 6) At what increase or decrease in costs are positive outcomes achieved under the MnPD single benefit program?

Data collection procedures include Minnesota Social Service System Information System (SSIS) data extractions, interviews and surveys of foster caregivers, case-specific surveys of caseworkers, and site visits with interviews.

**Implementation.** Under the Minnesota Waiver Terms and Conditions the state is permitted to operate the MnPD project in six counties. All six counties accepted the project at the start, however due to various external pressures four counties have adjusted their level of participation. Cass County is participating only nominally, having assigned just two children to the project to this point. Carlton County, after operating the project for 13 months, has assigned no new children to the waiver since the beginning of 2007 and has recently reaffirmed a moratorium on new assignments. Hennepin County, after assigning a large number of children during the early part of the project, froze waiver assignment midway through 2007. However, as this report was being prepared, Hennepin County restarted assignment of children to the project. Mille Lacs County asked to be removed from the project in February 2007. Dakota and Ramsey counties are assigning children to the project on a steady basis.

The major issue that has impacted implementation of the MnPD single benefit project is concern among the participating counties of their financial liability. Because the Minnesota human services system is county administered, the cost neutrality requirements of the MnPD project impact each county individually and directly. Whether or not the MnPD project as a whole is cost neutral, each county will realize savings or incur expenses depending on its individual cost neutrality position. This concern, coupled with the prospect of the loss of Federal funds due to the Deficit Reduction Act, caused Carlton and Hennepin counties to suspend assignment of new children to the project during 2007.

Another implementation issue of consequence has been the manner in which counties identify program-eligible children and assign them to the MnPD project. These county based procedures have varied during the first half of the project, although there are major similarities

across the five counties. Generally, it has been caseworkers who have initially identified potential MnPD project children and brought them to the attention of their county project managers. County project managers, sometimes following discussion of permanency plans for the children during unit meetings, confirm program eligibility and enter the names into the web assignment program. However, for the first program quarter in Ramsey County and for the first year and a half in Hennepin County, the assignment method was different; project managers themselves identified eligible children using SSIS system data only and made the MnPD project assignment without consulting caseworkers.

In the three largest counties participating in the MnPD project (Hennepin, Ramsey and Dakota); there is a high degree of caseworker specialization. In Hennepin and Dakota counties the adoption units have been given primary responsibility for offering the MnPD single benefit option to foster caregivers of eligible children. Functionally in these two counties, this has placed greater programmatic attention on adoption cases than permanent legal and physical custody cases where termination of parental rights has not occurred. In Ramsey County, more children have been placed into the MnPD project from the child protection units than the adoption unit. Children who are placed in the project by these caseworkers have an equal chance for a permanency outcome of either adoption or permanent legal custody upon discharge from foster care.

**The MnPD Single Benefit Offer and its Acceptance or Rejection.** To date not all foster caregivers of MnPD waiver group children have been offered the single benefit. According to information available to evaluators, 73 percent have and 27 percent have not been offered the single benefit. The absence of the offer has occurred more frequently in instances in which project managers have directly assigned children to the waiver without consultation with caseworkers. But the offer may be withheld in any instance in which an impediment to permanency becomes known to a caseworker. The single benefit is unlikely to be offered in situations in which a child opposes permanency with his or her foster caregiver, or in a foster care situation that is on the verge of disrupting, or if the caseworker has other reservations about making the foster caregiver's home the child's permanent home.

Based on the responses of waiver group foster caregivers in interviews, caseworkers had talked with a majority (83 percent) of them about adoption or permanent legal and physical custody before discussing the single benefit option with them. Three out of four foster caregivers interviewed who had been offered the MnPD benefit said they understood how it worked, but others did not or were confused about it. Some foster caregivers (29 percent) expressed concerns about the MnPD single benefit program, sometimes related to health benefits for the child, the possibility of the single benefit ending, or other matters. Eight of 10 foster caregivers said they were satisfied with how the offer had been made to them.

When foster caregivers were asked if they wanted to adopt or accept permanent legal and physical custody of their foster children, or if they were leaning towards either one, a large percentage answered affirmatively, 75.9 percent of control group caregivers and 91.8 percent of waiver group caregivers. A number said they "wanted to [adopt or assume permanent legal and physical custody], but couldn't afford it" or that they were "worried about finances." Foster caregiver responses indicated the MnPD single benefit offer served as an inducement for them to

begin the permanency process. During interviews, 41.6 percent of waiver group caregivers that had chosen to adopt or assume permanent legal and physical custody said that the offer of the MnPD single benefit was “essential” or “very important” in their decision. Another 22.9 percent said that the single benefit offer played a role in their decision. A third said the MnPD single benefit offer was “not important” in their decision.

Interviews have revealed other concerns that foster caregivers have about assuming permanent responsibility for their foster children. The most common of these involved the special education and health needs of foster children. Waiver group caregivers, faced with the MnPD single benefit offer, expressed concerns about losing services or the possible withdrawal of ongoing financial support by the county. Others expressed concerns about the adoption or the permanent legal and physical custody process itself, its length and complexity, or what was viewed as a lack of support from the county.

In case-specific surveys, caseworkers reported a similar set of foster caregiver concerns, but not as often as the caregivers themselves did. Caseworkers saw the amount of financial support provided by the county to be the most common concern of foster caregivers. But the single benefit program was viewed as reducing this anxiety, which was observed by them in 44.3 percent of control group foster caregivers and 30.3 percent of waiver group foster caregivers ( $p=.002$ ). Additionally, caseworkers saw waiver group foster caregivers as expressing other worries less frequently, including apprehensions about the special needs of a child or the child’s physical and mental health, among others.

Eighty-five percent of foster caregivers interviewed reported accepting the single benefit program following its offer. Twelve percent declined and 3 percent were either still undecided or postponed a decision for other reasons. Of foster caregivers who accepted the MnPD single benefit, 81 percent decided to adopt, 18 percent accepted permanent legal and physical custody. The majority of foster caregivers (63 percent) accepted the single benefit within 24 hours of the offer. Others took a week (17 percent), up to a month (8 percent), or more than a month (13 percent) to make a final decision.

When asked expressly why they declined the MnPD single benefit offer, some foster caregivers expressed financial concerns, the cost of child care, or the age of an older child. Some said simply they did not want to make a permanent commitment to the child they were caring for or that the child did not wish for permanency in their home.

**Outcomes.** The impact analysis has three parts: 1) Comparison of the randomly assigned (RA) waiver and control group children in Hennepin and Ramsey counties, 2) Comparison of the non-randomly assigned (NRA) waiver and matched control group children in Carlton, Cass, and Dakota counties, and 3) Comparison of all waiver group children with all control group children. Results from the first comparison should be given more weight because that design provides the greatest amount of control, thereby reducing the chance that spurious variables have confounded results. An ongoing issue discussed in the Process Analysis chapter, and in semi-annual reports, is the failure of caseworkers to offer the MnPD single benefit to some foster caregivers in the waiver group, primarily in the RA sample. This situation occurred most often when county managers were assigning children to the project without consulting with caseworkers. Because

there is no way to identify control group children for whom the MnPD offer would not have been made, the present impact analysis does not take this difference into consideration.

The following is a summary of impact-study results at the mid-way point of the MnPD project:

- Permanency. Children assigned to the MnPD single benefit project achieved permanency significantly more often. This was true of all children as well as the RA children considered separately.
  - A significant impact of the MnPD single benefit on rates of permanent legal and physical custody was found regardless of the study group, RA or NRA.
  - The MnPD single benefit has not as yet had a significant impact on rates of adoption in the RA group. (The impact on rates of adoption were reduced by a county program in Ramsey County that offered other forms of financial assistance to low-income families that adopted children, and was more heavily utilized for control group children. However, Hennepin County MnPD children considered separately were not adopted sufficiently often to reach the level of statistical significance.)
- Relative vs. Non-relative Care. A positive impact of the MnPD single benefit on adoption in the RA sample was found among children in non-relative care but not those in relative care. The significant impact of the MnPD single benefit on rates of permanent legal custody was found regardless of whether children were in relative or non-relative care. A similar pattern was found among the NRA group for both adoption and permanent legal and physical custody.
- Age of Child. A significant impact of the MnPD single benefit occurred in rates of adoption of younger children in Hennepin County; no impact was found for older children. A significant impact was found on rates of permanent legal and physical custody for both younger and older children in Hennepin County. No differences were found in Ramsey County related to age of child. In the NRA group, both younger and older MnPD waiver group children were adopted and moved to permanent legal and physical custody more often.
- Minority Group Children.
  - African American children were adopted less frequently overall in the RA sample. This may be due to greater numbers of older children in the African American study sample. On the other hand, the MnPD single benefit had a significant impact on increasing rates of permanent legal and physical custody for African American children in the RA sample. There were too few African American children in the NRA sample for analysis.



- Within the RA sample, a similar pattern was found for American Indian children: The MnPD single benefit made little difference in adoptions but had a significant impact on rates of permanent legal and physical custody. Within the NRA sample, both adoptions and permanent legal and physical custody occurred significantly more often for American Indian children placed in the MnPD waiver group.
- Children with Disabilities (whether physical, psychological or behavioral). The MnPD single benefit had an impact (statistical trend) on adoption of children with disabilities in the RA sample, in Hennepin County but not Ramsey County. No impact was found on rates of permanent legal and physical custody of RA children with disabilities. MnPD impacted rates of both adoption and permanent legal and physical custody of NRA children with disabilities.
- Foster Care.
  - As a result of moving to permanency more often, MnPD waiver group children spent less time in foster care than control group children.
  - MnPD waiver group children achieved permanency through adoption more quickly. For all children in the study, the difference was statistically significant, as it was for the NRA sample. For the RA sample it was a statistical trend. Quicker movement to permanency through permanent legal and physical custody was significant for the NRA sample but not for the RA sample.
  - No differences were found in the number of disruptions in care (changes in providers) or in the number of displacement days (number of days in foster care after disruption and prior to permanency).
- Child Well Being.
  - No differences were found in the number of new reports of child maltreatment for all children in the study or for children moved to permanency.
  - Other measures of child well-being (such as educational performance or health) will be examined in detail through a second follow-up of caregivers as more time has passed.

The positive impact of MnPD single benefit that has been found thus far has overcome an experimental quandary: not all members of the treatment group have received the treatment. If, as expected, the proportion of waiver group foster caregivers offered the MnPD single benefit increases as time goes on, the demonstration will provide a better test of the underlying hypothesis; and given what is known at this point, the impact of the program should become more robust.

Final note: These outcome findings, considered in light of the organizational practices that places greater programmatic focus on adoption than permanent legal and physical custody cases, suggests that greater permanency gains might be possible if increased attention were paid to permanent legal and physical custody cases, where termination of parental rights has not occurred. Findings also suggest that county project managers might wish to revisit how they apply the MnPD project to adoption cases.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### A. Overview of the Demonstration

The Minnesota title IV-E child welfare waiver project, called the Minnesota Permanency Demonstration (MnPD), is a single benefit assisted guardianship demonstration. It was approved by the Department of Health and Human Services, under Section 1130 of the Social Security Act, on October 1, 2004 and is authorized for five years. The five years began on the date of initial implementation, which was November 17, 2005.

#### 1. Purpose

The purpose of the Minnesota Child Welfare Demonstration (MnPD) project is to determine whether a single (or continuous) benefit program increases permanency rates and shortens foster care stays among children in long-term foster care, with a particular emphasis on children with special needs. The project has created a new single benefit program that provides foster caregivers with benefit continuity that follows a child from foster care to a permanent adoptive or permanent legal custody placement.<sup>1</sup> The single or continuous benefit program raises the public assistance benefits received by permanent caregivers (through adoption or a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody) to a level that is equal to the rate paid for foster care. Under the traditional system in place, a foster caregiver's benefit is significantly reduced if they choose to adopt or accept permanent legal and physical custody for a child in their care. The basic hypothesis of the MnPD project is that child permanency rates will increase and stays in long-term foster care will decrease through the elimination of financial disincentives that discourage foster caregivers from offering children in their care a permanent home. As stated in the Minnesota title IV-E Waiver Terms and Conditions, the "overall goal of the single benefit program is to increase the willingness of foster care families to adopt or assume legal custody of special needs children by eliminating the financial barriers to these permanency options."

The language of the MnPD's waiver Terms and Conditions regarding the project's function and basic goals is provided in the following box (from Section 2, paragraph 2.0, Implementation).

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<sup>1</sup> Minnesota statutes do not express a preference between the permanency alternatives of adoption or a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody to a relative.

*Under these Waiver Terms and Conditions, the State seeks to create a new single benefit program, providing families with benefit continuity that follows the child from foster care to a permanent adoptive or relative placement, regardless of the legal status of the child. Children participating in the demonstration will receive payments equal to their existing foster care benefit; this payment will replace payments made under the State’s Adoption Assistance and Relative Custody Assistance programs.*

*The overall goal of the single benefit program is to increase the willingness of foster care families to adopt or assume legal custody of special needs children by eliminating the financial barriers to these permanency options. Specific project goals include:*

- *Increasing the permanency rates of special needs children in long-term foster care;*
- *Reducing long-term foster care stays of special needs children;*
- *Reducing adoption and relative custody dissolutions and disruptions;*
- *Improving the well-being outcomes of children in the foster care system;*
- *Improving participant satisfaction with the foster care system;*
- *Reducing the administrative and direct service costs of foster care placements; and*
- *Enhancing the State’s understanding of the effects of a single benefit on foster family decision-making and attitudes toward permanency.*

*Under these Waiver Terms and Conditions, the State will operate a demonstration of the single benefit program. The demonstration will target title IV-E eligible children in selected counties in home-based, long-term foster care for whom reunification has been ruled out as a permanency option. In addition, a child must be placed in a safe and stable home for at least six months to participate in the demonstration. Children of any age who meet these eligibility requirements may participate in the demonstration.*

*The demonstration will place particular emphasis on American Indian children in long-term foster care and children with special needs. Special needs children include those that are older, are part of a sibling group, or who have intense psychological, physical, and behavioral problems. To the extent possible, sibling groups will be maintained in the same permanent placement.*

As designed, the MnPD project targets children who are title IV-E eligible in home-based, long-term foster care for whom reunification has been ruled out as a permanency option. The project is limited to children placed in “safe and stable” foster homes for at least six months,

although an amendment to the terms and conditions allows exceptions to be made to the six-month rule. As described in the state's original child welfare waiver proposal and in the waiver Terms and Conditions, the project is intended to place particular attention on American Indian children and children with special needs. These latter are defined as children who are older, part of a sibling group and/or have intense psychological, physical and behavioral problems. From the start of the project, African American children were included among those given special emphasis. Both American Indian and African American children have historically been harder to move to permanency while being disproportionately represented in Minnesota's foster care system, especially in the population of children in long-term foster care. And, while children who are "older" are specifically referenced, the terms and conditions permit children of any age who otherwise meet eligibility requirements to be included in the MnPD project.

The MnPD waiver Terms and Conditions, therefore, describe two groups of children who form the target population. The more inclusive group consists of those who meet the minimum eligibility criteria: "title IV-E eligible children in selected counties in home-based, long-term foster care for whom reunification has been rule out as a permanency option (and who have been) placed in a safe and stable home for at least six months." Within this larger group are those children closer to the center of the target, those with "special needs" on whom "the demonstration will place particular attention."

The MnPD waiver Terms and Conditions specifically permit the state to operate the waiver in six counties, but also allow the state to expand the waiver to other counties over time with approval.

## **2. Background and Context**

Despite the state's efforts to move foster children to permanency, a large number remain in long-term foster care. Many of these children are older, members of sibling groups, and have a variety of special need conditions. A major finding of the 2001 Minnesota Children and Family Services Review (CFSR) was that the state's Adoption Assistance and Relative Custody Assistance programs' benefit reduction for foster caregivers was a serious barrier to permanency. The CSFR outcome analyses cited this issue as "discouraging adoption" and "reducing the number of relatives who might take advantage of the program instead of remaining as foster parents."

The Minnesota Department of Human Services convened two advisory groups in 2002 that examined the issue of long-term foster care and options available to move children sooner to permanent living arrangements. Members of these groups consistently pointed to lower benefit rates for foster caregivers as a barrier to adoption and transfer of permanent legal and physical

custody. Both groups recommended a single-benefit program that eliminated the counter-productive, financial disincentives of the present benefit system in Minnesota.

A 2002 legislative proposal<sup>2</sup> discussed the financial disincentives to child permanency in the existing child protection system and reviewed options for reform. The report described the basic problem of the difference in basic benefits between the foster care program (which paid \$500-607 per month) compared with the Adoption Assistance and Relative Custody Assistance programs' (which paid \$247-337 per month). Foster caregivers who wanted to adopt or assume permanent legal and physical custody of the children they cared for faced the prospect of losing about half of the financial assistance they received as foster caregivers. This can be a significant problem for foster caregivers with low incomes or in poverty, including many minority relative foster caregivers. The legislative proposal suggested correcting this barrier by creating a single benefit program with a single assessment tool for all children and adjusting the benefit structure based on each child's needs.

The depth of concern about racial disparities in permanency rates was expressed in a second report<sup>3</sup> produced by the Minnesota Department of Human Services in 2002, which mentioned a title IV-E waiver demonstration project as a possible funding option to study and restructure the traditional benefit programs. The link between the disparity of benefits and permanency rates was also described in DHS's *Annual Progress & Services Report* of June 2003. Long-term foster care has been a particularly troublesome issue among American Indian children in the state. American Indian tribes and communities generally oppose the termination of parental rights as a permanency goal for children in foster care because it is not consistent with their cultural values and traditions. This has been a barrier to the adoption of American Indian children. In addition, relatively high rates of poverty among American Indian and African American families, especially relative foster caregivers, have made taking on permanent legal care of children a barrier when it means a loss or reduction of benefits. The MnPD waiver project has been viewed as a direct response by the state to these problems and as an opportunity to test a policy that might be replicated statewide to improve permanency outcomes for children in foster care.

**Specific Waivers.** Under the federal title IV-E waiver Terms and Conditions, the state has waivers of the following provisions of the Social Security Act and Program Regulations in the operation of the title IV-E child welfare demonstration project:

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<sup>2</sup> *Single Benefit Package for Children in Out-of-Home Placement*. March 2002

<sup>3</sup> *Study of Outcomes for African American Children in Minnesota's Child Protection System*. April 2002

- Section 472 (a): Expanded Eligibility: To allow the State to expend title IV-E funds for children and families who are not normally eligible under Part E of title IV of the Act as described in the Terms and Conditions.
- Section 474(a)(3)(E) and 45 CFR 1356.60(c)(3): Expanded Services: To allow the State to make payments for services that will be provided that are not normally covered under Part E of title IV of the Act; and to allow the State to use title IV-E funds for these costs and services as described in the Terms and Conditions, Section 2.0.
- Section 471 (a)(3): Waiver of State plan requirement that the State’s foster care and adoption assistance plan be in effect in all subdivisions of the State.
- Sections 473(a)(1)(A), 473(a)(1)(B)(ii), 473(a)(3), and 45 CFR 1356.40 – Guardianship Payments: To allow the State to implement guardianship payment agreements and make guardianship payments to guardians for the care of children, as described in the Terms and Conditions, Section 2.
- Section 473(a)(3): To waive the provision requiring consideration of the circumstances of the adoptive parents.

### **3. Service Intervention Strategy**

Within the limits of the waiver Terms and Conditions, a single benefit program has been instituted for eligible foster children and their caregivers. Through this program foster caregivers in the waiver group are offered a single benefit, which is their current foster care benefit rate, if they adopt or accept a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody of the foster children in their care. As opposed to the traditional system, as experienced by non-participating foster families across the state and control group caregivers in demonstration counties, benefits paid to waiver group foster caregivers are not reduced when the child moves from foster care to permanent care. The MnPD project, therefore, will examine the impact on permanency outcomes of a single benefit program contrasted with the existing Adoption Assistance and Relative Custody Assistance programs in the state. These traditional program structures and requirements have not been changed.

### **4. Implementation**

The waiver Terms and Conditions of the MnPD project permit the state to operate the project in six counties. The six counties proposed by the state and named in the waiver Terms and Conditions are Cass, Carlton, Dakota, Hennepin, Mille Lacs, and Ramsey counties.

Hennepin and Ramsey counties include the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St Paul, which comprise the largest metropolitan area in the state. Dakota County is a rapidly growing, relatively affluent suburban county just south of the Twin Cities. Cass, Carlton and Mille Lacs counties are smaller in population and more rural, located north of the Twin Cities. Cass, Carlton and Mille Lacs counties were selected to participate in the MnPD project because of the number of American Indian children in their population and because these children were, from the start, a major focus of the project. Differences in the size and demographic characteristics of the participating project counties can be seen in **Table 1**.

**Table 1. Selected Characteristics of MnPD Counties**

	Carlton	Cass	Dakota	Hennepin	Ramsey	MN	US
Population (2006 est)	34,116	29,036	388,001	1,122,093	493,215	5,167,101	299.4 m
Change (from 2000)	7.7%	6.9%	9.0%	0.5%	-3.5%	5.0%	6.4%
Under 18	22.0%	21.8%	26.9%	23.9%	25.1%	24.3%	24.6%
White	91.4%	86.9%	89.7%	80.5%	78.5%	89.3%	80.1%
African American	1.1%	0.3%	4.0%	10.8%	9.7%	4.5%	12.8%
American Indian	5.2%	10.8%	0.5%	1.1%	0.9%	1.2%	1.0%
Asian	0.4%	0.3%	4.0%	5.5%	8.7%	3.5%	4.4%
Hispanic	1.0%	1.1%	4.2%	5.9%	6.1%	3.8%	14.8%
Person/square mile	36.8	13.5	624.4	2,003.9	3,275.9	61.8	79.6
Median household inc	\$43,837	\$38,906	\$67,175	\$54,471	\$47,607	\$51,202	\$44,334
Living in poverty	8.2%	11.6%	5.0%	9.3%	11.0%	8.1%	12.7%

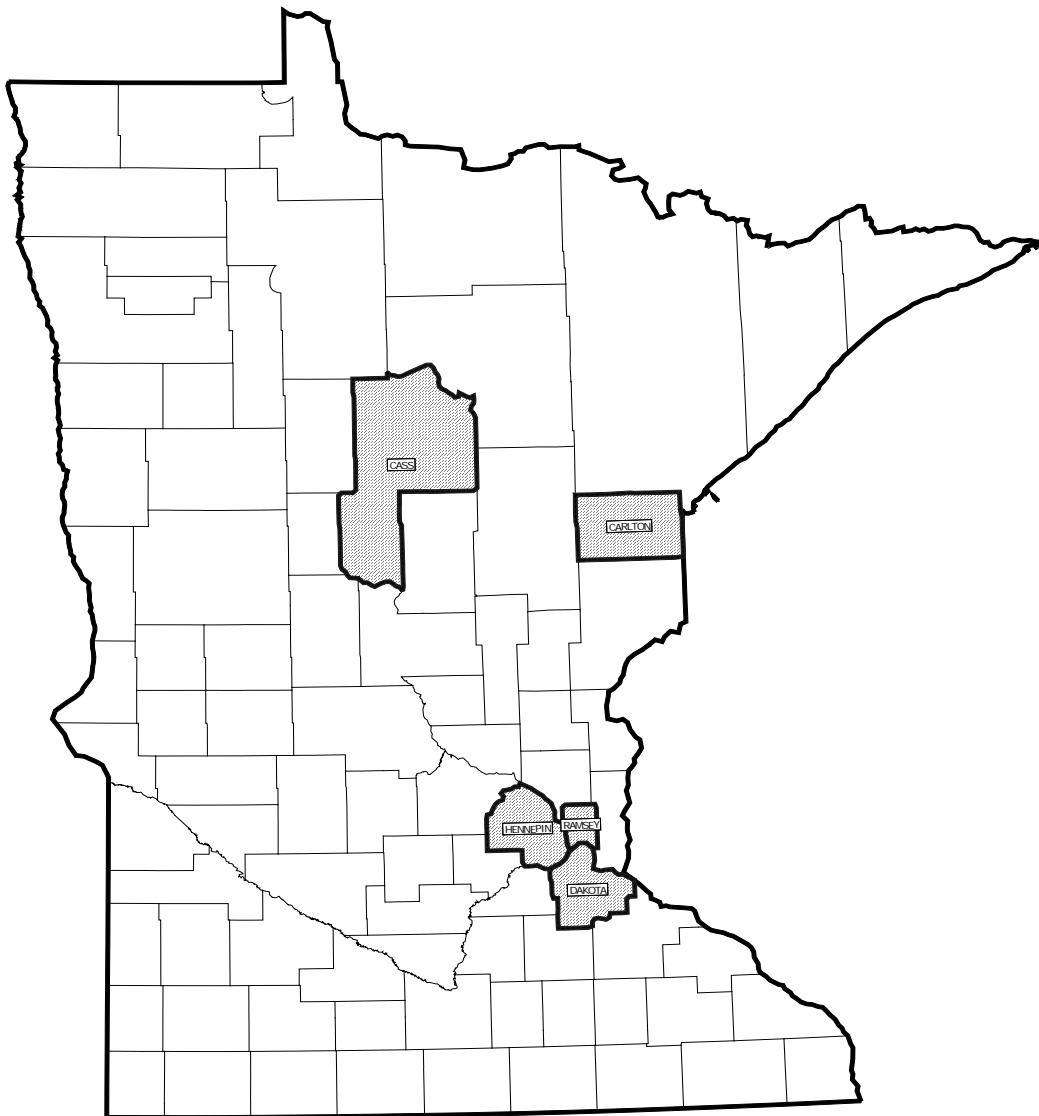
Source: United States Census Bureau. Retrieval at <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/27000.html>

For reasons that are discussed in the next section of the report, operationally, the MnPD project has been varied. Cass County has assigned only two children to the waiver, one during the first year of the demonstration and one during the second. Carlton County, after operating the project for 13 months, has assigned no new children to the waiver since the end of 2006 and a



moratorium on new assignments for the foreseeable future was recently reaffirmed (April 2008). Hennepin County, after assigning a large number of children to the project initially, froze MnPD project assignment midway through 2007. As this report was being prepared, Hennepin County has restarted assignment of children into the project. Mille Lacs County has chosen not to assign any children and requested to withdraw from the project in February 2007. Dakota and Ramsey counties are continuing to assign children to the MnPD project on a steady basis.

The five counties that have entered children into the MnPD project, fully or partially—Carlton, Cass, Dakota, Hennepin and Ramsey—are shown on **Map1**. While the waiver Terms and Conditions permit the state to add other counties to the MnPD project with federal approval, there are no current plans to do so.



**Map 1. Counties Participating in the MnPD**

## B. Methodology

### 1. Design of the Evaluation

The evaluation of the Minnesota Permanency Demonstration includes an impact study, a process study and a cost effectiveness study. Evaluators are not conducting the cost neutrality analysis, which is being done by the Financial Operations Division of the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

The impact study utilizes a mixed experimental design: an experimental field study in the metro counties of Hennepin and Ramsey and a quasi-experimental field study in the non-metro counties. Control group children in the two metro counties and comparison group children in the other counties serve as points of comparison for analyzing impact study questions and for the cost-effectiveness study. Foster caregivers of waiver group children are eligible for the single benefit program, while foster caregivers of control and comparison group children have available to them the traditional benefit system in place prior to the demonstration (the state's Adoption Assistance and Relative Custody Assistance programs).

In Hennepin and Ramsey counties, children are assigned randomly either to the waiver (experimental) or the control group. Prior to random assignment, county agencies screen children for MnPD project eligibility. Random assignment is done through a web-based procedure designed by the evaluator. As a first step in this procedure, county MnPD project managers enter the characteristics of the child into the database that qualifies him or her for the project. This provides evaluators with some essential information about the children in the study population and also serves as a broad error trap to increase the probability that only children who meet program eligibility criteria are assigned to one of the study groups. The web-based system used to randomly assign children to the waiver or control groups is described in **Appendix A**.

In the three non-metro counties, accurate screening data are more critical. For each child assigned to the MnPD project in these counties, a similar child is found *in another county* in the state to serve as a matched case. Correct matching depends on knowing important characteristics of each child assigned to the project. Besides obvious types of demographic variables, children must also be similar on several other variables that have the potential to affect placement outcomes and permanency. To insure that evaluators have all necessary information for matching, local county MnPD project managers are asked to enter children that they assign to the project into the same entry program available to the two random assignment counties. However, random assignment does not occur. Instead, confirmation is requested that the child has been assigned to the MnPD project and that the foster caregiver will be offered the MnPD single benefit. Besides providing the evaluators with information on the characteristics of assigned

children, this procedure also provides SSIS identifiers. Accurate entry of such information is essential because no indicator is entered into SSIS indicating the MnPD assignment status of children. A description of the pair matching methodology is provided in **Appendix B**.

The process study is monitoring the implementation of the MnPD project, assessing the similarities and diversity of county agency approaches to the project, and identifying process and operational factors that influence MnPD project outcomes. The process study is keying in on the projects' non-quantitative goals, including coordination with American Indian tribes, and seeking to understand why waiver foster caregivers accept or reject the single benefit option. The process study is also monitoring the level of participation in the MnPD project on the part of counties and the concerns or obstacles faced by those counties and their attitudes toward the MnPD project that may affect their participation and, in turn, project outcomes.

The cost-effectiveness study has a different purpose from the neutrality analysis. Cost effectiveness is meant to examine the relative costs of achieving various positive outcomes. In a cost-effectiveness analysis, it is necessary to measure program costs combined with one or more measures of effectiveness. Measures of effectiveness in the context of an outcome or impact analysis refer to differences in desired outcomes between the waiver (experimental) and control or comparison groups. The differences that can be used are those that may be considered to be real difference, that is, those that were statistically significant. The results of cost-effectiveness analyses are ratios of costs to effectiveness. In this way, the cost-effectiveness analysis is an adjunct to and dependent upon outcome analyses.

## **2. Research Questions**

There are six core questions guiding this evaluation. They are:

- A) What impact does the single benefit option have on moving children in foster care into permanent living arrangements?
- B) What affect does the demonstration have on the well-being of children and the stability of their living situations?
- C) Does the single benefit option improve the permanency and well-being of children who have been historically harder to move out of long-term foster care: children with special needs, older children and children who are American Indian and African American?
- D) Why do foster caregivers accept or reject the single benefit option?
- E) What are the primary challenges faced by counties in implementing the single benefit program?
- F) At what increase or decrease in costs are positive outcomes achieved?

The first two core questions in this list (A and B) are closely related. Improvement in permanency is assumed to be improvement in child well-being (an assumption built into federal legislation with the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997). Similarly, the third question (C) is an extension of the first two and focuses attention on groups of children that are the special target of the demonstration. The first three core questions are being addressed in the impact study. The process study is examining the next two core questions (D and E). The final question (F) is examined in the cost analysis. Only the design of the cost study is discussed in this report; the cost effectiveness of the MnPD project will be addressed in the final report.

The following is a list of the specific research questions related to program outcomes that have directed the impact study.

1. Do children who receive the MnPD single benefit (experimental/waiver group children) achieve permanency, whether through adoption or a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody to a relative, at higher rates than control/comparison group children?
  - a) Do MnPD waiver group children achieve greater permanency through adoption than control children?
  - b) Do MnPD waiver children achieve greater permanency through permanent legal custody than control children?
  - c) What impact does the MnPD single benefit have on other outcomes, such as reunification and emancipation?
  - d) What is the impact of MnPD single benefit on children in relative care versus non-relative care?
2. What is the impact of the MnPD single benefit on children targeted by the demonstration?
  - a) How does the MnPD single benefit impact the permanency outcomes of American Indian and African American children?
  - b) How does the MnPD single benefit impact the permanency outcomes of children with special needs?
  - c) What is the impact of a child's age on achieving permanency through MnPD single benefit?
3. Do children in the MnPD waiver group achieve permanency through adoption or permanent legal custody more quickly than control children?
4. Do MnPD waiver group children experience fewer disruptions in their living situations than control children?

5. Are there fewer reports of abuse or neglect for MnPD waiver group children than control group children?
6. Do MnPD waiver group children spend less time in foster care than control group children?
7. Do MnPD waiver group children experience improvements in other measures of their well-being (such as, educational and health status, or family functioning)?

### **3. Data Collection Procedures and Evaluation Activities**

Major data sources being utilized for the evaluation include extractions from the Minnesota Social Services Information System (SSIS), interviews and surveys of foster family caregivers, detailed case-specific information collect from county caseworkers on a sample of cases, site visits to county offices coupled with interviews of administrative, supervisory and field staff, and the collection and analysis of cost data associated with a sample of waiver/ experimental and control group cases.

**SSIS Data Extractions.** The evaluators receive monthly downloads of data extractions from SSIS. Data files are passed to IAR electronically in a compressed password-protected format via an FTP site. Conversion programs are then run that reorganize SSIS data for research purposes.

IAR maintains data files on all children in active cases including children in out-of-home placement, along with placement provider tables. These records include all intake and assessment data, case-management workgroups that have been opened and worker time records. Case activity can be tracked and monitored through these files, including cases that are closed and subsequently re-opened because of new reports of maltreatment. Through training provided as the demonstration was getting underway in 2005 and through written instructions to local offices, accurate entry of certain fields within SSIS that are necessary for the evaluation was emphasized, particularly fields associated with the special needs of children, court dispositions and special school status.

The original request for data extractions from SSIS was made in September 2005. The first extraction was received in December 2005 and downloads are received monthly. Because of the case matching element of the evaluation design, extractions include data not only from counties participating in the demonstration but from all counties in the state. The last extraction of data utilized in this report was received in April 2008 and includes SSIS data through March 31, 2008.

The monthly downloads are provided in 101 separate data tables (files). Each data table contains information on some specific action, person or event. For example, information on the report and intake process are in two tables, one that pertains to the person and one that has information about the reported event. There are six tables with maltreatment-related information. Other tables provide information on the assessment and its results, on a variety of demographic information, and on workgroups that may have been opened. Still other tables contain data on court petitions and dispositions, on placement and adoption activity, on vendors and foster care providers, on title IV-E eligibility, and on staff time related to specific cases. Some of the data contained in the tables represent new activity that occurred during the previous month, while other data is historical. Thus, for example, downloads contain both new and former reports of child maltreatment as well as the history of placement occurrences.

The downloaded data tables are first converted into formats usable for research and the full complement of each month's data tables are archived. This initial conversion of the data tables is done through a number of extraction programs written for the project. Children assigned to the waiver (and control group children) must be located in the background databases. Most of the data on these children, who compose the study population, are brought into a master research database. Some data on the children are kept in separate peripheral files because of their complex nature or relative infrequency of use. Another database is constructed that contains the pool of possible matching cases for the three counties where random assignment is not occurring. Each month, as a new download is received, the process is repeated with the master research database growing both with the addition of new children and with the addition of new information on children already in the database. The research database is, therefore, historical, cumulative and comprehensive. It includes data on all MnPD waiver and control group children from the time they were opened in the state child protection system through the present.

**Case-Specific Caseworker Survey.** Because many relevant characteristics of children are not available through SSIS, an ongoing survey of county caseworkers (and tribal caseworkers where this is relevant) is being conducted as new cases are added to the waiver and control groups. The survey is termed "case-specific" because it is keyed to representative samples of waiver and control group cases. Cases are sampled and caseworkers surveyed to provide information on the care-giving situation and the history and characteristics of children, including health and education variables, needed to measure child well-being outcomes.

Sample cases are randomly selected each month. A web-based survey method is being utilized in which the caseworker in each sampled case is identified in SSIS records and is sent an

e-mail with a reference to the particular child of concern. The e-mail itself serves as a cover letter and contains hyperlink enabling the caseworker to open the survey form via her/his Internet browser. The survey is located on the IAR website. Caseworkers are asked to respond to the surveys concerning no more than three cases during any 12-month period.

A one-fifth sampling proportion was originally planned. However, the number of children assigned to the waiver group is less than anticipated by evaluators and the actual percentage at this point is 55.4 percent (n=536 of 967). The number of currently completed case-specific surveys is 415, including 221 waiver children and 194 control children.

**Caregiver Interviews.** Foster caregivers are important sources on issues related to child well-being and family functioning and, importantly, on understanding foster caregiver decision making about permanency and the MnPD single benefit. Two contacts with caregivers are planned, one within three months of the single benefit offer and a second after a period of two years (when possible) or between one and two years (for those entering the study in the latter stages of the project). In the first interview waiver group caregivers are asked whether and how they were offered the single benefit and, if so, what concerns played an important role in their decision to accept or reject the offer. Both waiver and control group caregivers are asked whether they had previously considered adopting or accepting permanent legal and physical custody of children in the MnPD project. Caregivers are also asked questions about the status and well-being of the child and the family unit. The second contact (through interviews and surveys) will focus more on the status and well-being of the child and the family unit. All contacts with caregivers to date have involved the first family contact.

Through this reporting period, 253 caregivers have been selected for interviews and interviews have been conducted with 129, including 75 caregivers with one or more waiver group children and 54 caregivers with one or more control group children. Interviewers have been unable to contact some caregivers (n=42; 16.6 percent) by telephone with available information and a nearly equal number of caregivers (44) did not answer repeated telephone calls or respond to messages left on recording devices. Sixteen caregivers (6.3 percent) refused to be interviewed and 38 interviews are currently pending, with efforts underway to contact these caregivers.

The interviews are either face-to-face or by telephone depending on the preference of the caregiver. When repeated efforts to contact the caregiver to request an interview are unsuccessful, a mail survey questionnaire is mailed to them. Thus far, 78 surveys have been mailed and 18 have been completed and returned, 9 by waiver group caregivers and 9 by control group caregivers.

At the time this report was prepared, feedback had been received from a total of 147 foster caregivers, 28.2 percent of the waiver group caregivers in the study population and 20.3 percent of the control group caregivers.

Rules for selecting families and conducting the first round of interviews that have been established by the evaluator are as follows: initial contact with caregivers is made after 90 days from the date of study group assignment; in the case of waiver group children, contact is made only after the evaluator learns that the offer of the MnPD single benefit has been made; contact is not made in cases in which there has been a change of foster caregivers (about 12 percent of cases); foster caregivers are interviewed about a single child and are not re-contacted when a second or third child appears in the case; cases selected are limited to those in which the children are age 17 and younger (which excludes about 2 percent of cases).

Evaluators endeavor to match the ethnicity of the foster family and the interviewer. To accomplish this, evaluators have included two consultants on the research team. One is an American Indian with a Masters in Social Work who lives in Duluth. She is a member of the Chippewa Tribe. The Minnesota Chippewa Tribe is a centralized government for six Ojibwe (or Chippewa or Anishinaabe) bands in the state. The Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa have their administrative and service center on their reservation in Carlton County, one of the counties participating in the demonstration. As part of her MSW program, the interviewer had an internship with the Fond du Lac Band and is, therefore, known to them. She currently works for the University of Minnesota Duluth.

The second consultant is an African American professor in the School of Social Work of the University of Minnesota in St. Paul. She has a Ph.D. in Social Work and has assisted from the beginning of the demonstration project in the development of survey and interview instruments and in developing the interview protocol. She also is responsible for selecting interviewers, training them and coordinating their work on the project. She currently has three graduate-level interviewers who conduct all interviews, both in-home and telephone, of caregivers who are not American Indian.

#### **Research Trips, Site Visits and Interviews of County Administrators and Staffs.**

Throughout the course of the demonstration senior researchers are making site visits to counties participating in the demonstration. These site visits include interviews with state and county administrators, project managers, adoption and child protection unit supervisors and caseworkers. The original research plan called for annual sites to project counties, but to facilitate implementation more frequent research and technical assistance trips have been made, including trips prior to the start of the project in November 2005.



Evaluators were in the state during July, August, September, and October 2005 prior to the start of the demonstration. These visits involved meetings with state Department of Human Services project staff (related to the history, goals, and expected operation of the project), with the MnPD Evaluation Advisory Committee (related to the development of the research design and plan), with the SSIS technical staff (related to the identification of need data fields, data extracts and downloads, and issues of eligibility). Meetings were held with the statewide Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council (to explain the project and evaluation as it would affect American Indian children statewide) and the Hennepin County ICWA team (to discuss evaluation activities among American Indian families in the Twin Cities). A meeting was held with the director of the Fond du Lac tribal social services unit, which has offices in Carlton County, and which required a tribal Institutional Review Board (IRB) review process of the evaluation practices. A second, separate, IRB research proposal was developed and presented to the state DHS Institutional Review Board. Evaluators met with professionals of the American Indian Project at the University of Minnesota Duluth to discuss issues related to conducting research among American Indian families in the rural, northern counties of the state. Additional meetings were held to obtain the services of the American Indian interviewer and the African American coordinator of interviews identified in the previous section.

Once the project began, evaluators were in the state during the first program year during March, April, May, June, July and twice in November 2006. These visits involved site visits to participating counties including Carlton (2 visits), Cass (1 visit), Dakota (2 visits), Hennepin (2 visits), Mille Lacs (2 visits), and Ramsey (2 visits). Follow-up meetings were also held with state DHS project managers and coordinators of family interviews.

During the second project year evaluators visited Carlton County (2 visits), Dakota County (3 visits), Ramsey County (3 visits) and Hennepin County (2 visits). One of the visits to Hennepin County involved a broad discussion of the future of the project in the county and involved administrators of the state Department of Human Services and Hennepin County project managers. Evaluators also participated in a five county meeting with state agency administrators in which a broad set of issues pertaining to the MnPD project were discussed, outcomes reviewed, and the first cost neutrality report presented and examined.

Thus far, during the third project year, evaluators have conducted site visits to Hennepin, Ramsey and Dakota counties.

#### **4. Limitations**

Beyond dealing with the uneven implementation of the demonstration, the major limitation or complexity of this evaluation is its bifurcated nature. That is, the portion of the study that pertains to the metro counties of Hennepin and Ramsey that involves an experimental design with the random assignment of children eligible for the waiver to the experimental or control group. In the other and smaller counties—Carlton, Cass, Dakota—the research design is quasi-experimental, with randomization replaced by a pair-matching procedure that identifies non-waiver cases in other counties that most resemble cases assigned to the waiver in project counties. In both instances, a web-based assignment program designed by evaluators is used for the entry of new project cases in all instances to record and document eligibility criteria, and for Hennepin and Ramsey counties to randomly select cases for the experimental and control groups. In the analysis, whenever feasible, all experimental cases will be compared to all control cases (including both randomly selected and matching cases), although analyses will also split the study population apart into experimental and quasi-experiment components.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Process Analysis**

This chapter has five parts. The first is a review of major implementation issues, including county concerns about cost neutrality and the manner in which counties have operationalized the MnPD. The second part provides a review of the utilization of the waiver in participating counties. The third is a presentation of the characteristics of the children assigned to the waiver and their caregivers. The fourth part is a brief discussion of waiver services. The final section is a discussion of the factors that have influenced the decision of foster caregivers to accept or reject the single benefit option and the issues and concerns they have about the MnPD program and about accepting permanency for children in their care.

#### **A. Implementation**

As noted in the introduction, the implementation of the MnPD project has been uneven. The demonstration is being operated as planned in Dakota and Ramsey counties. In Hennepin County waiver assignment was stopped during the second year but was in the process of being restarted as this report was being prepared. Carlton County also stopped assigning cases in 2007 and has not restarted the project. Although technically still operating the MnPD project, Cass County has assigned only two cases to the waiver thus far. Mille Lacs County asked to be withdrawn from the project before it began. In this section, three issues that bear on the implementation and operation of the project are discussed. These are county concerns about cost neutrality and their financial risk, the manner in which counties have operationalized the process of selecting and assigning cases to the waiver, and efforts to utilize the project as a way of addressing long-term foster care among American Indians

##### **1. Cost Neutrality and County Financial Concerns**

A major issue that has impacted implementation of the MnPD from the first year of the project is concern among participating counties of their financial liability. Because the Minnesota child protection services system is county administered, the cost neutrality requirements of the MnPD project impact each county individually and directly. Whether or not

the project as a whole is cost neutral, each county will realize savings or incur expenses depending on its individual cost neutrality position.

As the MnPD project got underway and proceeded, participating counties grew increasingly aware of their potential risk as they assigned new cases to the waiver. This concern has not interfered with the operation of the project everywhere. Ramsey County, with offices in St. Paul and with its share of difficult cases, has been willing to trust the planning projections that were made prior to the start of the project and have kept focused on the potential positive benefits of the waiver. Dakota County, a more affluent and rapidly growing suburban area, has welcomed the MnPD project. Dakota County project managers see the MnPD as a valuable instrument they believe can help achieve their permanency goals for children in foster care. In Cass County the expressed financial concern has less to do with cost neutrality than the manner in which administrative savings are apportioned between the county and the state.

The financial issue has been most acutely felt in Hennepin and Carlton counties. The counties are quite different (see Table 1), but both fear the possibility of financial loss because of their commitment to pay the MnPD continuous benefit for waiver group children until they reach age eighteen. Hennepin County, a large urban agency, has operated the program within the ebb and flow of larger financial and political pressures. The federal Deficit Reduction Act portends the loss of significant financial resources and staff positions for the county, in child welfare generally and in child protection specifically. Risking additional costs through MnPD project has been difficult for the county to contemplate and justify.

Quite different from Hennepin County, Carlton County is a much less populated, rural county where most people within the child welfare community know one another. A major concern here is that a small number of expensive MnPD cases could create havoc with the agency's budget over an extended period of time and prevent the county from carrying out other essential work.

Because of the complexity of the MnPD project, it took time and experience for the participating counties to realize fully their potential financial risk. The counties began receiving preliminary reimbursement for the single benefit payments made to adoptive/permanent legal custodian parents in February 2007. However, it was not until 24 months from the start of the project that counties received the final reconciliation reimbursements and saw the first cost neutrality calculation.<sup>4</sup> While that calculation, which covered the period from November 2005

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<sup>4</sup> There was a complicating factor that contributed to the delay in finalizing the first cost neutrality calculation. Although fiscal information systems are becoming more centralized in Minnesota, counties continue to operate

through March 2007, proved to be positive for all participating counties, the counties had been operating the MnPD project without exact knowledge of their short or long term financial liability until then.<sup>5</sup>

Beyond this, while counties retain financial liability to continue to provide the long term maintenance costs of the single benefit, they have no guarantee that current federal assistance, that allows them to use title IV-E funds to offset some of these costs, will extend beyond the end of the current five-year waiver authorization period. Counties know that these costs can be substantial, especially in the cases of very young children. However, the state has guaranteed to provide the counties with financial support that matches the federal share in the event that the MnPD waiver ends after 5 years.

While counties understand and share the goals of the MnPD waiver, they are facing substantial reductions in federal support from other sources for their child welfare and child protection programs. This situation was not apparent to the counties at the start of the demonstration. While Hennepin County, as of April 2008, has begun to assign new cases to the waiver, Carlton County has decided to continue its moratorium on new MnPD waiver assignments.

## **2. Waiver Eligibility and Assignment**

The process of identifying potential MnPD waiver children and then entering them into the assignment program has varied among the counties, although there are similarities. Generally, caseworkers have made the initial identification of new potential waiver cases and brought the cases to the attention of county MnPD project managers.<sup>6</sup> County project managers, sometimes following discussion of the cases during unit meetings, confirm program eligibility and enter the cases into the web assignment program.

In Carlton County, when cases were still being assigned to the waiver, caseworkers brought all new cases that they believed met program eligibility requirements to the attention of the supervisor of the county's Family Services Unit during weekly team meetings. The cases would be discussed during these meetings and if the supervisor subsequently confirmed that program eligibility criteria were met, the child would be assigned to the waiver group. Once

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independent financial and accounting systems. Among other things this means that IV-E eligibility determination remains the responsibility of counties.

<sup>5</sup> As far as evaluators are aware, there has been no updated cost neutrality calculation.

<sup>6</sup> MnPD project managers may be CPS supervisors or other administrators given responsibility to oversee and coordinate the waiver demonstration in their county.

assigned, it was understood that the caseworker would make the continuous benefit offer to the foster caregiver. Carlton County considered any child for whom reunification was ruled out and who was title IV-E eligible, and who was living with a foster provider at least six months, to be eligible for the MnPD project, as long as the foster caregiver was also eligible (that is, licensed) and the case was title IV-E reimbursable. (To ensure a case was title IV-E eligible and reimbursable, the county did not assign children unless it had made at least one claim and received reimbursement.) In Carlton County four county caseworkers are responsible for adoption and foster care cases. Cases of American Indian children always include notification to the child's tribe and decisions about the child's care and permanency plan are not made without the involvement of the tribe.

In Dakota County the case assignment process is essentially the same. Dakota County has a much larger population, is more affluent than Carlton County (see Table 1), and has a larger child protection staff. The MnPD project manager is also the supervisor of the adoption unit and oversees a staff of five adoption caseworkers. The caseworkers in this unit are primarily responsible for identifying cases that are potentially eligible for the MnPD project. The effect of this has been a tendency towards adding new adoption cases to the waiver rather than ongoing child protection cases. The Dakota County policy is to offer the MnPD single benefit to all foster caregivers of new pre-adoptive cases that meet the minimum waiver eligibility criteria (as in Carlton County). The project manager is responsible for confirming that the child is title IV-E eligible and has been in foster care at least six consecutive months with the same foster caregiver. Once the project manager confirms eligibility and notifies the caseworker, it is expected that the caseworker will notify the foster caregiver and offer the MnPD single benefit. New TPR cases and cases considered "pre-adoption" and on the court docket are the primary focus of attention. Child protection cases involving a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody typically lie outside the line of sight of the MnPD project manager. These foster care cases are the responsibility of the ongoing child protection services unit, with several different supervisors and about 15 caseworkers. It is possible for these child protection cases to be discussed during weekly staff meetings and for eligible children to be assigned to the MnPD project, but the procedure for case identification and entry into the project is not as established as it is with the adoption unit. In Dakota County, the focus on new adoption cases for assignment to the MnPD project has more to do with the work load of the supervisor of the adoption unit than with a policy decision to limit entry of children into the project.

Cass County's participation in the MnPD project has been limited to the assignment of two children, none within the last 12 months. This has apparently resulted from two factors, the county's concern about their financial risk and the lack of children in their foster care system

who are title IV-E eligible and considered to be in long term foster care. Cass County has also found that children who might otherwise be eligible for the MnPD project do not have stability in their placement settings or they have foster caregivers who are not interested in permanent custody regardless of the financial benefits.

In Ramsey County, at the beginning of the demonstration, the MnPD project manager identified existing cases that met minimum eligibility requirements and entered them into the web assignment system.<sup>7</sup> When the web system selected cases for the waiver group, the project manager notified the caseworker that the MnPD single benefit option should be offered to the child's foster caregiver. Beginning in April 2006, caseworkers took over responsibility for making referrals of prospective eligible children to the project manager. Instructions to the caseworkers were, and currently are, that they use the minimum MnPD criteria when making these referrals. The assignment procedure in Ramsey County, therefore, is now technically the same as in Carlton and Dakota counties. In Ramsey County, both the child protection units and the adoption unit are responsible for identifying MnPD eligible children. Typically, the cases most likely to be referred in Ramsey County, as in Dakota County, are those that are facing a court decision where a permanency decision is required.

There is another issue in Ramsey County that does not involve the assignment of cases to the MnPD project but is likely to affect the outcome analysis. There is a county program that pre-dates the MnPD waiver called the Adoption Equalization Program. Like the MnPD single benefit, the Ramsey County AEP provides additional financial assistance to foster caregivers who seek to adopt children in their care. Unlike the MnPD project, the AEP is available only to foster caregivers who are otherwise financially unable to adopt. Since the start of the MnPD project, perhaps not surprisingly, the AEP has been used more often for cases randomly assigned to the MnPD control group cases (n=17) than for waiver group cases (n=6).<sup>8</sup>

In Hennepin County, until the suspension of waiver assignments in June 2007, cases were identified by two MnPD project managers based solely on system data. The county policy was that all children who met the minimum criteria—that is, they were IV-E eligible, reunification had been ruled out, and they were living in the same licensed foster home for at least the last six months—should be considered eligible for the MnPD project. The criterion that a child was living in a licensed foster home for at least six months was assumed to imply that the child was

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<sup>7</sup> In Ramsey County (as well as in Hennepin County but not other project counties) the web-based assignment system randomly selects children who have been entered for the experimental (waiver or MnPD services group) or control (traditional services group) conditions.

<sup>8</sup> It may be the use of the AEP for experimental cases that is more puzzling. But these appear to be cases in which the county program was already in process when waiver assignment occurred.

in a “safe and stable home” as required by the MnPD Terms and Conditions. Once identified, the project managers entered the new cases into the web-based system of random selection that determined whether children were assigned to the waiver or control study group. The names of children who were assigned to the waiver group were passed along to the caseworker for the child. The assumption was that the foster caregivers of all of these children would be offered the MnPD single benefit.

Because of financial concerns, Hennepin County suspended assignment of children to the waiver midway through 2007. In April 2008, one case with four children were entered into the web assignment program, the first since July 2007, and evaluators were advised that this marked the restart of the project in the county. With the new beginning caseworkers are being given the responsibility of making referrals for MnPD assignment, as is done in Carlton, Dakota and Ramsey counties. The project managers understand that this will restrict the assignment of cases to eligible children in which caseworkers view the placement in the best, long-term interest of the child, and not to every child who is technically eligible. They also expect that this will increase the proportion of cases selected and assigned to the project in which the MnPD single benefit is actually offered to the foster caregiver.<sup>9</sup> Hennepin County project managers now believe that their initial assumption that all licensed homes caring for children at least six months are suitable, permanent homes for foster children was too far-reaching. The project managers work most closely with supervisors of the county’s three adoption units. In restarting the project, the project managers have described their intentions with the supervisors of the adoption units and through them to caseworkers who will identify new MnPD-appropriate cases. Project managers planned to make a presentation about the restart of the MnPD project to all adoption caseworkers at the quarterly program meeting in May 2008. It is the intention of Hennepin County to try to focus the MnPD project more intensely on children with special needs as defined in the MnPD Terms and Conditions.

The change in Hennepin County to place the initiative for selecting MnPD project children in the hands of caseworkers can be expected to have consequences, as it has had in Ramsey County as well as in Carlton and Dakota counties. Caseworkers make decisions about children not only on the basis of technical eligibility but also on their judgment about the child and about the foster caregiver. The child’s safety, permanency and well-being are the primary responsibility of the caseworker and before recommending a foster caregiver to be a permanent home for a child, it is natural to expect the home to be vetted by the caseworker. Unless a caseworker views a foster caregiver as a potential permanent home for the child, it is unlikely the

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<sup>9</sup> See Table 8.



caseworker would recommend the home either to the project manager for inclusion into MnPD project or to the court for adoption or a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody.

The issue of caseworker reservations about offering the MnPD single benefit to some foster caregivers is discussed later in this chapter, (See “Caseworker Reservations” in Section E. The MnPD Single Benefit Offer and the Decision to Accept or Reject It.) Among other things, caseworkers may be aware of potential disruptions in the foster home situation. Of the children assigned to the waiver group, 9.5 percent are currently shown in the state data system as living with a foster caregiver other than the caregiver at the time of assignment; 4.6 percent changed to a second foster caregiver and then returned to the original; 8.3 percent are old enough to be emancipated; 2.2 percent have reunited with their biological parents, 1.0 percent are living with non-foster relatives, and .6 percent are runaways. Even in cases with eventually positive outcomes, change occurs: 13.6 percent of waiver group children with permanency outcomes have changed foster caregivers after waiver group assignment.

### **3. MnPD and American Indian Tribes**

The issue of long-term foster care among American Indian children is particularly critical. The Adoption and Safe Families Act (1997), which established new timelines for termination of parental rights and provided incentives and provisions to assist adoptions, did not take into consideration American Indian permanency values and did not specifically address how its provisions would interface with the Indian Child Welfare Act. The termination of parental rights is a troublesome issue for some tribes, which find it culturally unacceptable and an undesirable option since it has the potential for severing the child’s connection not just from his or her biological family, but from the child’s extended family and tribe, and because American Indian culture tends to place more value on relationships than timelines. One tribal official explained to evaluators what she said was a common view about foster care among American Indian communities: “The first alternative to a child’s biological parents is another blood relative, whether that relative is American Indian or not, and the second alternative is a member of the child’s tribe.” According to this view, any living situation that does not involve a child’s biological family, nuclear or extended, or its larger, tribal community, is viewed as temporary.

From the earliest planning for the MnPD project, an important consideration was a focus on the state’s American Indian communities<sup>10</sup> and their children in long-term foster care. The

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<sup>10</sup> See **Map 2** for the location of American Indian reservations in Minnesota. In the map, reservation lands are shown as shaded and the larger ones are named. There are numerous, small reservations throughout the southern part of the state. The larger ones and the ones impacted most by the waiver are in the northern part of the state.

objective has been to utilize the waiver to establish permanency for American Indian children in a manner that is consistent with how permanency is viewed by the tribes. Beyond this, the MnPD single benefit was seen as making permanent legal custody, or tribal or “customary” adoption,<sup>11</sup> as affordable to relative or tribal foster caregivers of limited financial resources.

During pre-demonstration planning and during the first two years of the project, the state agency attempted to create an atmosphere of understanding and cooperation with the American Indian community through meetings with tribal representatives and presentations at ICWA Advisory Council meetings. The state waiver project manager spoke to American Indian communities and tribal leaders about the waiver and the demonstration project whenever asked or whenever an acceptable opportunity was present, and provided training to tribal social service and justice professionals. These efforts often involved swimming upstream against the current of history, some within living memories that advised not just caution but distrust on the part of American Indians when new policies or practices are presented as “in the best interest of American Indian children.”

While efforts at building understanding and trust were underway, there was another, more technical issue that affected the project in Cass and Mille Lacs counties. This involved title IV-E substitute care agreements with the tribes. Without such agreements federal IV-E funds could not be claimed for American Indian children under the jurisdiction of a tribal court; such American Indian children could not, as a result, be assigned to the waiver. Counties responsible for the maintenance costs of a placement ordered through a tribal court could not draw down federal reimbursement for those costs without such an agreement. While title IV-E agreements were anticipated in Mille Lacs County with the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe and in Cass County with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, such agreements were not in place at the start of the MnPD project. The lack of an agreement in Mille Lacs County, and the inability of the county to claim IV-E reimbursement for American Indian children under tribal jurisdiction, was a major reason the county asked to be withdrawn from the demonstration during the early stages of the project.<sup>12</sup> IV-E agreements were either in place in the other project counties (as in Hennepin<sup>13</sup> and Ramsey counties) or not needed (as in Carlton<sup>14</sup> and Dakota<sup>15</sup> counties).

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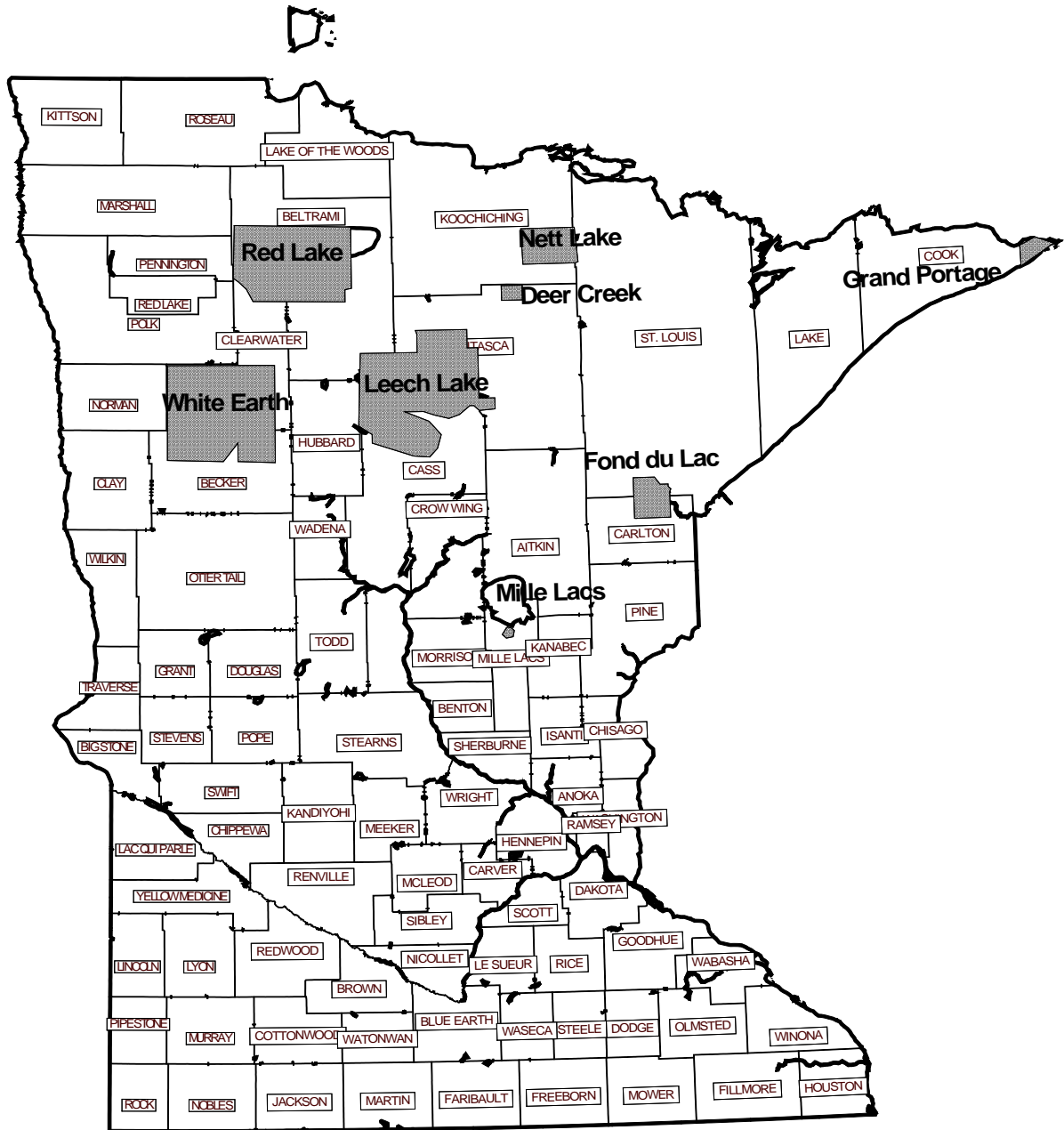
<sup>11</sup> Permanent arrangements that do not terminate the parental rights of biological parents.

<sup>12</sup> About half of the out-of-home placements in Mille Lacs County involve children from the reservation.

<sup>13</sup> One of the project managers in Hennepin County remarked that the American Indian community “embraced the waiver” from the start.

<sup>14</sup> This is because the Fond du Lac Band of Ojibwe does not have a tribal court that hears child protection cases and Fond du Lac children are typically under the jurisdiction of the Carlton County district court. It is worth noting that the Carlton County and Fond du Lac social service agencies have long worked together on American Indian child welfare cases and provide one of the stronger models of integrated services in the state.

<sup>15</sup> In Dakota County American Indians make up less than half of 1 percent of the population.



Map 2. Reservations in Minnesota

In the spring of 2008 the state signed a title IV-E agreement with the Leech Lake Band. As this report was being prepared, a similar agreement was anticipated between the state and the Mille Lacs Band. With such agreements in place the bands will be able to claim reimbursement for IV-E eligible staff training and other administrative activities, such as those that prevent the placement of children, monitor children in foster care, or facilitate reunification, and submit claims for additional child welfare staff. The affects of such agreements on the MnPD project in Cass and Mille Lacs county is not known at the present. One possibility is that the bands themselves will ask to join the MnPD project.

## **B. Waiver Utilization**

Through March 31, 2008, 861 children have been identified as eligible for the MnPD project by the five participating counties. This includes 431 in Hennepin County, 321 in Ramsey County, 69 in Dakota County, 38 in Carlton County, and 2 in Cass County.

In Hennepin County, where the process of random assignment separates these children into waiver and control groups, there are 215 children in the waiver group and 216 in the control group. In Ramsey County, where random selection also occurs, there are 170 children in the waiver group and 151 in the control group. The difference in the number of children in the two groups in Ramsey County is accounted for by the fact that when a child is determined eligible for the MnPD project and entered into the random assignment program, any siblings that child may have who also meet the program's eligibility criteria are automatically assigned to the same study group. There have been, in fact, 199 children in Ramsey County entered into the random assignment program to this point, and 98 have been selected for the waiver group and 101 for the control group. However, the waiver children have a larger number of eligible siblings than control children (a mean number of .73 compared with .5).

In Carlton, Cass and Dakota counties, where random assignment is not occurring, all children determined eligible for the MnPD project are entered into the assignment program and automatically become waiver group children. To these are added, sometimes with a small lag, matching cases from similar Minnesota counties that are not participating in the MnPD project. Thus, while there have been 861 children determined eligible for the MnPD project who are part of the study population, the study population also currently includes an additional 106 matching or comparison children. The full study population at this point, as a result, totals 961 children, with 494 waiver children and 473 control (including matching) children.

**Table 2** shows the number of waiver group and control group children, including matching children, as of March 31, 2008. (Until the very end of the MnPD project, the number of matching group children will generally lag somewhat behind the number of waiver group children in the non-metro counties.)<sup>16</sup> The 494 children assigned to the waiver group, live with 298 caregivers, a mean number of 1.66 children per family. The number of waiver group caregivers with one foster child was 176 (56.1 percent), while 74 had two foster children, 31 had three foster children, 12 families had four foster children, 3 families had five foster children and 2 had six or more foster children. The 473 control children live with 330 foster caregivers, an average of 1.43 per family.

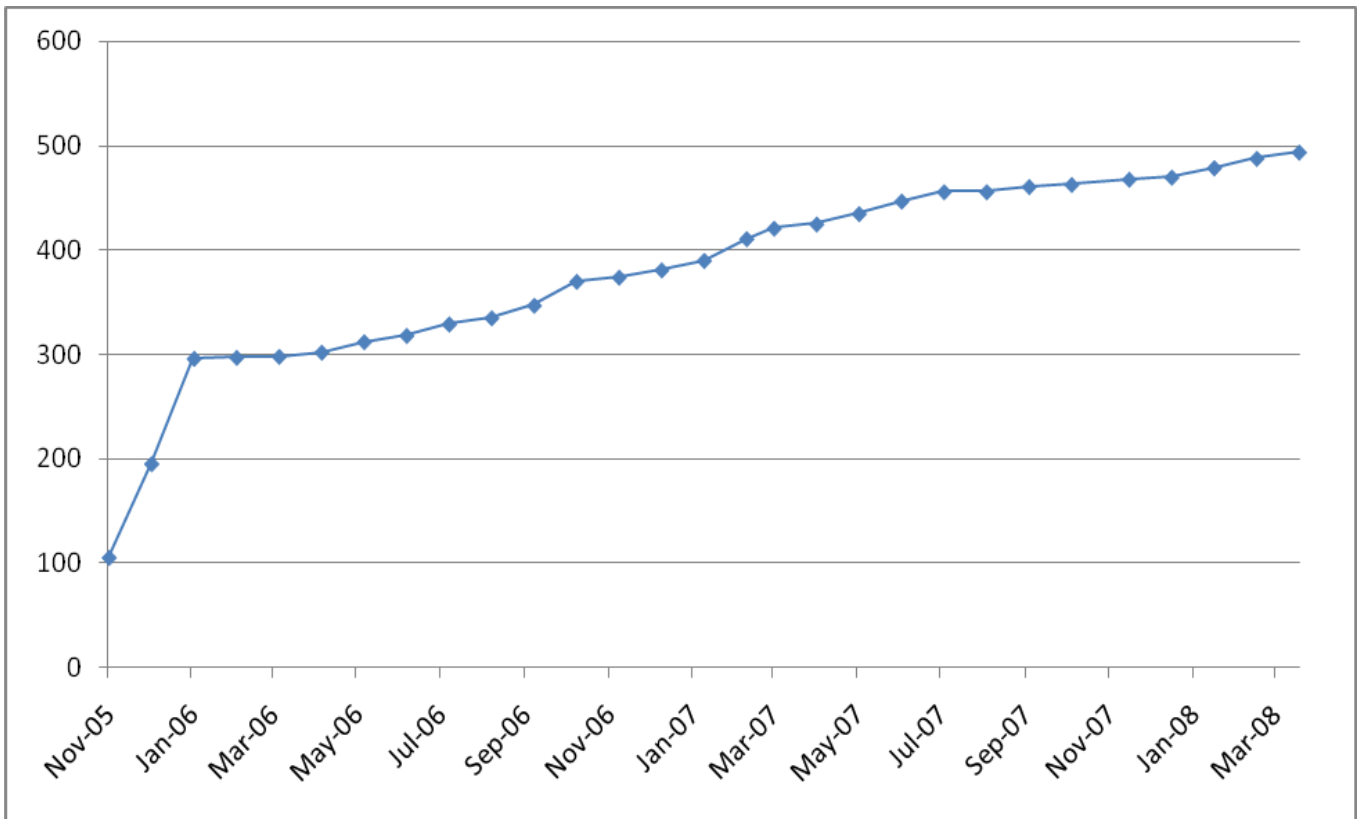
**Table 2. Waiver and Control/Matching Children by County**

County	Waiver/ Experimental Children	Control/ Matching Children
Carlton	38	38
Cass	2	2
Dakota	69	66
Hennepin	215	216
Ramsey	170	151
Total	494	473

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<sup>16</sup> This is because the selection of matching cases is a two-step process. First the software program developed to identify matching cases produces a pool of potential matches. The pool consists of two to five matches for each waiver child, ranked in order from best match, to second best match, etc. The names and system IDs of these children are sent to the DHS title IV-E Finance Supervisor who confirms whether or not each is indeed eligible for title IV-E reimbursement for foster payments. In each case, the best-matched child that is eligible for title IV-E reimbursement is selected and enters the study population as a control case.

**Figure 1** shows the cumulative number of waiver children across the first two and a half years of the MnPD project. As can be seen, 6 of 10 children that would become assigned to the waiver group were assigned during the first quarter of the project. During this initial period, there were a large number of children who met the eligibility criteria on participating county caseloads. Since that time, the focus of the MnPD project has tended to focus on newer cases that meet the minimum MnPD eligibility requirements, and have permanency dispositions pending before the court. MnPD project assignments have also been suspended, at least for a time, in Hennepin and Carlton counties.



**Figure 1. Cumulative Number of Children Assigned to the MnPD Waiver Group**

**Figure 2** also shows the cumulative number of children placed in the waiver group over the first half of the project but also shows the proportions originating in particular counties. In general, the relative size of counties, in population, is reflected in the relative difference in the numbers of children assigned to the MnPD project. Although, comparing the proportion of all waiver children in specific counties compared with the distribution of the general population in

the demonstration area as a whole, some differences are found (See **Table 3**). Despite the fact that Carlton County has suspended, at least temporarily, assignments to the project, it is a county with a small population and currently has a larger proportion of waiver children than might have been expected. On the other hand, despite its enthusiastic response to the demonstration, Dakota County has a slightly smaller proportion of children assigned to the MnPD project than might be expected. In the larger metro counties, Ramsey County has a higher percentage and Hennepin County a lower percentage than what would be expected from the relative size of the general population.

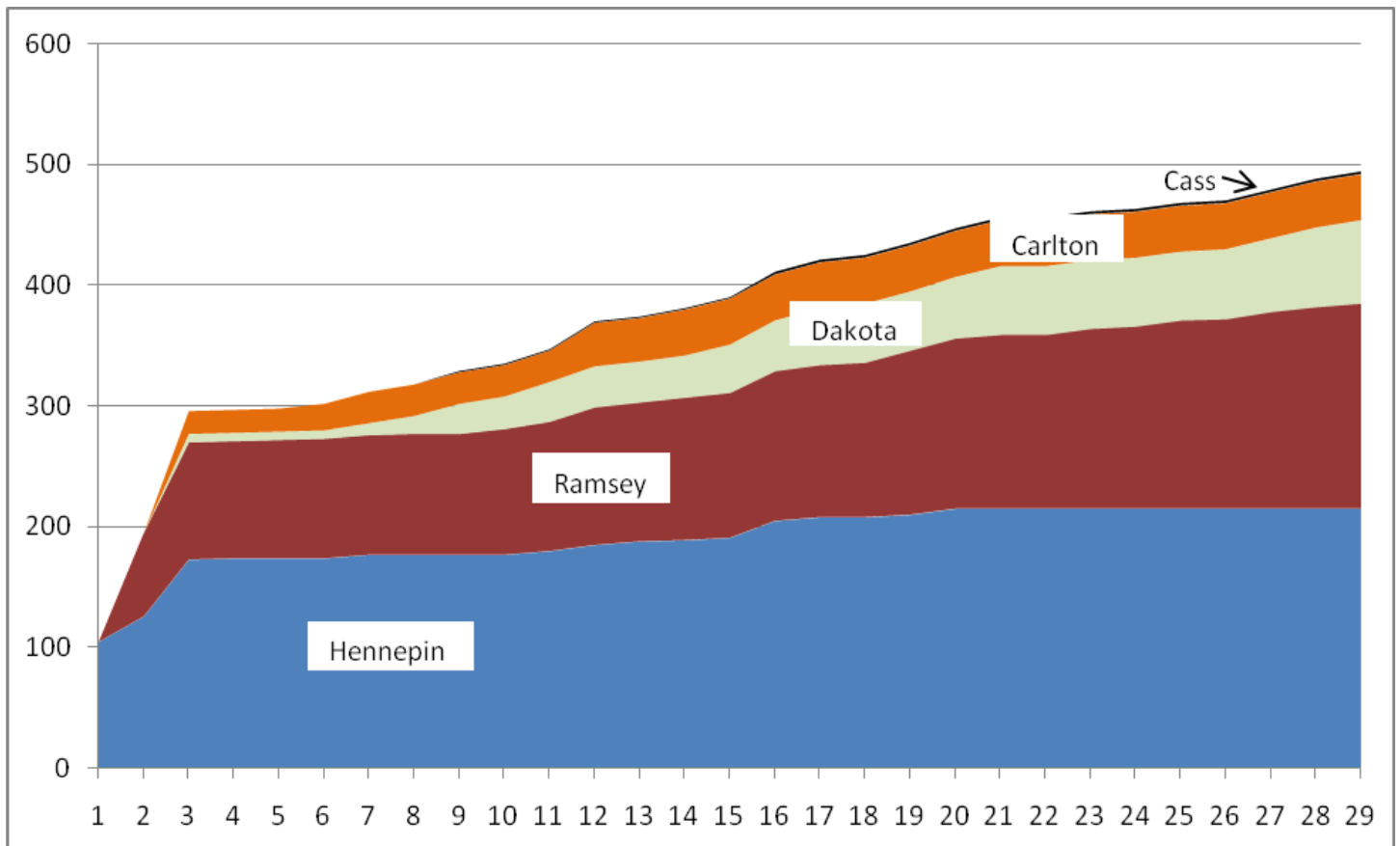


Figure 2. Cumulative Number of Children Assigned to the MnPD Waiver Group by County

**Table 3. Percent of Waiver Cases and the General Population**

County	Percent of Waiver Cases	Percent of Demonstration Area's General Population
Carlton	7.7%	1.7%
Cass	0.4%	1.4%
Dakota	14.0%	18.8%
Hennepin	43.5%	54.3%
Ramsey	34.4%	23.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

**Figure 3** also shows the cumulative number of waiver children in each county plotted individually. **Figure 4** is a stacked bar chart which shows the number of waiver children added each month of the MnPD project thus far. These two graphs show four things: 1) the large number of cases assigned to the MnPD project during the first quarter, primarily in Hennepin and Ramsey counties; 2) the large proportion of all waiver cases that are from these two counties; 3) the effect of the suspension of the project in Carlton and Hennepin counties during 2007; and 4) that new waiver cases during the last year have come primarily from Dakota and Ramsey counties.



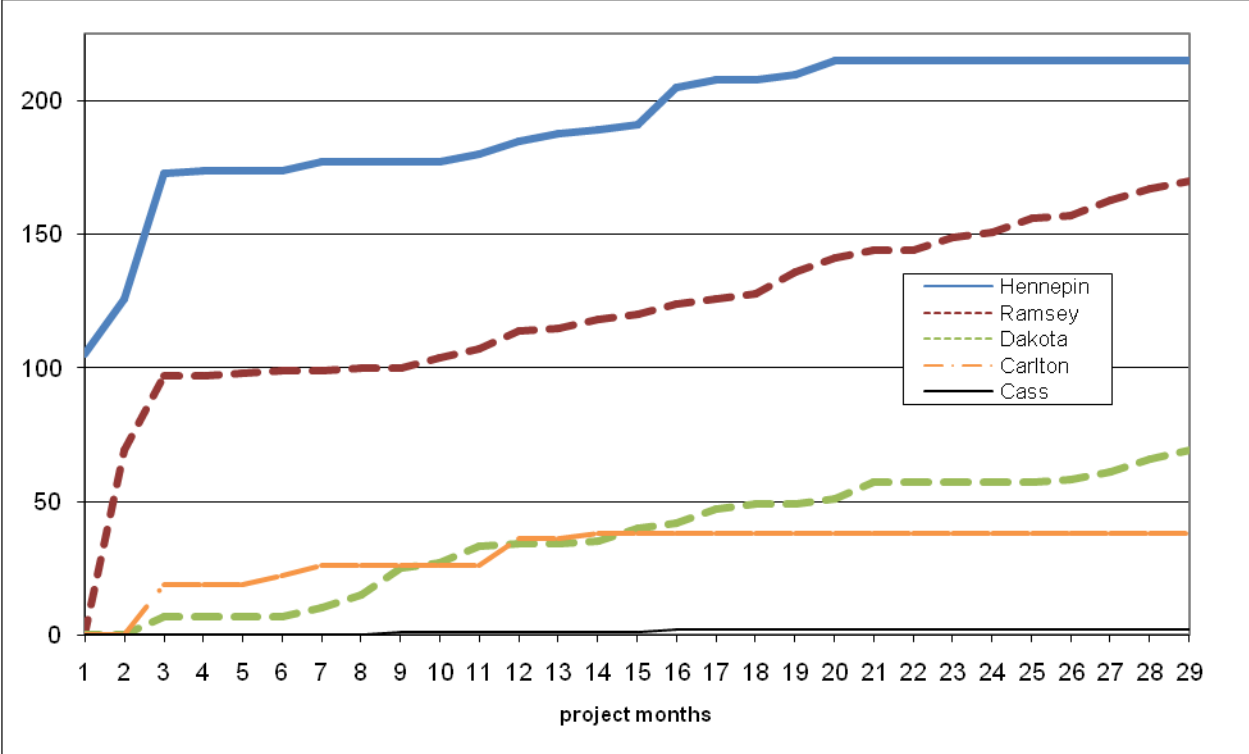


Figure 3. Cumulative Number of MnPD Waiver Children by County and Project Month

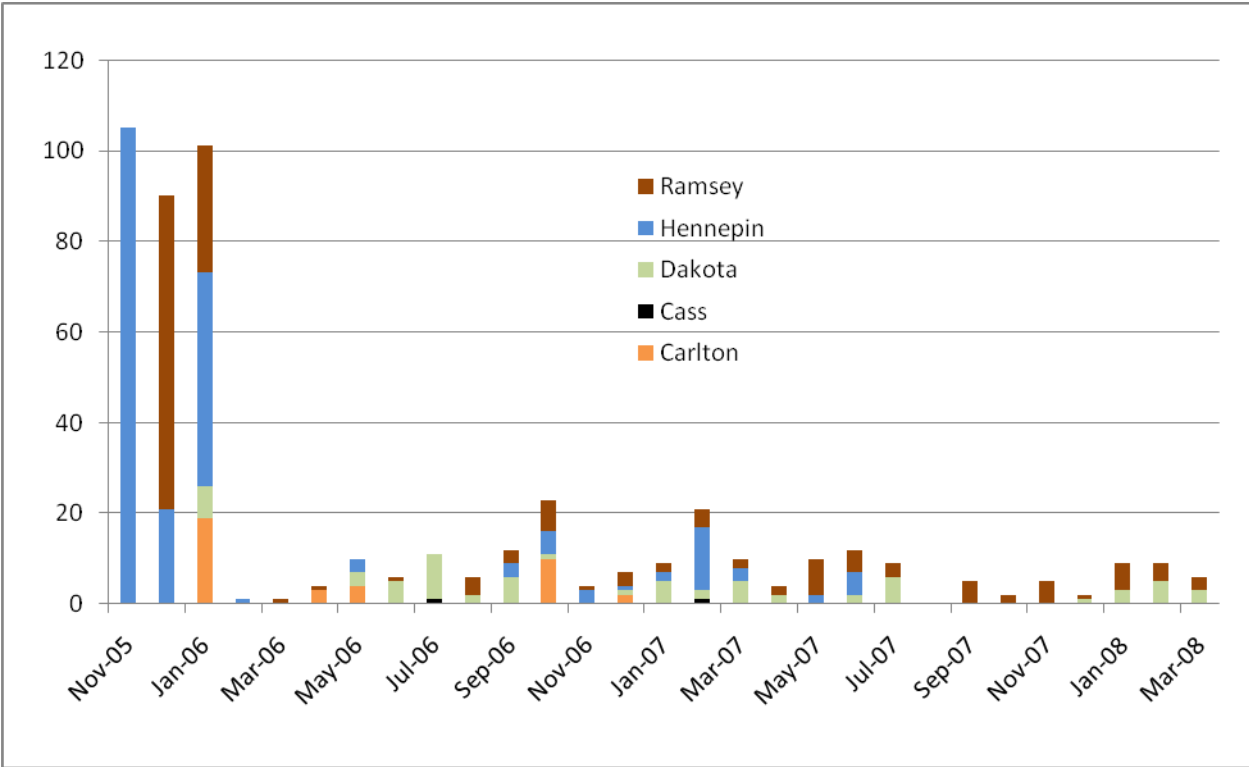


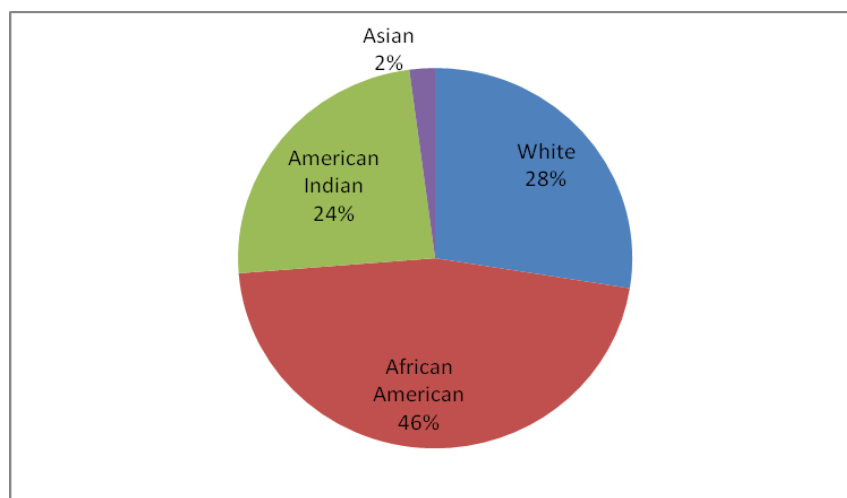
Figure 4. Number of Children Assigned to the MnPD Project by County and Project Month

## C. Characteristics of the Children and Caregivers

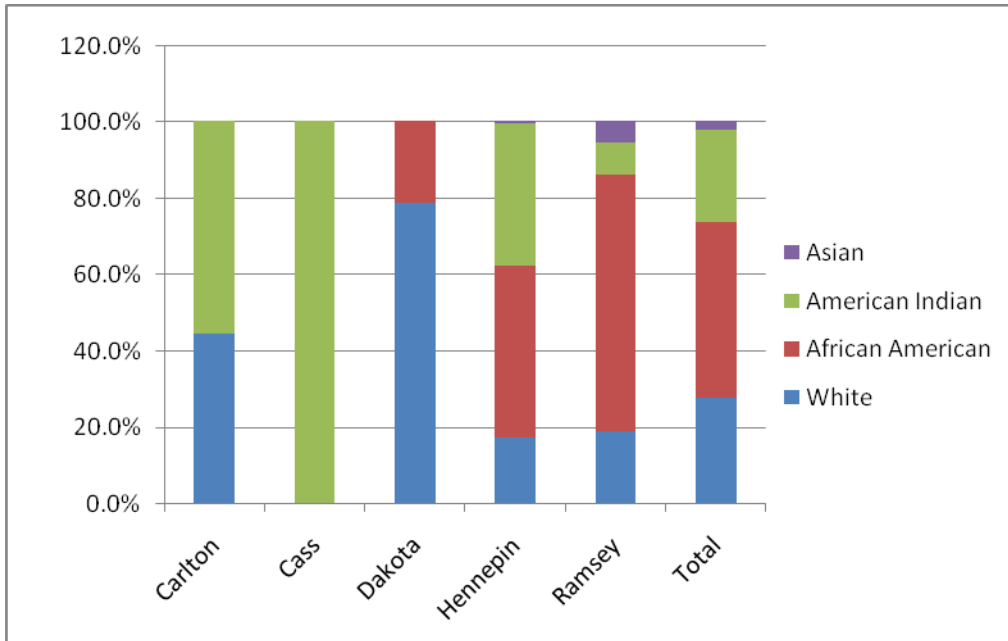
### 1. Children

**Gender and Age.** Children assigned to the waiver (experimental) group are fairly evenly divided by gender (241 boys and 253 girls). The mean age of waiver group children is 8.9. Excluding Cass County, the mean age of waiver group children is highest in Carlton (10.0 years) and Ramsey (9.7 years) counties. In Hennepin County the mean age of waiver children is 8.8 years and in Dakota County it is 6.6 years. Mean age ranges from 6.6 years in Dakota County to 9.7 years in Ramsey County.

**Race.** Slightly less than half (46.2 percent) of the children in the waiver group are African American, while one-quarter are American Indian (24.2 percent) and 27.5 percent are white. There is a small percentage (2.1) of children who are Asian. The racial breakdown of all waiver group children can be seen in **Figure 5**. The ethnicity of waiver children in each participating county is provided in **Figure 6**. The difference in the ethnicity of waiver children among the counties is one indication of variations that exist within the context of individual county programs. A majority (55.6 percent) of Carlton County waiver group children are American Indian; the rest (44.4 percent) are white. Nearly 8 in 10 waiver group children in Dakota County are white; the others are African American. Just as there are no African American children assigned to the MnPD project in Carlton County there are no American Indian children assigned to the MnPD project in Dakota County. The children in Hennepin and



**Figure 5. Ethnicity of Children in the MnPD Waiver Group**



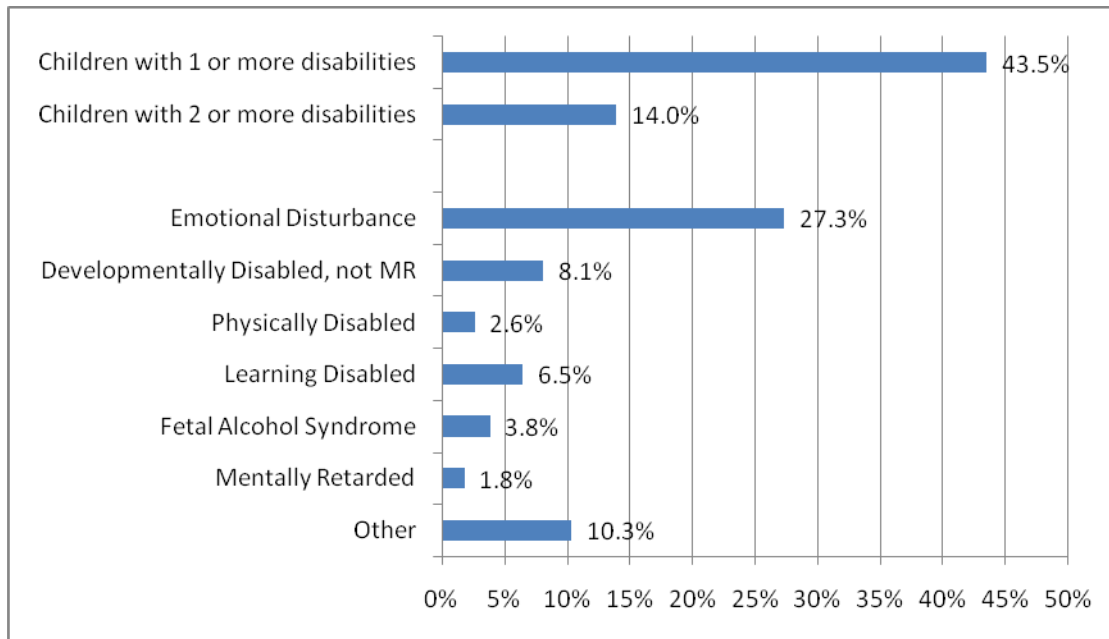
**Figure 6. Ethnicity of MnPD Waiver Children by County**

Ramsey counties are the most ethnically diverse. In Hennepin County the waiver group children are 45.3 percent African American, 37.3 percent American Indian, 17.0 percent white, and .5 percent Asian. In Ramsey County, a majority of waiver group children are African American, 67.3 percent, while 18.8 percent are white, 8.5 percent are American Indian, and 5.5 percent are Asian. While the ethnic makeup of the waiver group population in the two metro counties is diverse, the difference between them is significant. Hennepin County has a much larger percentage of American Indian children in its waiver group than does Ramsey County, while Ramsey County has a higher percentage of African American children in its waiver group.

**Disabilities.** Children with one or more disabilities accounted for 43.5 percent of waiver group children during the 29 month period. This figure is highest in Hennepin County (50.2 percent), followed by Ramsey County (43.5 percent), and then Carlton County (34.2 percent), and is lowest in Dakota County (27.5 percent). **Figure 7** shows the percentage of children with one or more disabilities and the percentage with specific types of disabilities.

**Special Education.** According to reports of caseworkers in the case-specific survey,<sup>17</sup> over a third (36.4 percent) of waiver group children in school attend special education classes.

<sup>17</sup> Throughout the report, all data reported as obtained from caseworkers, unless otherwise noted, was collected through the case-specific survey sample.



**Figure 7. Percentage of MnPD Waiver Children with Disabilities**

This figure was highest in Ramsey County where close to half of the waiver children (46.3 percent) were reported to attend special education classes. Hennepin County was the next highest, with 37.3 percent, and Dakota County the lowest, with only 15.4 percent of children attending special education classes.

**Special Services.** Children that require special services, such as mental health counseling, make up 39.1 percent of the waiver group population, according to caseworkers. This proportion was highest in Ramsey County, with close to half of the waiver children (47.1 percent) needing special services. The percentages in other counties was 37.0 percent for children in Hennepin County, 35.1 percent for Dakota County children, and 31.3 percent for children in Carlton County.

**School Attendance.** Caseworkers indicate that 71.2 percent of waiver group children are currently in school. Only 1.4 percent of waiver group children are reported to have dropped out, but another 7.0 percent are not in school for other reasons. Students in vocational training or GED programs in Ramsey and Hennepin counties account for a small proportion of these children. The remaining 20.5 percent are too young to be enrolled in school.

**Delinquency.** Delinquency was reported to be an issue in 18.6 percent of the waiver group children that were reviewed by caseworkers through the case specific survey. Within the population of children that had some involvement in delinquency, 9.0 percent were reported to have one past or present delinquency charge, while 5.0 percent had two or more charges. Dakota County has the fewest caseworker reports of delinquency among the waiver group population with 5.4 percent of children, compared with 10.5 percent in Carlton County, 19.6 percent in Hennepin, and 21.7 percent for Ramsey County children. (As will be seen later in this chapter, delinquency affects foster caregivers decisions to adopt or accept a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody.)

**Relationship with Biological Mother and Father.** Children within the waiver group vary in the level of contact they have with their biological parents. According to caseworkers, slightly less than half of these children, 46.5 percent, have little to no contact (once a year or less) with their biological parents, while 20 percent have contact with them once a month or more. According to foster caregivers, the foster child is in contact with his or her biological parent even less frequently. During interviews, foster caregivers reported that close to 70 percent of children, both in the control group and those assigned to the waiver group, had contact with their biological parents less than once a year or not at all (control group—69.8 percent, waiver group—66.7 percent). However, foster caregivers report that for both groups of children, 20.8 percent see a biological parent once a month or more.

Frequently waiver group children encounter major barriers to seeing their biological parents. Caseworkers report that 55.7 percent of children have a mother whose parental rights have been terminated, and 49.3 percent have a father whose parental rights have been terminated. Often the whereabouts of the biological mother and father are unknown, 20.8 percent of waiver group children have a mother and 27.1 percent have a father that cannot be located. A smaller proportion has a mother or father that is incarcerated, 3.6 percent and 7.2 percent, respectively.

**Kinship vs. Unrelated Placement.** Through the case specific survey, caseworkers reported that 48.6 percent of waiver group children were placed with an unrelated foster parent. The other children were living with a grandparent, an adult sibling, an aunt or uncle, or other family relation who had been licensed as a foster parent. Hennepin County has the highest rate of waiver group children placed with an unrelated caregiver (60.2 percent), while Ramsey County has the lowest (28.8 percent). As reported by caregivers, a third of foster caregivers (33.3 percent) in the waiver group are related by blood to their foster child. In control group caregivers, 28.3 percent were related to their foster child.

**Siblings.** Analysis of data available in SSIS indicates that 64.8 percent of children are members of a sibling group in out-of-home placement. Caseworkers responding to the case-specific survey reported that over half of the waiver group children in the sample, 55.7 percent, have a brother or sister in placement with the foster caregiver and 21.3 percent have a sibling in placement with a different foster caregiver. Another 10 percent of waiver group children have a sibling at home with the biological parent, while 16.3 percent have a sister or brother over 18. Only 10 percent of waiver group children have no siblings.

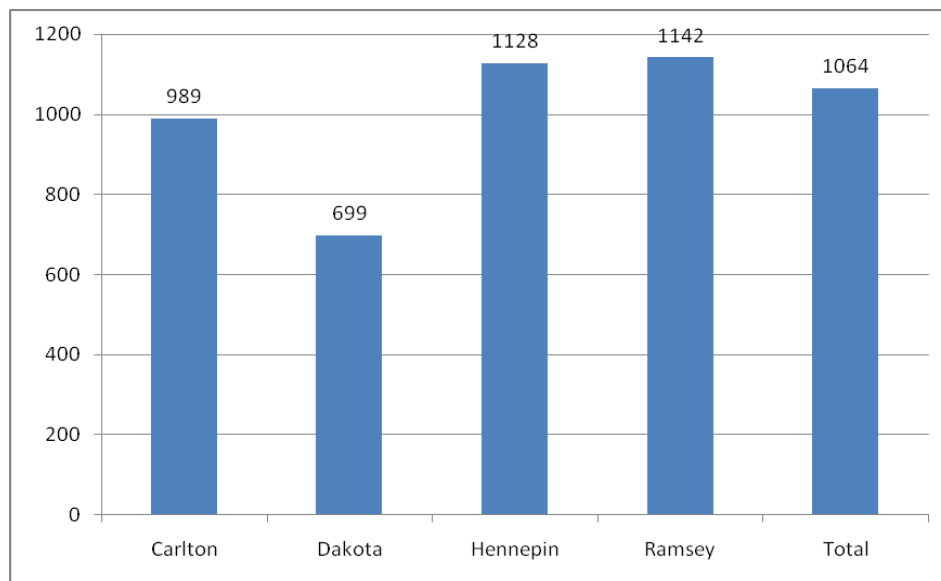
**Other Children and Adults in the Household.** In addition to the foster child in question, foster caregivers in the control group were more likely to have other children in the home than foster caregivers in the waiver group. Eighty-six percent of control group foster caregivers had another child in the home, and 67 percent of waiver group foster caregivers had another child in the home ( $p=0.009$ ). Those additional children in the home were likely to be either foster or biological children. **Table 4** shows the proportion of children that are biological, foster, or adopted out of all children reported to be in the home of control group and waiver group foster caregivers. Other foster children are more frequently found in the homes of waiver group foster caregivers (54.9 percent) than control group foster caregivers (27.8 percent), and biological children were reported more frequently in the homes of control group foster caregivers (32 percent) than waiver group foster caregivers (20.7 percent). Control group foster caregivers in the interview sample have many more children who are adopted in the household (28.9 percent), than waiver group foster caregivers (8.5 percent).

**Table 4. Relationship of Other Children in the Home to Foster Parents**

Relationship	Waiver	Control
Biological Child	20.7%	32.0%
Foster Child	54.9%	27.8%
Adopted Child	8.5%	28.9%
Child in Legal custody	0.0%	3.1%
Grandchild-foster	3.7%	4.1%
Niece/nephew-foster	1.2%	4.1%
Grandchild	9.8%	0.0%
Cousin's child	1.2%	0.0%

There are typically also other adults in the households where foster children reside. Control group foster caregivers reported other adults present in 78 percent of their homes, and waiver group foster caregivers reported other adults present in 74.7 percent of their homes. Of those households where other adults are living, the majority of respondents reported that a husband was also present (83 percent), and often also reported an adult child (27 percent). Few households had other family members that were disabled, in poor health, or elderly. However, control group households reported higher needs family members more frequently than waiver group households. Twenty-seven percent of control group foster caregivers had an additional disabled, sick or elderly individual in the home, while only 12.7 percent of waiver group foster caregivers reported similar individuals in the home.

**Days in Foster Care Prior to MnPD Waiver Assignment.** With certain exceptions, the minimum amount of time MnPD eligible children will have been in foster care prior to MnPD project assignment is six months. However, most children have been in foster care much longer. **Figure 8** shows the mean number of days children in different participating counties were in foster care before assignment to MnPD project. The average length of placement for these children was 3.0 years, when every out-of-home placement is considered. When only the current placement setting is considered, the mean length of placement was 1.8 years, which accounted for 60 percent of the total time the child was in out-of-home placement. Variation among



**Figure 8. Mean Days in Out-of-Home Placement Settings Prior to Assignment for Children in the MnPD Waiver Group**

counties in the length of placement is generally explained by the mean age of children selected for the MnPD project in each participating county.

**Target Population.** The overall goal of the MnPD project is “to increase the willingness of foster care families to adopt or assume legal custody of special needs children by eliminating the financial barriers to these permanency options.” Special needs children include those that are older, part of a sibling group, or who have intense psychological, physical and behavioral problems. American Indian and African American children are also being considered as in special need because of their significant overrepresentation in the long-term foster care population.

**Table 6** shows the percent of children with special needs (as defined above) assigned to the waiver group from the participating counties. The table shows the percent of waiver group children with specific characteristics and the percent with at least one of them. As can be seen, 91.5 percent of waiver group children across all counties have at least one of these

**Table 6. Waiver Children with Special Needs (including disabilities)**

County	Number of Waiver Children	Percent with a Disability	Percent Older than Median Age	Percent who are Members of Sibling Groups	Percent American Indian	Percent with Any Special Need
Carlton	38	34.2%	63.2%	71.1%	52.6%	94.7%
Dakota	69	27.5%	29.0%	36.2%	0.0%	66.7%
Hennepin	215	50.2%	48.4%	67.9%	36.7%	93.5%
Ramsey	170	43.5%	57.1%	71.8%	8.2%	98.2%
Total	494	43.5%	50.0%	64.8%	23.3%	91.5%
<i>Note: the lower half of the table is the same as the top half except for the ethnicity category. African American children have been added, which increase slightly the percent with any special need.</i>						
County	Number of Waiver Children	Percent with a Disability	Older than Median Age	Member of Sibling Group	American Indian or African American	Any Special Need
Carlton	38	34.2%	63.2%	71.1%	52.6%	94.7%
Dakota	69	27.5%	29.0%	36.2%	18.8%	66.7%
Hennepin	215	50.2%	48.4%	67.9%	81.4%	95.8%
Ramsey	170	43.5%	57.1%	71.8%	73.5%	98.8%
Total	494	43.5%	50.0%	64.8%	67.8%	92.7%



characteristics, when the only ethnicity included is American Indian. When African American ethnicity is added as a special-needs trigger (bottom half of Table 6), the percent increases to 92.7 percent, only a small increase due to the large percent of African American children who have at least one other target characteristic.

Considering individual categories, the percent of waiver group children with one or more disabilities ranges from a low of 27.5 percent in Dakota County to a high of 50.2 percent in Hennepin County. The percent older than the median age of all waiver group children varies from 29.0 percent in Dakota County to 63.2 percent in Carlton County. Ramsey County has the largest percent of waiver group children who are part of a sibling group in foster care. Carlton County has the largest percent of American Indian children in its waiver group, 52.6 percent. Ramsey County has the largest percent of waiver group children who are African American (63.9 percent); Carlton County (in addition to Cass County, not shown in the table) has no African American children in its waiver group.

As can be seen in Table 6, Ramsey County has the highest percent of waiver group children with at least one of these special-need characteristics, 98.2. Carlton and Hennepin counties have over 90 percent of waiver group children with one or more special needs. Dakota County has the lowest percentage of waiver group children with special needs, but even there the proportion is two out of three.

A number of other characteristics of waiver group children discussed previously also affect the degree of difficulty caseworkers face in moving children from foster care to permanency. Ramsey County waiver group children have special needs characteristics most frequently. For example, more Ramsey County waiver group children have had some reported prior delinquency problem (21.7 percent). Similarly, Ramsey County has the highest number of caseworkers reporting that waiver group children are involved in special education (46.3) and require special services, such as mental health counseling (39.1 percent). On average, Ramsey County children have spent more time in foster care prior to waiver assignment (1,142 days; followed closely by Hennepin County children, 1,128). A larger percentage of the foster caregivers of Ramsey County waiver group children rely on forms of public assistance, such as Food Stamps (7.2 percent), TANF/MFIP (5.8 percent), WIC (8.7 percent), and Housing Assistance (8.7 percent). It is likely that such factors will be reflected in program outcomes and should form part of the frame of reference for interpreting the MnPD project impact analyses.

**Comparison of Waiver and Control Group Children.** Table 7 shows how the characteristics of waiver group children compared to control group children on major

**Table 7. Characteristics of Waiver and Control Group Children**

		<b>Waiver</b>	<b>Control</b>
Sex	Female	51.2%	52.6%
	Male	48.8%	47.4%
Race	White	26.5%	31.1%
	African American	44.5%	48.0%
	Native American	23.3%	16.3%
	Asian	2.0%	2.5%
	Unknown	3.6%	2.1%
Age	Mean Age	8.9	8.5
	0-5.49 years	37.0%	37.3%
	5.5-10.49 years	19.6%	22.5%
	10.5-14.49 years	20.0%	18.9%
	14.5 years and older	23.3%	21.4%
Disability	any	43.5%	55.6%
	2 or more	14.0%	14.8%
	emotional disturbance	25.9%	37.6%
	DD, not MR	8.1%	5.5%
	physical disability	2.2%	1.9%
	learning disability	5.9%	5.1%
	fetal alcohol syndrome	3.8%	3.4%
	mental retardation	1.6%	3.0%
	other	9.3%	10.6%
Age at 1st removal	mean	5.4	5.3
Days spent in current foster care episode	mean	1105.2	1055.3
	median	554	626
Any CPS case management workgroup opened & closed prior to MnPD		37.7%	33.2%
# of CPS case management workgroups opened & closed prior to MnPD	mean	0.60	0.51
Any prior placement episodes		4.5%	2.7%
Difficulty of care level (0-7)	mean	2.3	2.4
Placement setting	relative	49.7%	44.3%
	non-relative	50.3%	55.7%

demographic variables and Child Protection Services case characteristics. The groups are quite similar on nearly all variables available to evaluators.

## 2. Caregiver Families

**Income.** During interviews, caregivers were asked about their total household income during the last 12 months from all sources. The amount reported by both waiver and control group caregivers was distributed over a wide range but was similar. The median household income was \$56,250 for waiver group families and \$55,000 for control group families. Ten percent of all MnPD families reported annual incomes of less than \$20,000; 24.3 percent reported income between \$20,000 and 39,999; 20.9 percent reported income between 40,000 and 59,999; 22.6 percent reported between \$60,000 and \$79,999; and 21.8 percent reported income of \$80,000 and above.

**Financial and Service Assistance Received by Caregiver's Household.** A majority of caregivers of both waiver and control group children reported receiving benefits from some type of public assistance program. Just over half of all caregivers interviewed said they had a child who participated in the school lunch program. About one-third (35.9 percent) of the caregivers participated in the WIC program, 16.4 percent received food stamps and 5.5 percent received TANF (MFIP) payments. Nine percent of caregivers said they received housing assistance and 13.3 percent received utilities assistance. Thirteen percent of the primary caregivers said they received child support and 4 percent received unemployment benefits.

**Employment.** The majority of caregivers reported that at least one adult in the home was employed. Seventy-seven percent of both waiver and control group caregivers interviewed said there was a wage earner in the household who worked full time. Another seven percent of waiver group caregivers and 13.9 percent of control group caregivers had a part-time worker in the household. Among the primary caregivers (interviewed respondents), 61.6 percent in the waiver group reported that they were employed either full time (45.2 percent) or part-time (16.4 percent). This is compared to a slightly smaller percentage (53 percent) of primary caregivers in the control group. Unemployment was reported by 38.4 percent of waiver group caregivers and 47.1 percent of control group caregivers.

**Education.** The education level of primary caregivers was very similar between the waiver and control groups. Overall, 10.4 percent had four-year college degrees and 57.6 percent reported some college work. Another 22.4 percent said they had high school degrees or GED's, while 9.6 percent said they had not completed high school.

**Medical Insurance.** Caregivers and the biological children in their homes obtained health insurance mainly through private insurance companies. Seven of ten caregivers in the waiver group said that they were covered through private insurance. Most caregivers (80 percent) said that their biological children also had private insurance. Only 15.5 percent of foster and adoptive children were covered by private health insurance. Medical Assistance provided health coverage for 77.5 percent of foster and adoptive children in waiver group, compared with 16.7 percent of biological children, and 13.7 percent of waiver group caregivers. Eight percent of primary caregivers of waiver group children reported that they currently had no medical coverage for themselves.

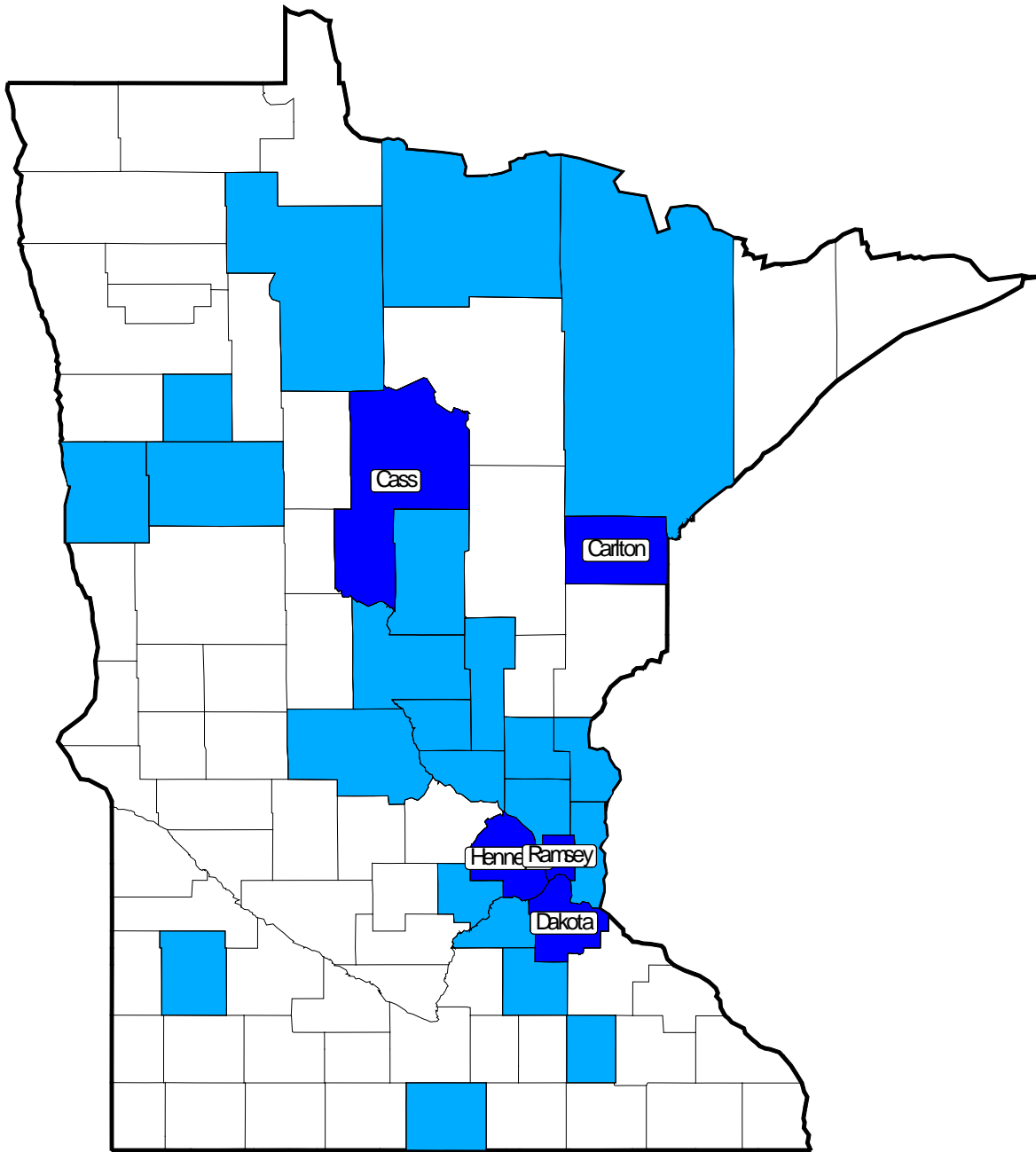
**Housing Stability.** Caregivers in the waiver group said they have lived at their present address for 8.3 years on average. The majority of these caregivers also said that they like their neighborhoods “very much” (89.0 percent) and described them as “very” safe (90.4 percent) and friendly (86.3 percent) places. Control group caregivers had similar positive views about their neighborhoods, and have lived at their present address for 11.9 years on average.

**Levels of Stress Reported by Caregivers.** Primary caregivers were asked during interviews about areas of stress in their lives. Nearly two in three (65.7 percent) reported some stress related to their economic or financial outlook, 50.8 percent reported some stress about their current job or job prospects, and 63.8 percent said they felt stress about their life in general. When asked about their children, about half said they felt some level of stress about their foster or adopted children (52.8 percent) and slightly fewer expressed some stress related to their biological children (45.7 percent). About 4 percent of caregivers described the level of stress they felt related to their children as high. Ten percent said stress related to their financial situation was high. There were no significant differences between waiver and control group caregivers.

### **3. Placement Counties**

MnPD project children who are placed in foster care are frequently placed in a county other than the one in which their case originated, often to be placed with relatives. This was the case with 44.5 percent of waiver group children during the first half of the project; while 55.5 percent of waiver group children were placed in foster care within the MnPD participating county. Among the participating counties, Dakota County had the highest percentage of its waiver group children in placement in another county (56.5 percent), followed by Hennepin County (48.8 percent), Ramsey County (38.2 percent) and Carlton County (26.3 percent).

**Map 3** on the following page shows the counties in which waiver group children are currently residing. **Table C-1** (in **Appendix C**) shows the counties in which waiver and control group children from each participating county were placed. In addition, there are 31 waiver group children and 23 control group children living with a caregiver in another state.



**Map 3. Foster Care Placement Counties of MnPD Waiver Children**

As has been noted in previous MnPD semi-annual progress reports, American Indian children are often placed in a county other than the one with original jurisdiction. The situation of these children is complicated by the number of different American Indian tribes and bands within the state. **Table C-2** (in **Appendix C**) shows the foster care disbursement of the American Indian children who are in the study population. The table shows the tribe or band of the children, as given in SSIS, along with the county of case responsibility and the county where the caregiver resides. The top portion of the table shows the placement of waiver group children, while the bottom part shows where control group children have been placed. As was noted in the previous progress report (December 2007), this table shows the complexity of the job facing the state agency. The table helps explain the reason the agency has engaged in significant outreach efforts to American Indian leaders across the state and why the state project manager has made presentations at quarterly meetings of the statewide Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council to explain and answer questions about the MnPD project.

## D. Services

The key service provided through the MnPD project is the single benefit offered to foster caregivers of waiver group children. **Table 8** shows the number of children assigned to the waiver group in participating counties during the first half of the MnPD project along with the number and percent of children whose foster caregivers have been offered the MnPD benefit.

**Table 8. Number of Children Assigned to the MnPD Waiver Group and Number of Children in Foster Families Offered MnPD Option**

County	Assigned to Waiver Group	Offered MnPD Option <i>n</i>	Offered MnPD Option %
Carlton	38	31	81.6%
Cass	2	1	50.0%
Dakota	69	66	95.7%
Hennepin	215	129	60.0%
Ramsey	170	133	78.2%
Total	494	360	72.9%

Through the first half of the MnPD project, the single benefit has been offered to the foster caregivers of about 8 in 10 (78.2 percent) waiver group children, based on information available to evaluators. There is a natural lag between waiver group assignment and the offer being made to foster caregivers of waiver group children, so the final proportion can be expected to be higher. And, occasionally, during this period before the MnPD single benefit is offered a disruption occurs and/or the foster caregiver loses his/her foster care license and the offer will never be made. In addition, as discussed in the beginning of this chapter and in the section that follows, there are reasons why the MnPD single benefit might not be offered to a specific foster caregiver.

Caseworkers with first-hand knowledge of the placement situation of a specific foster child may discern an impediment to permanency in the home even if MnPD technical eligibility criteria are met. This is most likely to happen in situations in which the identification of cases is done by project managers, based on technical data only, who then pass this information along to caseworkers (as was the case in Hennepin County before the suspension of the project in June 2007 and in Ramsey County for the first program quarter). It is less likely to occur when MnPD project referrals are initiated by caseworkers, as is now the practice in all active MnPD counties.

Based on interviews with foster caregivers, losing county assistance or services appears to be a critical issue for some caregivers considering permanency, particularly when the child has intensive medical, behavioral, educational or mental health needs. One in four foster caregivers said that the caseworker who presented the MnPD single benefit option to them also offered to help them find new services if some were lost by accepting the single benefit. A majority of foster caregivers (62.3 percent) did not hear or remember the caseworker mentioning anything about post-permanency services or assistance. More than half of caseworkers completing case-specific surveys, however, said they tried to refer caregivers to services following acceptance of the MnPD single benefit. Caseworkers said they made referrals to following services: programs for the developmentally disabled, mental health counseling, medical assistance, day care, early childhood education, in-home parenting, mentoring programs, and other therapeutic assistance for the child.

## **E. The MnPD Single Benefit Offer and the Decision to Accept or Reject It**

The decision to adopt or accept a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody is a complex personal and family matter for each foster caregiver. The bond with the child is paramount, but foster caregivers must also consider the feasibility of maintaining a life-long

relationship with the child. They must assess the practical aspects of the situation, including the ongoing needs of the child, the relationship of the child to other children in the home, cultural differences that may exist, the timing of the adoption or the transfer of permanent legal and physical custody, the age of child, and the overall financial implications of making a permanent commitment to the child. Foster caregivers will be at different points in their deliberations concerning permanency when offered the MnPD single benefit option and these factors can be expected to affect their decision-making.

**Previous Discussions of Adoption/ Permanent Legal Custody.** Because permanency is such a central goal for children in foster care, the option of adoption or a transfer of permanent legal custody to a relative is typically discussed at some point with all foster parents, especially when permanency timelines are imminent. The timing and manner in which this permanency discussion is broached is important and can impact family decisions. The caseworker assigned to the child must discuss permanency options with the foster caregiver early in the placement episode, and decisions about those options must be made after it becomes clear the placement is stable and reunification with the child's biological parents is not in the child's best interest.

Eighty-five percent of foster caregivers in the control group reported that they had spoken with a caseworker about adoption or a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody and 82.7 percent of foster caregivers in the waiver group remembered discussing this with their caseworker prior to the MnPD single benefit offer. For some, this discussion was not initiated by a caseworker, but rather by the foster caregivers themselves; other times the caregivers accepted the foster child into their home with the understanding that adoption or a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody would be pursued by the county.

**How the MnPD Single Benefit Was Offered.** Foster caregivers in the waiver group reported they were typically informed about the MnPD single benefit through face-to-face home visits by a caseworker (70.4 percent). Occasionally, foster caregivers learned about the MnPD single benefit through a phone call (14.1 percent), office visit (5.6 percent) or other method (9.9 percent), such as a letter. Most frequently, foster caregivers said the person who contacted them about the MnPD single benefit offer was a county caseworker (91.9 percent); sometimes it was a caseworker with a community agency (5.4 percent) or a tribal caseworker (2.7 percent).

Among American Indian caregivers who were interviewed, tribal caseworkers were the source of the MnPD single benefit offer 18.2 percent of the time. These caregivers reported that the tribal caseworker was their primary caseworker 27.3 percent of the time. Others said they worked with both a tribal and a county caseworker (18.2 percent) or that their primary



caseworker was from a county agency (36.4 percent) or a caseworker from a community agency (18.2 percent).

**Postponement of the MnPD Offer or Offer Not Made.** In the case-specific survey, 17.2 percent of caseworkers (38 of 221) said they had not discussed the MnPD single benefit with the foster caregiver. Of these, 9 caseworkers said they planned on telling the foster caregiver about the option, but 17 said they would likely not offer it and 12 said they were unsure. When caseworkers had not yet offered the MnPD single benefit, but planned on offering it at a later time, the two most cited reasons for delay were that the child had too recently been placed in the particular foster placement or that the caseworker had not received permission from a supervisor to inform the foster caregiver of the MnPD single benefit.

**Why the MnPD Offer is Not Made.** Caseworkers gave several reasons why they would not be offering the MnPD single benefit to a particular foster caregiver. Reasons included that the children had attained or were near the age of emancipation, the case had already been closed, the foster caregivers were not interested in adopting or accepting a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody, or because of reservations the caseworkers had about the suitability of the placement as a permanent home for the child.

**Caseworker Reservations.** An adoption or transfer of permanent legal and physical custody cannot be achieved if either the foster caregiver or the foster child does not want it. The attitude of the child towards adoption or a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody can be the most powerful reason to pursue or reject a permanent relationship. In just under half of case-specific surveys (46 percent), caseworkers reported that the child had been present when permanency was discussed with the foster caregiver. Forty-five percent of caseworkers also reported that they had discussed permanency with the child directly. Among waiver group children considered old enough to express an opinion (74.7 percent), caseworkers reported that 8.0 percent of the children did not want to remain (through adoption or transfer of permanent and physical custody) with the foster caregiver and 11.2 percent of the children said they were not sure they wanted to remain with the foster caregiver permanently. While caseworkers favored working towards a permanent living situation between the foster caregiver and the foster child in a majority of waiver group cases, some held reservations about this even in situations in which both the foster caregiver and child agreed to pursue it.

Caseworkers expressed other concerns about making some foster placements permanent. Among waiver group cases, these included concerns about the financial viability of the foster caregiver's family (24.9 percent), concerns about the emotional or intellectual adequacy of the

foster caregiver (7.7 percent), concerns about the condition of the caregiver’s home or space for the child (4.1 percent), concerns about the safety of the neighborhood (2.8 percent), concerns about drug or alcohol use within the foster caregiver’s home (.5 percent), among others (13.6 percent). As should be expected, such reservations have been found more frequently up until now in Hennepin and Ramsey counties where all or some waiver group assignments have been made by project managers without consulting caseworkers in the field.

Two examples of cases assigned to the waiver group by project managers in which the MnPD single benefit was not offered to the foster caregiver by their caseworkers were described during the most recent site visits by the evaluator. The first had to do with what was called the particular “family dynamics” in the case. The case involved a child in the care of his grandfather who, while accepting the child on a permanent basis, was unwilling to seek a transfer of permanent legal custody for fear of breaching relations with his own son, the child’s father. A second case involved an American Indian child living with a non-Indian foster caregiver who was not a relative of the child and who would not be accepted by the child’s tribe as the child’s permanent caregiver.

**Caseworkers’ Understanding of Family Situations.** Most caregivers interviewed said they felt that the caseworker assigned to their foster child understood their situation as a family. Nine out of ten waiver group caregivers believed the caseworker “fully” or “mostly” (81 percent, 9.5 percent) understood their circumstances. Sixty-seven percent of interviewed control group caregivers felt their caseworker “fully” understood their situation, and another 26 percent felt the caseworker “mostly” understood. Only a very small proportion of all foster caregivers believed that the caseworker did not understand their situation.

**Caregivers’ Comprehension of the MnPD Single Benefit Program.** After receiving information about the MnPD single benefit, 74 percent of caregivers interviewed said they believed they understood how the MnPD single benefit works. The remaining number said they either did not understand the MnPD single benefit (13.7 percent) or were unsure about it. (12.3 percent).

**Concerns about the MnPD Single Benefit Program.** While the majority of caregivers (70.8 percent) said that they did not have any concerns about the MnPD single benefit, others (29.2 percent) did. Statements captured during interviews revealed concerns covering a range of topics, but several indicated a worry that the MnPD single benefit would stop prematurely:

- “Does the benefit increase with the cost of living?”

- “I have twins and am unsure if the other twin will qualify for the benefit.”
- “If benefit was taken away we’ll be forced to sell the house and get rid of the kids.”
- “If the county or state runs out of money, what would happen?”
- “If we don’t fill out the paperwork each year, will the benefit stop?”
- “I need to make sure my child has health care.”
- “Sounds almost too good to be true.”

**Satisfaction with Delivery of the MnPD Single Benefit Offer.** Whether or not they still had questions about the MnPD single benefit, eight out of ten (80.9 percent) caregivers interviewed said they were “very” or “generally” satisfied with how the MnPD single benefit was offered to them. Most caregivers had positive comments in this respect:

- “I’m 100 percent satisfied. It was great”
- “The worker answered my questions even after she had explained it.”
- “It was done very, very well. It’s such a wonderful thing.”

Those that were not satisfied with the caseworker’s explanation expressed thoughts such as these:

- “I felt when they explained it, they didn’t understand the program.”
- “I still don’t understand this benefit at all.”
- “It’s not the social worker’s or county’s fault, it’s the newness of program.”

**MnPD Single Benefit as Incentive to Adopt or Accept Permanent Legal Custody.** Ultimately, the impact of the MnPD single benefit on moving children to permanency will be found in what actually occurs; and a positive impact is being realized (see the discussion of Research Question 1 in Chapter 3.) The interviews, however, give us the opportunity to understand more fully how the MnPD single benefit makes a difference in the permanency decisions of foster caregivers.

When asked if they had decided on or were leaning towards either adopting or accepting permanent legal and physical custody of their foster child, 75.9 percent of foster caregivers

interviewed in the control group and 91.8 percent of foster caregivers in the waiver group answered affirmatively.<sup>18</sup>

Several caregivers said they “wanted to [adopt or accept permanent legal and physical custody], but couldn’t afford it” or that they were “worried about finances”. Caregiver responses indicated the MnPD single benefit offer served as an inducement for them to begin the permanency process. During interviews, 41.6 percent of waiver group caregivers who had chosen to adopt or assume permanent legal and physical custody said that the offer of the MnPD single benefit was “essential” or “very important” in their decision. Another 22.9 percent said that the MnPD single benefit offer played a role in their decision. A third (35.4 percent) said the MnPD single benefit offer was “not important” in their decision. Caregivers who found the MnPD single benefit offer to significantly impact their decision made statements such as these:

- “I think it helped make the final decision in being able to provide for him.”
- “It was extremely important—she has FAS (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome), and I became attached, so I didn’t want to give her up because I couldn’t afford it.”
- “It was the thing that helped make the decision.”
- “Very important, we needed assistance for basic needs.”
- “[The child] has so many problems...I would not have adopted her without the benefit...the benefit will encourage others to adopt.”
- “[I’m] very grateful for the program because without it, it would have been hard to adopt. My husband and I waited a very long time for children because I cannot have my own and we were very glad to have the chance to adopt [the child]. Thank you for this program.”

Other providers were more neutral towards the benefit:

- “It was about taking care of her and providing a stable home but it’s helpful.”
- “It certainly made it easier, but we would have made it work.”

Caregivers that believed that the MnPD single benefit offer was not significant in their decision made comments such as these:

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<sup>18</sup> The difference between the two groups is larger here than the difference in actual permanency outcomes (see Chapter 3) and suggests that caregivers disposed to permanency were more willing to be interviewed.

- “We would have adopted her anyways regardless of the benefit.”
- “I wasn’t looking at the money part, just want them to be stable.”
- “It was not an influence in our decision.”
- “It (the money) wasn't on top. We just wanted him to be safe.”

When asked specifically if the family could financially afford permanency *without* the MnPD single benefit, 59.7 percent said they would be able to afford it, and 38.8 percent said they could not afford it. However, even among those caregivers who believed they could afford to adopt or accept permanency legal and physical custody without the MnPD single benefit, there were reservations. Caregivers comments during interviews indicated a lack of confidence in the family’s financial ability to care for the child. In response to the question of whether they could afford to adopt or accept permanent legal and physical custody without the MnPD single benefit, respondents replied:

- “Barely, I’d have been struggling and would have needed to find extra income.”
- “We had no means to adopt without it.”
- “Yes, but it would have been a greater hardship.”
- “We couldn’t have afforded it otherwise.”
- “If I had to I would have to, but it makes it easier.”
- “It would create a hardship, but I would keep her.”
- “It would have been difficult but I would have done it anyway.”
- “Possibly not both kids. MnPD helped adoption happen much sooner than without.”
- “We wanted to adopt [the child] but knew we couldn't afford it without the benefit.”
- “The social worker told me about subsidized adoption because I couldn't afford to adopt without the benefit.”

For others, financial considerations were not as important:

- “This is my grandchild whom I've raised. His parents were not caring for him, so I have to take him regardless.”
- “It would have been hard but money wasn't the reason I adopted her. I love her—we would have made it.”
- “You make it work, we would have figured it out.”

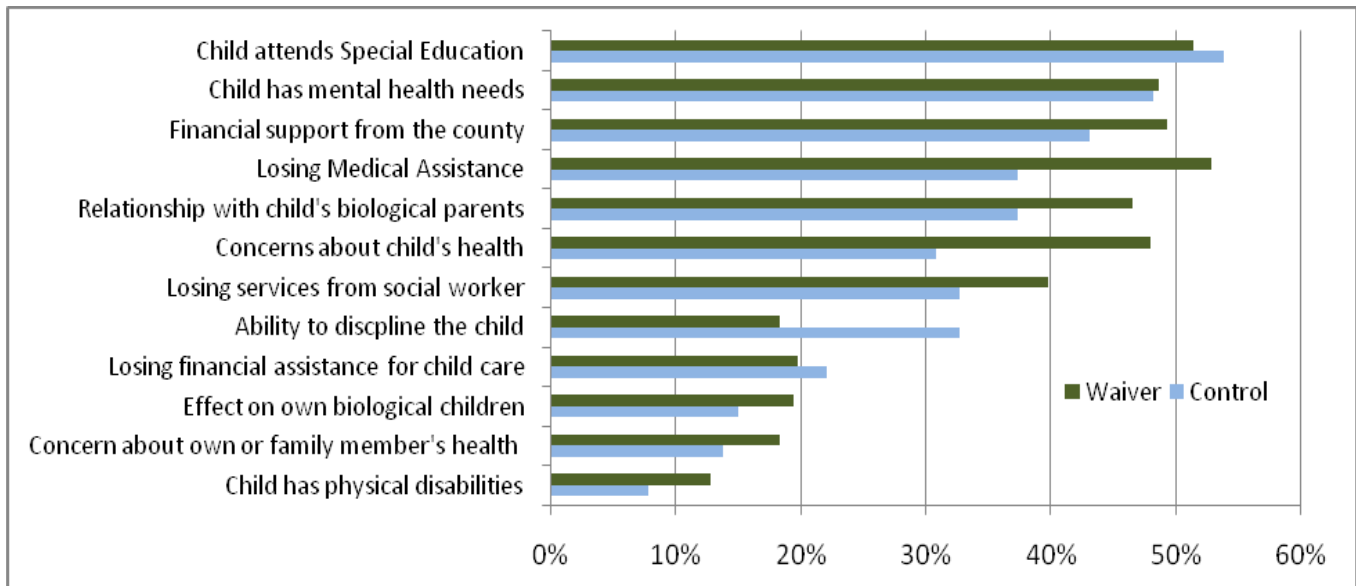
A grandmother living in Hennepin County who is accepting the MnPD single benefit for one of five grandchildren she is raising explained it this way:

- "It is hard to not have enough money. I just lost day care assistance because they say I make too much money....I don't know how that's possible when I only work 20 hours a week. I have learned to budget our money but sometimes I feel bad because I don't have enough money for everything. This month the rent is late....I know my grandkids want things I cannot buy for them, but I accept that this is our life and I would take all these kids to live with me again in a second if I had to do it over. I love them with all my heart.”

#### **Other Concerns that Impact the Adoption/Permanent Legal Custody Decision.**

While the financial situation of the foster caregiver’s family has been found to be a factor in a caregiver’s decision to adopt or accept permanent legal and physical custody, many other issues have also emerged in the interviews. Caregivers were asked about other concerns that arose when they were deciding whether or not to adopt or accept permanent legal and physical custody of a foster child in their care.

**Figure 9** lists the most common concerns of caregivers and the percentages of waiver and control group children who shared them. Both groups reported similar frequencies for most concerns. More than half of caregiver respondents in both groups reported that the child in their care attended Special Education classes. The child’s mental health needs were also a concern for 48 percent of control and waiver group caregivers. Caregivers in the waiver group were slightly more likely to report concerns about losing county or state services than caregivers in the control group. About half of these caregivers (49.3 percent) reported concern with losing county financial support as well as state Medical Assistance (52.8 percent).



**Figure 9. Concerns Expressed by Caregivers that Impact Decisions about Adoption and Permanent Custody**

Losing the services of the caseworker was an issue for 40 percent of waiver group foster caregivers. As some said:

- “I’m worried about losing case management and support services in case something happens in the future.”
- “I’m worried about a decrease in the support I get from the county worker.”
- “I need a long term social worker.”

Caregivers in the waiver group were also concerned about the child’s general health (47.9 percent) and the child’s relationship with his or her biological parents (46.5 percent). Caregiver comments more specifically identified these concerns:

- “I’m afraid of the parents coming and taking him and not knowing what to do, or who to call if that happened.”
- “What if the mother tries to get him and doesn’t bring him back?”
- “I’m worried about her physical safety with the biological parents.”
- “I worry they (biological parents) may try to take away the children later.”

**Concern about the Process of Adoption/Permanent Legal and Physical Custody.** In addition to the concerns listed in **Figure 9**, a few other apprehensions appeared in interviewed caregivers' comments. Most prominent was concern with the process involved in achieving adoption or a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody. Fourteen individual caregivers mentioned issues with the adoption or the transfer of permanent legal and physical custody process—its length, complexity, or lack of county support:

- “I didn’t really have anyone to talk to at the county.”
- “There is a lack of support and information and help from the county.”
- “The length of time has been too long.”
- “There is not enough information and too much paperwork.”
- “The change from one worker to another slowed the adoption process.”
- “There are so many court appearances.”
- “We were just worried and anxious that there would be problems with the adoption process. We had her since she was baby and wanted to make sure she would stay.”

**Concerns about Siblings and Age of the Child.** Separation from or loss of contact with the child’s siblings was identified as a concern in three comments. Age was also mentioned as a concern for foster caregivers with children close to 18 years old. Two foster caregivers identified this as a reason to forego adoption or a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody—either because permanency did not seem necessary or because the child was old enough to refuse and instead seek emancipation.

**The View of Caseworkers on the Concerns of Caregivers.** In case-specific surveys caseworkers are asked to assess the concerns of caregivers about adoption and a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody. In general, caseworkers have reported a similar set of caregiver concerns, but caseworkers do not report them as often as the caregivers themselves do. Caseworkers who completed case-specific surveys during the first half of the MnPD project saw the amount of financial support provided by the county to be the most common concern of caregivers. The MnPD single benefit was viewed by caseworkers as reducing this anxiety, which was observed by them in 44.3 percent of control group caregivers but only 30.3 percent of waiver families ( $p=.002$ ). Additionally, caseworkers also saw waiver group caregivers as expressing other worries less frequently, including apprehensions about the special needs of a



child or the child’s physical and mental health, among others (see **Table 9**). However, waiver and control group caregivers were viewed as having a similar level of concern about the fear of losing state Medical Assistance.

**Table 9. Concerns of Foster Parents as Reported by Caseworkers**

	Waiver	Control	Significance
Amount of financial support from county	30.3%	44.3%	.002
Special needs of child	20.8%	37.1%	.000
Childs relationship with biological parents	19.9%	33.0%	.002
Fear of losing county services	23.5%	27.3%	--
Providers capability to discipline this child	10.9%	21.1%	.003
Fear of losing financial help with child care	12.2%	21.1%	.01
Fear of losing Medical Assistance	24.4%	20.1%	--
Mental capabilities of the child	6.8%	19.6%	.000
Concerns about child health	7.7%	17.0%	.003
Effect on providers own children	4.5%	11.3%	.008
Providers own health or health of other family members	6.8%	11.3%	--
Physical capabilities of the child	5.4%	7.2%	--

**Cultural Perceptions of Adoption and Permanent Legal Custody as a Potential Concern.** While cultural perceptions about adoption and permanent legal and physical custody also sometimes influenced a caregiver’s decision, it did not appear to be a major barrier for most caregivers. Eighty-seven percent of interview respondents said that people from their culture had generally had positive attitudes towards adoption and permanent legal and physical custody. Nevertheless, the act of terminating parental rights appears to be more challenging for caregivers

who are fostering American Indian children. Two caregivers said in interviews that supporting termination of parental rights has been difficult for tribes.

**Acceptance of the MnPD Single Benefit.** Eighty-five percent of caregivers interviewed reported accepting the MnPD single benefit following its offer. Twelve percent declined the offer and 2.8 percent are either still undecided or postponed a decision for other reasons. Of caregivers who accepted the MnPD single benefit, 80.6 percent decided to adopt, 17.7 percent accepted a transfer of permanent legal custody and 1.6 percent remain undecided. The majority of caregivers (62.5 percent) accepted the MnPD single benefit within 24 hours of the offer. Other caregivers took a week (16.7 percent), up to a month (8.3 percent), or more than a month (12.5 percent) to make a final decision.

**Decline of the MnPD Single Benefit.** When asked expressly why they declined the MnPD single benefit offer, some caregivers expressed financial concerns, the cost of child care, or the age of an older child. Some said simply they did not want to adopt the child they were caring for or that the child did not wish to be adopted.

- “The children do not want to be adopted.”
- “When [child] decided she didn't want to be adopted all conservation ended.”
- “We don't like this child. He has too many problems and it would be difficult to have a life long relationship with him. It's in his best interest.”

Caseworkers asked to state why, in their view, providers declined the MnPD single benefit offer, cited similar causes:

- “Child care costs.”
- “The child was too old.”
- “They didn't want to lose the social worker's help when she needs it.”
- “They do not want to adopt this child.”
- “They haven't had the child long enough to decide.”
- “Because of the high needs of child and the loss of support from the county.”

## **Chapter 3**

### **Impact Analysis**

#### **A. Introduction**

The impact analysis of the Minnesota Permanency Demonstration (MnPD) is based on a mixed experimental design. In the two largest counties participating in the study, Hennepin and Ramsey, children who qualified for the MnPD single benefit were randomly assigned to the waiver or control group. Eighty percent of children currently in the study population and involved in this analysis came from Hennepin and Ramsey counties and therefore were subject to the strongest part of the design. For the remaining counties, a matching procedure was used. Any child in Carlton, Cass and Dakota counties that was considered waiver-appropriate was assigned to the waiver group. Researchers then searched the state Social Services Information System (SSIS) for the most similar matching child, as is discussed in the Introduction and further in Appendix B. There were 213 children (22.0 percent of the total study population) included in the present analysis.

The impact analysis includes three comparisons: 1) Comparison of the randomly assigned (RA) waiver and control children, 2) Comparison of the non-randomly assigned (NRA) waiver and matched control children, and 3) Comparison of all waiver children with all control children. Results from the first comparison should be given more weight because that design provides the greatest amount of control, thereby reducing the chance that spurious variables have confounded results.

An ongoing issue discussed in the Process Analysis chapter, and in semi-annual reports, is the failure of caseworkers to offer the single benefit to some foster caregivers in the RA waiver group. Because there is no way to identify control group children for whom the offer would not have been made, the present impact analysis does not take this difference into consideration.

As discussed earlier in this report, the MnPD single benefit project targets children in long term foster care, with special needs and this is seen as including children with disabling conditions as well as American Indian and African American children. For this reason, separate

outcome analyses were conducted of three subgroups of children, those with disabilities, American Indian children and African American children. Two types of children with disabilities were considered: 1) Children with any disability and 2) severely disabled children. The latter were composed of the following categories: fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, traumatic brain injury, severe emotional disturbance, chemical dependency and developmental disability (with and without mental retardation). A large portion of the children in these categories have multiple disabilities. However, considering both severe and multiple disabilities reduced the sample size too much for valid analyses.

The age of the child and whether the foster caregiver is related to the child were also analyzed as variables influencing permanency rates.

The remainder of this chapter presents outcomes analyses of outcomes at the demonstration's mid-way point. Research questions 1 through 6, which address questions related to both permanency and child well-being, are analyzed with data obtained from SSIS. Research question 7, related to child well-being, is addressed through data obtained from interviews with families and caseworker surveys.

## **B. Analysis of Outcomes**

**Research Question 1. Do children who receive the MnPD single benefit (waiver group children) achieve permanency, whether through adoption or a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody to a relative, at higher rates than control group children?**

**MnPD Impact on Overall Permanency.** The outcome data shows that MnPD waiver group children experience higher rates of permanency than control group children. Almost 60 percent (58.7) of waiver group children achieved either adoption or permanent legal custody compared to 43 percent of the control group. This difference was statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ). Looking at the subset of randomly-assigned children in Hennepin and Ramsey counties, the comparable figures were 53.2 and 46.3 percent, which were also statistically significant ( $p = .001$ ).

Information on adoption was obtained from two sources within SSIS: the discharge reason listed at the conclusion of placement episodes and the court orders issued at the end of hearings. These two sources usually provided identical information, although court orders were not always consistently entered by caseworkers.

Permanent legal custody to a relative refers to the status defined by Minnesota law as “a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody.” This is similar to the status of guardianship in other states. A small number (8) of “customary tribal adoptions” of American Indian children also took place using the MnPD single benefit program. This permanency disposition is ordered through tribal courts and resembles a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody more than traditional adoption because it does not involve termination of parental rights. For this reason, these cases were included within the permanent legal custody category.

Almost 8 percent of all children in the MnPD study were discharged or emancipated from foster care upon reaching legal adult age at eighteen. Among RA children, 9 percent of waiver group children versus 7.6 percent of control group children were emancipated by the end of data collection, a difference not statistically significant. Similarly, among NRA children, 4.7 percent of waiver group children versus 5.7 percent of control group children were emancipated, also not significant. These findings argue for the comparability of waiver and control group children.

**MnPD Impact on Adoption.** Slightly more randomly-assigned control group children were adopted (39.8 percent) than waiver group children (37.2 percent); this difference was not statistically significant (**Table 10**). In Hennepin County, 49.8 percent of MnPD waiver group children were adopted compared to 44.9 percent of control children (not significant), but in Ramsey County the outcomes were reversed with only 21.8 percent of waiver group children adopted compared to 32.5 percent of control group children. This imbalance occurred primarily because of a unique program in Ramsey County, the Adoption Equalization Program (AEP). This program provides subsidies to foster caregivers who would otherwise be unable to adopt and was offered to (and accepted by) 17 caregivers of control group children and 6 caregivers of waiver group children. The AEP was offered after random assignment had occurred and, thus, represents an imbalance in the experimental design. If these children are dropped from the analysis in Ramsey County, 18.2 percent of waiver group children were adopted compared to 21.1 percent of control group children, a difference that is not statistically significant. The lack of significant difference in Hennepin County and similar results in Ramsey County following the AEP control suggests that, at this point in the study, the MnPD project’s ability to increase adoption rates has been small.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Changes in the manner in which children are selected for the MnPD project, as discussed in the Process Study, and the expectation that this will increase the percentage of waiver (experimental) cases in which the MnPD single benefit is offered, may alter this analysis in the final report.

**Table 10. Adoption of MnPD Children**

<b>Adoption</b>		
<b>RA*</b>	<i>Random Waiver.</i>	<i>Random Control</i>
<i>Not Adopted</i>	62.8%	60.2%
<i>Adopted</i>	37.2%	39.8%
<i>Total</i>	387	367
<b>NRA*</b>	<i>Non-Random Waiver.</i>	<i>Comparison</i>
<i>Not Adopted</i>	48.6%	75.5%
<i>Adopted</i>	51.4%	24.5%
<i>Total</i>	107	106
<b>ALL*</b>	<i>All Waiver</i>	<i>All Control/Comparison</i>
<i>Not Adopted</i>	59.7%	63.6%
<i>Adopted</i>	40.3%	36.4%
<i>Total</i>	494	473
* RA indicates Randomly Assigned, NRA indicates Not Randomly Assigned, ALL indicates both RA and NRA children		

Three other points should be made regarding adoption in the full RA sample. First, the approximately 5 percent difference in (49.8 – 44.9) between waiver and control group children in Hennepin County may become statistically significant by the conclusion of the evaluation. Secondly, waiver and control group adoption rates did differ for subgroups within the sample, as is evident below. Thirdly, changes to the manner in which children are selected for the MnPD project, as discussed in the Process Analysis, may increase the percentage of children offered the MnPD single benefit, and therefore the number of waiver group cases in which the single benefit is offered. This also could alter the analysis in the final report.

Within the non-randomly assigned groups, a significantly greater percentage of waiver group children (51.4 percent,  $p < .001$ ) were adopted than comparison group children (24.5 percent). This may be due in part to the inability of evaluators to verify that reunification, as a permanency option, had been ruled out for comparison group children, as is discussed in the analysis of reunification below. The overall percentage difference for RA and NRA groups

combined favored waiver over control group children (40.3 versus 36.4 percent), but the differences were not statistically significant.

**MnPD Impact on Transfer of Permanent Legal and Physical Custody.** In the area of permanent legal custody (**Table 11**), significantly more waiver group children overall reached permanency (19.4 percent) than control group children (7.2 percent). The differences were reflected in both sub-samples: RA (16.3 percent waiver group versus 7.4 percent control group,  $p < .001$ ) and NRA (30.8 percent waiver group versus 6.6 percent comparison group),  $p < .001$ . In addition, there were significant difference between waiver and control group children in both RA counties (Hennepin: waiver group, 13.0 percent; control group, 6.5 percent;  $p = .016$ ; Ramsey: waiver group, 20.6 percent; control group, 8.6 percent;  $p = .002$ ). To date, the MnPD project appears to have had the greatest impact on foster caregivers' willingness to assume permanent legal and physical custody (rather than adoption) of the children in their care.

**Table 11. Permanent Legal and Physical Custody of MnPD Children**

<b>Legal Custody</b>		
<b>RA*</b>	<i>Random Waiver.</i>	<i>Random Control</i>
<i>No legal custody</i>	83.7%	92.6%
<i>Legal Custody</i>	16.3%	7.4%
<i>Total</i>	387	367
<b>NRA*</b>	<i>Non-Random Waiver.</i>	<i>Comparison</i>
<i>No legal custody</i>	69.2%	93.4%
<i>Legal Custody</i>	30.8%	6.6%
<i>Total</i>	107	106
<b>ALL*</b>	<i>All Waiver</i>	<i>All Control/Comparison</i>
<i>No legal custody</i>	80.6%	92.8%
<i>Legal Custody</i>	19.4%	7.2%
<i>Total</i>	494	473
* RA indicates Randomly Assigned, NRA indicates Not Randomly Assigned, ALL indicates both RA and NRA children		

These outcome findings considered in light of the some counties organizational structures that place greater programmatic focus on adoption rather than permanent legal custody cases (see Chapter 2), suggests that greater permanency gains might be possible if increased attention was paid to foster care cases where termination of parental rights has not occurred, but reunification of the child with the biological parents is not possible or highly unlikely. Findings also suggest county project managers might wish to revisit how they apply the MnPD single benefit option to cases directed towards achievement of adoption.

### **Impact of MnPD Single Benefit on Relative versus Non-Relative Caregivers.**

Slightly less than half of children entering the MnPD study were in relative foster care (47.9 percent). Most of the remainder were in non-relative foster care (52.9 percent). A small number of cases (7) were placed in other settings and excluded from the present analysis. In the Hennepin County RA sample, the MnPD single benefit appeared to impact adoption rates for non-relative foster caregivers (waiver group: 59.3 percent; control group: 45.5 percent;  $p = .023$ ).<sup>20</sup> The difference was smaller and not significant among relative foster caregivers (waiver group: 60.8 percent; control group: 55.8 percent; n.s.). A similar finding occurred in the NRA sample (waiver group: 61.4 percent; comparison group: 23.5 percent;  $p < .001$ ). Thus, the MnPD single-benefit option appears to increase adoption rates among non-relative foster care providers only.

The opposite was true for cases involving a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody to a relative. In the RA sample in Hennepin County, permanent legal custody occurred more often for children with relative foster caregivers (waiver group: 27.6 percent; control group: 13.1 percent;  $p < .001$ ). In the NRA sample, both relative and non-relative foster caregivers accepted a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody more often when receiving the MnPD single benefit. (Relative foster caregivers—waiver group: 49.9 percent; comparison group: 12.5 percent;  $p < .001$ . Non-relative foster caregivers---waiver group: 15.8 percent; comparison group: 4.4 percent;  $p = .032$ ).

**Reunification.** In addition to adoption and a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody, other permanency outcomes occur, including reunification. Reunification refers to children's return to their biological parents or other legal custodians. Very small percentages of RA children were reunified (**Table 12**) and the differences were not statistically significant. This

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<sup>20</sup> This difference was not found in the Ramsey County RA sample, probably due partly to the Adoption Equalization Program and possibly to the large number of children with multiple special-need characteristics.



was to be expected because Hennepin and Ramsey counties were instructed to submit children for random assignment only when reunification had been ruled out as a permanency plan. Although counties were instructed to rule out reunification before entering children into MPD, termination of parental rights had not yet taken place in many of these cases. Consequently, despite the efforts of counties, reunification of children with biological parents occurred in a small number of RA cases (less than 5 percent). Among the NRA children, reunifications occurred in 17.0 percent of comparison group cases compared to .9 percent of waiver group cases. The difference was statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ). This difference along with the slightly higher difference among RA children (2.6 percent versus 4.4 percent) led to an overall difference (waiver, 2.2 percent; control, 7.2 percent) that was also statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ).

**Table 12. Reunification of MnPD Children**

<b>Reunification</b>		
<b>RA</b>	<i>Random Waiver.</i>	<i>Random Control</i>
<i>Not reunified</i>	97.4%	95.6%
<i>Reunified</i>	2.6%	4.4%
<i>Total</i>	387	367
<b>NRA</b>	<i>Non-Random Waiver.</i>	<i>Comparison</i>
<i>Not reunified</i>	99.1%	83.0%
<i>Reunified</i>	0.9%	17.0%
<i>Total</i>	107	106
<b>ALL</b>	<i>All Waiver</i>	<i>All Control/Comparison</i>
<i>Not reunified</i>	97.8%	92.8%
<i>Reunified</i>	2.2%	7.2%
<i>Total</i>	494	473

## **Research Question 2. What is the MnPD Single Benefit's impact on permanency rates for children targeted by the demonstration?**

**American Indian and African American Children.** Sufficient numbers of African American children were present for analysis only in Hennepin and Ramsey counties, that is, among RA cases. Just as there was no statistically significant difference between waiver and control groups for adoption cases overall, in these two counties there was also none for African American children. This remained true even when the analysis was limited to Hennepin County.

Overall, African American children appeared to be more difficult to move to adoption regardless of their study status. Among non-African American waiver group children, 40.0 percent were adopted compared to 34.6 percent of African American children. Among control group children the comparable percentages were 43.9 percent and 36.8 percent. This may be due in part to the lower proportion of younger children in the overall African American sample, that is, in the combined waiver and control groups. Overall, 61.1 percent of Caucasian children and 68.7 percent of American Indian children were under 9 years of age. By contrast only 52.6 percent of African American children overall were under 9 years old.

Just as significantly more waiver group children overall achieved a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody to a relative, so did African American children in the MnPD waiver group more often achieve this form of permanency (12.6 percent), compared to the control group (7.1 percent;  $p=.045$ ).

Looking at the overall population, including RA and NRA children in all counties, American Indian children were more likely to be adopted under MnPD single benefit (waiver group, 35.7 percent; control group, 20.8 percent,  $p = .019$ ). The sample at this point in the study includes 192 American Indian children, of which 95 were in the RA waiver group, 51 in the RA control group, 20 in NRA waiver group and 26 in the NRA comparison group. These are relatively small sample sizes and no difference was found in adoptions for MnPD waiver group American Indian children in the RA group compared to the control group, even when the sample was limited to Hennepin County. A significant difference was found in the NRA sample in that 6 children were adopted in the waiver group compared to 0 adopted in the comparison group. More American Indian children that were adopted under the MnPD single benefit were adopted by non-relatives, conforming to the overall pattern for adoption, as described above.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> It may be that many of the adoptions of American Indian children by non-relatives involve members of the child's tribe. This issue will be explored in interviews during the next 30 months of the project.

American Indian children were also more likely to achieve a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody to a relative, which in this analysis includes tribal “customary adoption”. Among NRA children, in Carlton County primarily, 70 percent of waiver group American Indian children went into permanent legal custody compared to 11.5 percent of American Indian control group children. Among RA children in the two urban counties, the comparable figures were 25.3 percent in the waiver group versus 13.7 percent in the control group, a statistical trend ( $p = .077$ ).

**Impact of the MnPD Single Benefit on Permanency for Special Need Children with Disabling Conditions.** For the present analysis it was possible to consider children with any listed disability as well as those with severe disabilities. Most of these children could be described as special needs, fitting the criteria and emphasis of the waiver Terms and Conditions. **Table 13** and **Table 14** show adoption and permanent legal custody outcomes for children without disabilities and children with disabilities, including any disabling condition. This latter group includes those with severe disabilities as well as those with less severe disabilities, such as learning disabilities. There were 478 of the 967 children in the present study sample with at least one disability listed (any disability). This amounts to about half (49.4 percent) of the children in study, indicating some success in selecting such children for assignment. Of the 478 children with disabilities, slightly less than half (224 or 46.9 percent) were categorized as severely disabled, as defined above.

Regarding adoption (**Table 13**), the previously discussed problem introduced among randomly assigned children through utilization of the Adoption Equalization Program in Ramsey County is evident among non-disabled children. Differences between the waiver and control groups for RA children with disabilities were in the expected direction (waiver group, 51.9%; control group, 47.3%) but were not statistically significant. By contrast, RA control group children without disabilities were adopted more frequently. Separating the two RA counties, in Hennepin County waiver group children with disabilities were adopted substantially more frequently (60.2 percent) than control group children with disabilities (49.2 percent), a difference that was close to statistical significance ( $p = .062$ ). In Ramsey County, the proportions were reversed, as they were for the entire Ramsey County sample (waiver group: 40.5 percent; control group 44.4 percent, n.s.).

Among NRA children, both children with and without disabilities were more frequently adopted under the MnPD single benefit ( $p = .001$ ). The greatest difference occurred among children with disabilities ( $65.6 - 30.6 = 35$  percent). This translated in a substantial overall difference with 54.0 percent of waiver group children with disabilities being adopted compared 43.3 percent of control group children ( $p = .013$ ).

**Table 13. Adoption of MnPD Children with and without Disabilities**

<b>Adoption</b>				
	<b>Not Disabled</b>		<b>Disabled</b>	
<b>RA*</b>	<i>Random Waiver .</i>	<i>Random Control</i>	<i>Random Waiver.</i>	<i>Random Control</i>
<i>Not Adopted</i>	76.0%	69.3%	48.1%	52.7%
<i>Adopted</i>	24.0%	30.7%	51.9%	47.3%
<i>Total</i>	204	166	183	201
<b>NRA*</b>	<i>Non-Random Waiver.</i>	<i>Comparison</i>	<i>Non-Random Waiver.</i>	<i>Comparison</i>
<i>Not Adopted</i>	54.7%	84.1%	34.4%	69.4%
<i>Adopted</i>	45.3%	15.9%	65.6%	30.6%
<i>Total</i>	75	44	32	62
<b>ALL*</b>	<i>All Waiver</i>	<i>All Control/ Comparison</i>	<i>All Waiver</i>	<i>All Control/ Comparison</i>
<i>Not Adopted</i>	70.3%	72.4%	46.0%	56.7%
<i>Adopted</i>	29.7%	27.6%	54.0%	43.3%
<i>Total</i>	279	210	215	263
* RA indicates Randomly Assigned, NRA indicates Not Randomly Assigned, ALL indicates both RA and NRA children				

Considering permanency outcomes in the area of a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody (**Table 14**), the difference for RA children without disabilities was statistically significant ( $p = .002$ ) while that for children with disabilities was close to a statistical trend ( $p = .107$ ). However, only very small proportions of RA children with disabilities entered this permanent status either among waiver group (5.5 percent) or control group children (2.5 percent). This was not the case among the NRA cases. For both groups, a transfer of permanent legal custody occurred significantly and substantially more often for waiver group children (waiver group,  $p = .004$ ; control group,  $p = .016$ ).

**Table 14. Transfer of Permanent Legal and Physical Custody  
of MnPD Children with and without Disabilities**

<b>Permanent Legal Custody</b>				
	<b><i>Not Disabled</i></b>		<b><i>Disabled</i></b>	
<b><i>RA</i></b>	<i>Random Waiver.</i>	<i>Random Control</i>	<i>Random Waiver</i>	<i>Random Control</i>
<i>No Legal Custody</i>	74.0%	86.7%	94.5%	97.5%
<i>Legal Custody</i>	26.0%	13.3%	5.5%	2.5%
<i>Total</i>	204	166	183	201
<b><i>NRA</i></b>	<i>Non-Random Waiver.</i>	<i>Comparison</i>	<i>Non-Random Waiver.</i>	<i>Comparison</i>
<i>No Legal Custody</i>	62.7%	86.4%	84.4%	98.4%
<i>Legal Custody</i>	37.3%	13.6%	15.6%	1.6%
<i>Total</i>	75	44	32	62
<b><i>ALL</i></b>	<i>All Waiver</i>	<i>All Control/ Comparison</i>	<i>All Waiver</i>	<i>All Control/ Comparison</i>
<i>No Legal Custody</i>	71.0%	86.7%	93.0%	97.7%
<i>Legal Custody</i>	29.0%	13.3%	7.0%	2.3%
<i>Total</i>	279	210	215	263

The pattern of outcomes for children with severe disabilities resembles those for children with any disabilities and it is not necessary to produce similar tables to those just examined. Looking at all waiver group and control/comparison group children, however, children with severe disabilities were adopted more often (waiver group, 53.5 percent; control group 41.6 percent,  $p = .05$ ) than non disabled children (waiver group, 37.0 percent; control group 30.5 percent,  $p = .266$ , n.s.). Both groups were placed in permanent legal custody more often with children with severe disabilities at overall lower percentages as just described (waiver group, 7.1 percent; control group 2.4 percent,  $p = .088$ , trend) than non–severely disabled (waiver group, 22.5 percent; control group 8.9 percent,  $p < .001$ ). We can conclude that at this stage of the

evaluation, some evidence was found of success in achieving permanency among children with disabilities, although the outcomes were not consistent for all subgroups.

### **Impact of Child's Age on Achieving Permanency through the MnPD Single Benefit.**

Age is taken here as the age at which the child was assigned to a waiver or control/comparison group. A little more than half the children in the study (52.3 percent) were under 9 years of age at this point in time. The rest were mainly 9 to 17 years of age, although a few (1.6 percent) were 18 or older at the time they entered the study. The child's age was a factor in the move to permanency through the MnPD single benefit. Considering adoption within the RA group (and excluding the anomalous Ramsey County cases), MnPD waiver group children under 9 years old were adopted more often (71.7 percent) than control group children (61.5 percent;  $p = .068$ ). No difference was found for the older group, where the adoption rate was 25.5 percent for waiver group versus 23.3 percent for the control group. Age was a less important factor in achieving permanent legal custody than it was for adoption. In the waiver group, RA children under 9 years of age achieved only slightly higher permanency rates (17.6 percent) than older children (15.1 percent). For the control group, the rates were 6.8 and 8 percent. However, the difference was statistically significant for both groups. In the NRA group, age was not important for either adoption or permanent legal custody, as both younger and older children were adopted and moved to permanent legal custody more often under the MnPD single benefit.

### **Research Question 3. Do children in the MnPD waiver group achieve permanency through adoption or a transfer of permanent legal custody more quickly than control group children?**

If the MnPD single benefit was effective in motivating foster caregivers to adopt or accept permanent legal and physical custody of children in their care, it was reasoned it might also shorten the time in the children spent in foster care until these outcomes were finalized. To this end, the number of days that passed from the date of assignment of children to the study either as waiver or control/comparison group children until permanency was achieved was considered.

Adoptions occurred within a mean of 235 days in foster care for the MnPD waiver group children compared to 297 days for the control/ comparison group children, which was a significantly shorter period ( $p = .007$ ). For the NRA children the comparable figures were (waiver group: 203; control group: 319;  $p = .006$ ) and for RA children they were (waiver group: 247; control group: 293;  $p = .087$ ).

A transfer of permanent and legal and physical custody to a relative occurred within a mean of 121 days for the MnPD waiver group children compared to 184 days for the control/comparison group children, which was a significantly shorter period ( $p = .057$ ). For the RA children these figures were 141 days for the waiver group and 161 for the control group ( $p=.599$ ). For the NRA children the comparable figures were 72 days for waiver children and 274 among matching children.<sup>22</sup>

The difference within the randomly assigned sample was a trend for adoption and not statistically significant for a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody.

To more fully evaluate this question a type of multivariate analysis referred to as Cox Proportion Hazards analysis was performed. This survival analysis was conducted on children who had been adopted or placed in permanent legal custody or who remained in out-of-home placement. The latter are referred to as censored cases in survival analysis and the time to permanency for this group was calculated as the end of data collection (March 30, 2008). Children who were reunited or who had been emancipated were removed from the analysis.

This type of survival analysis is a type of regression analysis that permits the introduction of multiple covariates. The following variables were introduced: child's gender, child's age at study entry, race/ethnicity, special needs (measured through the presence of one or more severe disabilities), relative versus non-relative provider, and the child membership in the random or the non-random portion of the evaluation.

The dependent variable in the analysis was the number of days until one of the two types of permanency was achieved. This analysis, therefore, takes into account not only whether permanency was achieved but the length of time until it was achieved. It also makes it possible to legitimately compare children who entered the study at different times and thus had differing *opportunity periods* for permanency to be achieved. (For example, a child that had been in the study for six months has less opportunity, on average, than one who has been in the study for one year.)

The following table (**Table 15**) shows the status of variables in the final equation. Three variables were statistically significant in this context. The MnPD single benefit project had a significant impact ( $p = .034$ ) on length of time to permanency, quickening its occurrence. And,

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<sup>22</sup> Note, however, that for the matching cases of NRA children, only 6 cases have closed and the mean has been skewed by one case in particular. As the project continues a better picture will emerge about the degree of difference between the groups.

as was illustrated in the previous section, permanency was achieved more frequently through MnPD project. In addition, the child’s age was shown to be important, older children are more difficult to move to permanency than younger children. And, with respect to children with special needs, children with severe disabilities are shown to be less difficult to move to permanency. The latter finding reflects the overall success of MnPD in achieving permanency for disabled children (Tables 13 and 14).

**Table 15. Proportion Hazards Analysis: Variables in the Equation**

	B	SE	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
MnPD program	-.241	.114	4.492	.034	.786
Child's gender	-.148	.110	1.814	.178	.862
Child's age at study entry	-.168	.014	145.288	.000	.845
Caucasian			2.242	.326	
African American	-.190	.174	1.191	.275	.827
American Indian	-.222	.152	2.152	.142	.801
Severe Disabilities	.419	.130	10.445	.001	1.520
Relative/Non-relative foster provider	.025	.057	.198	.656	1.025
Membership in random or non-random portion of the evaluation	-.215	.169	1.613	.204	.806

This kind of analysis demonstrates how a set of variables in the context of an ongoing experiment, individually and in combination, impact achieving permanency. The primary purpose of the analysis, however, was to determine whether the MnPD single benefit project impacted permanency rates while controlling for the effects of other important variables. In this sense, it supplements and adds to the bivariate analyses considered in the previous section. It confirms and strengthens the conclusion that the MnPD single benefit project is effective in moving children to legal permanency and in moving them to permanency sooner.



#### **Research Question 4. Do MnPD waiver group children experience fewer disruptions in living situations than control group children?**

Two kinds of disruptions are considered: 1) disruptions in foster care through change of foster caregivers and 2) disruptions of adoption, permanent legal custody or reunification after permanency has been achieved.<sup>23</sup>

There are many reasons why a child might experience a change in their foster care placement. Many of these are not necessarily legitimate disruptions. For example, a change for purposes of education, medical treatment or other treatment may be only temporary changes. We considered the following to be changes in foster placement that usually indicate a valid disruption: behavioral consequences, entry to corrections, entry to detention, changes for reasons of safety or stability, entry into a shelter and runaway status. Looking at the entire study population, waiver group children experienced an average of 1.37 relocations in foster care for one of these reasons while control/comparison group children showed an average of 1.40. This difference was not statistically significant.

Regarding the second type (waiver or control group), disruptions after permanency was achieved have numbered so few that no meaningful analysis was possible. There were 7 disruptions in adoption cases (waiver group: 2; control/comparison group: 5). There were 5 disruptions in permanent legal custody cases (waiver group: 5; control/comparison group: 0). There were 7 disruptions after reunification with parents (waiver group: 1; control group: 6). No conclusions are possible at this time concerning this variable.

Finally, the mean number of displacement days per child was examined. Displacement days refer to number of days after a disruption in foster care (the first type of disruption considered above). It was thought that the MnPD single benefit might reduce such days. Taking the average number of days for all waiver and control/comparison group children, it was found that the mean for waiver group children was 146 days and for control/comparison group children was 149 days, a difference that was not statistically significant. The MnPD single benefit does not appear to have any impact on displacement days.

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<sup>23</sup> Although we use the term disruption for returns to foster care after reunification, these should technically be termed “re-entries” to foster care.

### **Research Question 5. Are there fewer new reports of abuse or neglect for MnPD waiver children?**

In this analysis, the broadest definition of a new report was used: any new call to the county child protection agency intake unit that was accepted as a valid CPS report. In some states it would be possible to go on to consider whether the CPS report was later substantiated. This approach would be invalid in Minnesota where a differential response system is in place throughout the state and the majority of reports receive a family assessment rather than a traditional investigation. Family assessments do not lead to a finding of substantiated or unsubstantiated maltreatment.

The timeframe within which new reports were counted was from the data of assignment of the child to the evaluation until the end of data. Children that had achieved permanency were also monitored to determine whether new reports were received after adoption, permanent legal custody or reunification.

Considering all children in the study to date, 15.4 percent of waiver group children experienced at least one new report compared to 19.2 percent of control/comparison group children. This difference represented a statistical trend ( $p = .067$ ). However, the difference was apparently due mainly to waiver- control/comparison difference in the NRA sample. The waiver-control difference in the RA sample was not statistically significant.

Differences were also considered for children that moved to permanency. No significant difference was found with waiver and control/comparison group children that had achieved adoption or a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody. However, a relatively large difference was found among children that had been reunited. It may be recalled that many of the comparison group children were reunited with parents in the NRA sample. Of these 19 or 34 children (55.9 percent) had a new CPS report, whereas only 2 of the 9 waiver group children (18.2 percent) that were reunified experienced a new report. This difference was statistically significant ( $p = .031$ ).

### **Research Question 6. Do MnPD waiver group children spend less time in foster care than control group children?**

For this analysis the number of days was counted either until permanency (or emancipation) had been achieved or, for children still in foster care, until the end of data collection.

For the entire study sample, MnPD waiver group children were in foster care placements for a mean of 396 days compared to 462 days for control/comparison group children. This difference was statistically significant ( $p = .004$ ). The difference was reflected in both study sample segments. For RA waiver group children the number of days was 434 compared to 488 for control group children ( $p = .047$ ) and for NRA waiver group children it was 257 days compared to 374 days for comparison group children ( $p = .003$ ).

This finding is completely consistent with the success of the MnPD single benefit project in moving greater proportions of children to permanency. In fact, other things being equal, the more children are moved to permanency, the greater the reduction in the average length of time that children remain in foster care.

### **Research Question 7. Do MnPD waiver children experience improvements in other measures of well-being (such as, educational achievement, health status, or family functioning)?**

This research question was designed to be answered through data collected from families during the second follow-up contact after some time had passed. At this point we can still review the well-being data collected during the first interview shortly after children's initial entrée into the study. Well-being indicators were collected from caregivers and caseworkers to provide a basis for assessing the impact of permanency in the lives of MnPD waiver group children.

**Table 16** displays these measures of child well-being for randomly assigned (RA) children in Hennepin and Ramsey counties. Under a random assignment design, waiver and control group children should theoretically be highly similar on all measures of child well-being. This occurred with children in Hennepin and Ramsey counties and indicates that waiver and control groups in these counties are comparable. While some percentage differences occurred, this is expected with random assignment and one of the differences was statistically significant.

**Table 16. Comparison of Selected Responses from Social Workers and Foster Providers Concerning Child Well-Being (RA Sample)**

<b><i>Worker Responses</i></b>	<i>Waiver</i>	<i>Control</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Child is currently in school	71.2%	68.4%	---
Dropped out of school	1.2%	2.6%	---
Child in vocational training	3.6%	1.6%	---
Child is doing excellent or good in school	61.3%	55.1%	---
Child is doing fair or poor in school	38.7%	44.9%	---
Child has an A or B grade point average	42.7%	45.2%	---
Child has a D or F grade point average	19.5%	22.6%	---
Child attends special school	40.9%	43.9%	---
Total Responses	168	193	
<b><i>Foster Provider Responses</i></b>	<i>Waiver</i>	<i>Control</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Child has had persistent health problems	53.1%	39.6%	---
Child has had a medical checkup in last year	98.0%	96.2%	---
Child takes medication(s) on a regular basis	14.2%	12.9%	---
Child argues a lot: always or mostly	28.0%	28.3%	---
Child complains about being lonely: rarely	94.0%	83.0%	---
Child complains about being lonely: sometimes	4.0%	13.2%	---
Child shows a sense of humor: always or mostly	82.4%	79.2%	---
Child takes responsibility for actions: rarely	31.4%	35.8%	---
Child is depressed: sometimes	27.5%	28.3%	---
Child has feelings of loss about biological parents	47.1%	55.8%	---
Child worries about biological parents	23.5%	43.1%	.058
Child has a mental or physical disability	50.0%	38.8%	.069
Child has ADD or learning disability	52.0%	48.1%	---
Total Responses	51	53	

The top portion of the table displays caseworkers' responses on children's academic status, and the bottom portion foster care provider responses regarding children's health, emotional concerns and type of disability. Responses were received from 168 of waiver group children's caseworkers and from 193 of control group children's caseworkers.

The sample of responding foster caregivers was smaller, including slightly more than 50 in each study group. In two areas, statistical trends were found which may indicate differences between the two groups: waiver group children were more often reported to have disabilities, and control group children were more often reported to have worries about their biological parents. These differences may be due to biases in the types of families that responded to initial surveys. The differences may also be due simply to the random significance that sometimes occurs when many multivariate comparisons are made.

Generally, however, this table's comparisons indicate these waiver and control groups will produce reliable analyses as further follow-up data are collected.

**Educational Status and Achievement as Intervening Variables.** We can use this initial child well-being data to ask whether educational status and achievement have any mediating effect on the MnPD single benefit impact on permanency outcomes.

In **Table 17**, three such variables are considered: school performance rating, GPA and special school attendance. The analysis shows that in nearly every case children who are doing better in school, making better grades and who are not enrolled in a special school are more likely to move from foster care to permanency, whether they are members of the MnPD waiver or control group. For example, among children performing "excellent" or "good" in school, 55.8 percent of waiver group and 41.9 percent of control group children were adopted, compared to 45.5 and 33.3 percent, respectively, of children performing "fair" or "poor" in school. This was not the case for permanent legal custody, where the MnPD single benefit project impacted permanency rates for both high and low-achieving children. This may indicate that adoptions are more difficult to finalize for low achieving children. This conclusion should be considered with caution, however, because this group was generally limited to sample sizes of 22 to 33 children. As sample sizes increase, evaluators will return to this analysis and examine the apparent finding a second time.

**Table 17. Educational Status and Achievement as an Intervening Variable in MnPD Single Benefit Permanency Outcomes (Children in the Randomly Assigned Sample)**

	<i>Waiver % (n)</i>	<i>Control % (n)</i>	<i>Significance</i>
<i>School Performance</i>	<i>Legal Custody Achieved</i>		
Child doing excellent or good in school	15.0% (127)	8.6% (140)	.075
Child doing fair or poor in school	17.1% (41)	1.9% (53)	.012
	<i>Adoption Achieved</i>		
Child doing excellent or good in school	55.8% (77)	41.9% (93)	.049
Child doing fair or poor in school	45.5% (22)	33.3% (33)	.266
<i>School GPA</i>	<i>Legal Custody Achieved</i>		
Child has GPA of A or B	15.0% (121)	8.6% (147)	.075
Child has GPA or C, D or F	12.8% (47)	2.2% (46)	.059
	<i>Adoption Achieved</i>		
Child has GPA of A or B	60.5% (76)	43.6% (101)	.018
Child has GPA or C, D or F	30.4% (23)	24.0% (25)	.430
<i>Special School Attendance</i>	<i>Legal Custody Achieved</i>		
Child does not attend special school	14.9% (121)	7.9% (139)	.057
Child attends special school	17.0% (47)	3.7% (54)	.028
	<i>Adoption Achieved</i>		
Child does not attend special school	55.3% (76)	37.9% (95)	.017
Child attends special school	47.8% (23)	45.2% (31)	.532

## Chapter 4 Cost Study

The cost study in the MnPD single benefit evaluation has two parts. The first is a comparative analysis of all costs of families under the MnPD single benefit project compared to the traditional benefit systems. The second is a cost-effectiveness study. These analyses are distinct from cost neutrality analysis in that the latter is concerned only with the federal share of title IV-E funds, while the cost study in the evaluation will include these and all other cost data accessible to evaluators (such as title IV-A, IV-B, IV-E, XIX and state and local funds).

The sample for the case-specific caseworker survey will be used for the cost analysis. The following is an overview of the cost study which will be undertaken during the final year of the evaluation so that the analysis is as accurate and comprehensive as possible.

**Comparative Costs.** The cost analysis is divided into time periods, treating cases that enter the study during different project years as cohorts. The analysis can be outlined as follows:

<i>Five-year Experimental costs: Cases in year 1</i>	<i>Four-year Experimental costs: Cases in years 1 and 2</i>	<i>Three-year Experimental costs: Cases in years 1, 2 and 3</i>	<i>Two-year Experimental costs: Cases in years 1, 2, 3 and 4</i>	<i>One-Year Experimental costs: Cases in years 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5</i>	<i>Total Experimental cos: All cases</i>
⇕	⇕	⇕	⇕	⇕	⇕
<i>Five-year Control/Comp costs: Cases in year 1</i>	<i>Four-year Control/Comp costs: Cases in years 1 and 2</i>	<i>Three-year Control/Comp costs: Cases in years 1, 2 and 3</i>	<i>Two-year Control/Comp costs: Cases in years 1, 2, 3 and 4</i>	<i>One-Year Control/Comp costs: Cases in years 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5</i>	<i>Total Control/Comp costs: All cases</i>

In this scheme all experimental and control/comparison costs are shown on the right (separated boxes) for the comprehensive blended analysis in the final report. In the sub-analyses, cases that were assigned in various years will be analyzed over each fixed project period. For example, about five years of cost data will be available for cases assigned during the first year (boxes on the left), while four years of data will be available for analysis of cases assigned during the first two years, and so on, with approximately one year of data available on all cases. In addition to the blended analysis, metro experimental-control cases will be analyzed separately

from the non-metro experimental-comparison cases. The analysis includes costs of purchased services as well as the cost of case management provided by county caseworkers.

**Cost-Effectiveness.** The cost-effectiveness study has a different purpose. It is also distinct from cost-benefit analysis, which compares program investment costs to various benefits achieved. Cost-effectiveness links program outcomes with the costs incurred to achieve them.

For the cost-effectiveness analysis, it is necessary to measure program costs combined with particular measures of effectiveness. Measures of effectiveness in the context of an outcome or impact analysis refer to differences in desired outcomes between the experimental and control or comparison groups. The differences that can be used are those that may be considered to be a real difference, that is, those that were statistically significant. The results of cost-effectiveness analyses are ratios of costs to effectiveness.

Programs can be cost effective in two ways. Either effectiveness can be improved while costs are maintained at similar levels or effectiveness may remain unchanged or change only slightly while costs are reduced. While either type of change may produce a corresponding change in cost-effectiveness ratios, the former is more likely in waiver programs where cost neutrality is a goal, and this will be the approach in Minnesota.

In this way, the cost-effectiveness analysis is an adjunct to and dependent upon outcome analyses. Any or all may be candidates for inclusion in cost-effectiveness study. For example, if the proportion of children who achieve permanency through adoption, guardianship or reunification is significantly greater for the experimental group in a program that remains cost-neutral *across all combined cost categories* the program may be shown to be cost effective. Under this analysis, a cost difference may be calculated for achieving a relative increase in permanency, say, per 100 or 1,000 children.



## Appendix

# Appendix A

## Assignment of Children to Waiver or Control Groups

### Detailed Instructions with Internet Screens

**I. Determine that a child is eligible and appropriate for the MPD.** There are certain basic selection criteria: 1) in safe and stable foster care for at least six months, 2) eligible for Title IV-E and 3) at least one of the following: a) state ward, b) long-term foster care by court order, c) filing for termination of parental rights, pending or completed, d) filing for transfer of permanent legal and physical custody, pending or completed

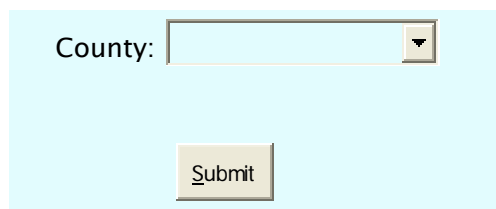
**II. Make sure you have basic information** on the child (name, SSIS person ID, foster family name, SSIS foster family ID, a case management workgroup ID, any special needs of the child, **and (for Hennepin and Ramsey) whether the child has siblings in placement**).

**III. Open the assignment program** in your Internet Browser (Internet Explorer or Netscape) and type in the following into the address bar: <http://www.iarstl.org/mn/ive/mnive.htm>

*Make this address a favorite in your browser so that you can come back to it again without retyping this address. When you press the Enter key on your keyboard, a page will appear with the following:*

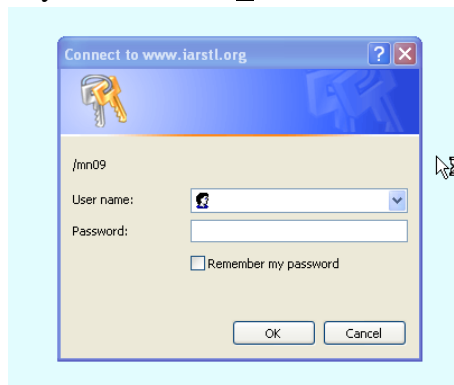
### MINNESOTA PERMANENCY DEMONSTRATION

Please select your county:



A screenshot of a web form with a light blue background. At the top, it says "Please select your county:". Below this is a label "County:" followed by a text input field with a dropdown arrow on the right. Below the input field is a "Submit" button.

Select your county and click the **Submit** button. The following popup will appear:



A screenshot of a login popup window titled "Connect to www.iarstl.org". The window has a blue header with a key icon. Below the header, it shows the path "/mn09". There are two input fields: "User name:" with a dropdown arrow and "Password:". Below the password field is a checkbox labeled "Remember my password". At the bottom are "OK" and "Cancel" buttons.

Enter the user name and password for your county. These will be emailed to your county. They should be given only to the person entering data into the system in your county and to the responsible supervisor or administrator. Click the **OK** button.

**IVa. The following screen will appear in Carlton, Cass, Mille Lacs and Dakota Counties.** Enter the information. If one person always enters the information in each county (which we recommend) you may simply enter your initials into the first and last name field. Enter the name of the child and the other information called for. Note that both boxes under 1) must be checked and at least one box under 2) must be checked. Under 3) check only boxes that apply to this child.

## MINNESOTA PERMANENCY DEMONSTRATION

### Child Identification Entry Page

<b>Your Name: First</b> <input type="text"/> <b>Last</b> <input type="text"/>
<b>Name of Child: First</b> <input type="text"/> <b>Last</b> <input type="text"/>
<b>Child's SSIS Person ID:</b> <input type="text"/>
<b>Current SSIS Case Management Workgroup ID:</b> <input type="text"/>
<b>Foster Provider Name:</b> <input type="text"/> <b>Provider SSIS ID:</b> <input type="text"/>

**1. Check if the child:** *(both of these must be checked to proceed)*

- Has been in safe and stable licensed foster care for at least six months
- Title IV-E eligible

**2. Current legal status of child:** *(check any that apply, one must be checked)*

- State ward
- Long-term foster care by court order
- Filing for termination of parental rights, pending or completed
- Filing for transfer of permanent legal and physical custody, pending or completed

**3. Check ALL of the following that apply to this child:**

- Diagnosed moderate to severe mental retardation
- Mild mental retardation
- In special school or mainstreamed as a special school student

- Other developmental disability (e.g., autism, seizure syndrome, cerebral palsy, ...)
- Learning disability
- Physically disabled
- Diagnosed severe mental health or emotional disabilities
- Present or past juvenile delinquency
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Fetal Alcohol Effects
- Chronic illness
- Other Special Needs Indicate:

Click the Submit button when all the information has been entered. If you have made errors in entry you may receive messages as you go along or at the end of the entry.

A small popup window will appear asking you to confirm that your entries are correct. Then the following screen will appear.

### Submission Received

[Enter another child](#)

[View list of children previously entered](#)

**IVb. In Hennepin and Ramsey Counties, the following screen will appear.**

Enter the information. If one person always enters the information in each county (which we recommend) you may simply enter your initials into the first and last name field. Enter the name of the child and the other information called for. Note that both boxes under 1) must be checked and at least one box under 2) must be checked. Under 3) check only boxes that apply to this child. There is an additional item (4) for Hennepin and Ramsey—described below.

**MINNESOTA PERMANENCY DEMONSTRATION**

**Child Identification Entry Page**

<b>Your Name: First</b> <input type="text"/> <b>Last</b> <input type="text"/>
<b>Name of Child: First</b> <input type="text"/> <b>Last</b> <input type="text"/>
<b>Child's SSIS Person ID:</b> <input type="text"/>
<b>Current SSIS Case Management Workgroup ID:</b> <input type="text"/>
<b>Foster Provider Name:</b> <input type="text"/> <b>Provider SSIS ID:</b> <input type="text"/>

**1. Check if the child:** *(both of these must be checked to proceed)*

- Has been in safe and stable licensed foster care for at least six months
- Title IV-E eligible

**2. Current legal status of child:** *(check any that apply, one must be checked)*

- State ward
- Long-term foster care by court order
- Filing for termination of parental rights, pending or completed
- Filing for transfer of permanent legal and physical custody, pending or completed

**3. Check ALL of the following that apply to this child:**

- Diagnosed moderate to severe mental retardation
- Mild mental retardation
- In special school or mainstreamed as a special school student
- Other developmental disability (e.g., autism, seizure syndrome, cerebral palsy, ...)
- Learning disability
- Physically disabled

- Diagnosed severe mental health or emotional disabilities
- Present or past juvenile delinquency
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Fetal Alcohol Effects
- Chronic illness
- Other Special Needs Indicate:

**4. Does this child have siblings in out-of-home placement?**

- Yes
- No

*If you answered 'Yes' to Question 4,*

**4a. Have any of these siblings been previously assigned to the MPD waiver? [\(click to see previously entered children\)](#)**

- Yes, a sibling was previously assigned to the waiver (experimental) group
- Yes, a sibling was previously assigned to the non-waiver (control) group
- No

In Hennepin and Ramsey, item 4) concerns siblings of this child that were submitted earlier to the MPD and have been assigned to the Waiver or the Control groups. It is very important that this item be entered correctly. If the Yes button is checked then 4a must be answered. If you know that the child has siblings in placement but cannot remember whether they have previously been submitted to this program click the link that says: “[\(click to see previously entered children\)](#)”. This will open a popup window that will permit you to check previous children entered and their waiver or control status. This is to ensure that siblings are all assigned either to the waiver or to the control group.

Click the Submit button when all the information has been entered. If you have made errors in entry you may receive messages as you go along or at the end of the entry.

A small popup window will appear asking you to confirm that your entries are correct. Then one of the following two screens will appear. This first screen reports that the child was assigned to the waiver group:

Submission Received

**James Smith is assigned to the Waiver group**

This Child is Assigned to the MPD Waiver (MPD benefits may be offered to this provider).

[Enter another child](#)

[View list of children previously entered](#)

The second screen reports that the child was assigned to the control group.

Submission Received

**James Smith is assigned to the Control group**

This Child is Assigned to the MPD Waiver (MPD benefits may be offered to this provider).

[Enter another child](#)

[View list of children previously entered](#)

Make a note of the group to which the child has been assigned. The MPD may be offered only to foster families of children assigned to the waiver group.

**V. At various points the following link will appear:**

[View list of previously entered children](#)

This link may be clicked to see a list of previously entered children. The order in which they appear may be changed. The options are a) name of child, b) SSIS person ID#, c) SSIS case management workgroup ID#, and d) date entered into this system.

**VIEW LIST OF PREVIOUSLY ENTERED CHILDREN**

Order the list by:

Select the order and click the **Submit** button. A list like the following will appear:

**Children entered for Carlton County:**

<b>Child Name</b>	<b>SSIS Person ID</b>	<b>CM Workgroup ID</b>	<b>Worker Name</b>	<b>Date Entered</b>
Case, Test	55555555	44444555	Loman, Tony	10/13/2005 10:19:56
John, John	34555555	46546546	L, T	10/13/2005 17:07:33
Lee, Chris	69857812	55627899	L, T	10/17/2005 12:48:31
Lewis, Hank	22222222	66666666	L, T	10/14/2005 15:05:25

This list is in alphabetical order of last name.



## Appendix B

### Pair Matching Methodology

In order to accomplish matching, a “pool” of children from which matches could be made was needed. The term pool refers to a larger group of children of the same general type. Ideally, the entire pool of potential matches should be two or three orders of magnitude larger than the group of children assigned to the waiver in order to create the best matches possible. Whether this is possible can only be determined after the demonstration begins and the numbers and types of children assigned to the waiver in non-metro counties is observed. Determining the adequacy of the pool of children for matching purposes will be one of the first problems to be solved in the evaluation.

Variables available from SSIS on children from the selected counties who are IV-E eligible and meet the criteria of the waiver will be assembled, reviewed and prioritized for importance to the matching process. Variables utilized in matching includes demographic and social variables (such as age, sex, race/ethnicity, and tribe for American Indian children), case characteristics (including length of time in placement, previous cases and removals, difficulty of care rating of the child, and whether a specialized foster care support agency as provided contracted assistance), and geography (first choice will be adjacent counties with similar socio-economic and CPS caseload characteristics). Once the new waiver child has been identified, the evaluator runs its matching programs to select the best comparison match from the non-waiver counties.

In selecting individual matched pairs, all (or the large majority of) children in the pool of potential matches are considered. Each variable is assigned a priority weight. Weights will be summated for each child in the pool. The child with the highest score will be selected as the match. While the procedure produces matched *pairs* of children, the object is to produce *matched groups*. The difference is critical, because it allows some flexibility in matching (that is, some differences between the children in particular pairs), so long as the characteristics of the waiver and comparison group as a whole are not significantly different.

Ideally, matching children should be selected from counties that are similar in demographic and resource characteristics. Matching counties must be selected on an empirical basis. Part of the problem of determining the adequacy of the matching pool is to determine whether similar children can be identified in counties initially selected for comparison cases. Specific American Indian tribes are found in the two northern counties in the study: Carlton and Cass. If at all possible, matching children are selected from the same tribes. The best counties

for comparison matches are the adjacent counties of St. Louis, Crow Wing, and Itasca. This may be expanded to Aitkin, Kanabec, and Morrison counties. Matches for the Twin Cities suburban county of Dakota are selected from the suburban counties of Anoka, Carver and Scott.

## Appendix C

### Placement Counties

As discussed in Chapter 2, children who are placed in foster care by a participating MnPD county are frequently placed in a different county, usually to be with relatives. **Table C-1** shows the counties in which waiver group and control group children from each participating MnPD county were placed during the first half of the demonstration. The term ‘provider county’ refers to the county where the caregiver resides.

American Indian children also are often placed in a county other than the one with original jurisdiction. The situation of these children is complicated by the number of different American Indian tribes and bands within the state. **Table C-2** shows the foster care disbursement of the American Indian children who are in the study population. The table shows the tribe or band of the children, as given in SSIS, along with the county of case responsibility and the county where the caregiver resides. The top portion of the table shows the placement of waiver children, while the bottom part shows where control children have been placed.

**Table C-1. Placement Counties of Waiver (Experimental) and Control Children**

**Hennepin County Children**

Provider County	N		Total	%		
	Control	Exp.		Control	Exp.	Total
Anoka	5	16	21	2.3%	7.4%	4.9%
Becker	5	5	10	2.3%	2.3%	2.3%
Beltrami	2	5	7	0.9%	2.3%	1.6%
Benton	1	2	3	0.5%	0.9%	0.7%
Carver	0	1	1	0.0%	0.5%	0.2%
Cass	0	3	3	0.0%	1.4%	0.7%
Chippewa	1	0	1	0.5%	0.0%	0.2%
Chisago	0	4	4	0.0%	1.9%	0.9%
Clay	0	2	2	0.0%	0.9%	0.5%
Clearwater	4	0	4	1.9%	0.0%	0.9%
Crow Wing	0	1	1	0.0%	0.5%	0.2%
Dakota	2	7	9	0.9%	3.3%	2.1%
Dodge	1	4	5	0.5%	1.9%	1.2%
Faribault	0	1	1	0.0%	0.5%	0.2%
Hennepin	121	110	231	56.0%	<b>51.2%</b>	53.6%
Isanti	10	2	12	4.6%	0.9%	2.8%
Koochiching	0	1	1	0.0%	0.5%	0.2%
LeSueur	1	0	1	0.5%	0.0%	0.2%
Lyon	0	2	2	0.0%	0.9%	0.5%
Mahnomen	0	2	2	0.0%	0.9%	0.5%
Mille Lacs	1	3	4	0.5%	1.4%	0.9%
Morrison	0	1	1	0.0%	0.5%	0.2%
Nicollet	1	0	1	0.5%	0.0%	0.2%
Ramsey	21	15	36	9.7%	7.0%	8.4%
St. Louis	1	2	3	0.5%	0.9%	0.7%
Scott	0	5	5	0.0%	2.3%	1.2%
Sherburne	4	1	5	1.9%	0.5%	1.2%
Stearns	0	1	1	0.0%	0.5%	0.2%
Washington	11	3	14	5.1%	1.4%	3.2%
Wright	8	0	8	3.7%	0.0%	1.9%
Out of State	15	16	31	6.9%	7.4%	7.2%
Unknown	1	0	1	0.5%	0.0%	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Table C-1, continued**

**Ramsey County Children**

Provider County	N			%		
	Control	Exp.	Total	Control	Exp.	Total
Anoka	6	4	10	4.0%	2.4%	3.1%
Cass	0	1	1	0.0%	0.6%	0.3%
Chisago	1	0	1	0.7%	0.0%	0.3%
Clay	0	2	2	0.0%	1.2%	0.6%
Crow Wing	2	0	2	1.3%	0.0%	0.6%
Dakota	5	9	14	3.3%	5.3%	4.4%
Hennepin	16	34	50	10.6%	20.0%	15.6%
Hubbard	1	0	1	0.7%	0.0%	0.3%
Isanti	1	0	1	0.7%	0.0%	0.3%
Lyon	0	1	1	0.0%	0.6%	0.3%
Mille Lacs	0	1	1	0.0%	0.6%	0.3%
Ramsey	101	105	206	66.9%	<b>61.8%</b>	64.2%
Sherburne	1	0	1	0.7%	0.0%	0.3%
Stearns	3	1	4	2.0%	0.6%	1.2%
Washington	6	2	8	4.0%	1.2%	2.5%
Out of State	5	9	14	3.3%	5.3%	4.4%
Unknown	3	1	4	2.0%	0.6%	1.2%
Total	151	170	321	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

**Carlton County Children**

Provider County	Exp.	%
Carlton	28	<b>73.7%</b>
Dakota	3	7.9%
St. Louis	6	15.8%
Out of State	1	2.6%
Total	38	100.0%

**Dakota County Children**

Provider County	Exp.	%
Anoka	1	1.4%
Beltrami	6	8.7%
Dakota	30	<b>43.5%</b>
Hennepin	5	7.2%
Morrison	3	4.3%
Ramsey	6	8.7%
Rice	2	2.9%
Scott	1	1.4%
Sherburne	2	2.9%
Stearns	1	1.4%
Washington	1	1.4%
Out of State	5	7.2%
Unknown	6	8.7%
Total	69	100.0%

**Table C-2. Assignment & Provider County of American Indian Children of Different Bands & Tribes**

Waiver (Experimental)		Assignment County				
TRIBE of child	Provider County	Carlton	Cass	Hennepin	Ramsey	Total
Unknown tribe	Anoka	0	0	0	1	1
Unknown tribe	Chisago	0	0	3	0	3
Unknown tribe	Dodge	0	0	1	0	1
Unknown tribe	Ramsey	0	0	5	0	5
Unknown tribe	St. Louis	2	0	0	0	2
Omaha Tribe of Nebraska	Stearns	0	0	1	0	1
Hannahville Indian Community	Hennepin	0	0	1	0	1
Minnesota Chippewa tribe (cannot identify specific band)	Hennepin	0	0	0	1	1
Fond du Lac Band of Chippewa Indians	Carlton	11	0	0	0	11
Fond du Lac Band of Chippewa Indians	Ramsey	0	0	0	2	2
Grand Portage Band of Chippewa Indians	Carlton	2	0	0	0	2
Grand Portage Band of Chippewa Indians	St. Louis	1	0	0	0	1
Leech Lake Band of Chippewa Indians	Beltrami	0	0	2	0	2
Leech Lake Band of Chippewa Indians	Carlton	4	0	0	0	4
Leech Lake Band of Chippewa Indians	Clay	0	0	2	0	2
Leech Lake Band of Chippewa Indians	Faribault	0	0	1	0	1
Leech Lake Band of Chippewa Indians	Hennepin	0	0	10	1	11
Leech Lake Band of Chippewa Indians	Isanti	0	1	1	0	2
Leech Lake Band of Chippewa Indians	Mille Lacs	0	0	3	0	3
Leech Lake Band of Chippewa Indians	Ramsey	0	0	1	0	1
Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians	Anoka	0	0	4	0	4
Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians	Hennepin	0	0	1	0	1
Bois Forte (Nett Lake) Band of Chippewa Indians	Beltrami	0	0	1	0	1
White Earth Band of Chippewa Indians	Anoka	0	0	0	1	1
White Earth Band of Chippewa Indians	Becker	0	0	5	0	5
White Earth Band of Chippewa Indians	Beltrami	0	0	1	0	1
White Earth Band of Chippewa Indians	Cass	0	0	3	0	3
White Earth Band of Chippewa Indians	Hennepin	0	0	1	1	2
White Earth Band of Chippewa Indians	Isanti	0	0	1	0	1
White Earth Band of Chippewa Indians	Koochiching	0	0	1	0	1
White Earth Band of Chippewa Indians	Mahnomen	0	0	2	0	2
White Earth Band of Chippewa Indians	Ramsey	0	0	0	3	3
White Earth Band of Chippewa Indians	Scott	0	0	1	0	1
White Earth Band of Chippewa Indians	Washington	0	0	0	1	1
Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians	Anoka	0	0	1	0	1
Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians	Dakota	0	0	0	1	1
Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians	Hennepin	0	0	2	0	2
Devils Lake Sioux Tribe	Anoka	0	0	1	0	1
Devils Lake Sioux Tribe	Cass	0	1	0	0	1
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe	Hennepin	0	0	3	0	3
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe	Anoka	0	0	1	0	1
Oglala Sioux Tribe - Pine Ridge	Dakota	0	0	2	0	2
Oglala Sioux Tribe - Pine Ridge	Hennepin	0	0	3	0	3
Rosebud Sioux Tribe	Dakota	0	0	3	0	3
Rosebud Sioux Tribe	Dodge	0	0	3	0	3
Rosebud Sioux Tribe	Hennepin	0	0	4	0	4
Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe	Beltrami	0	0	1	0	1
Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe	Hennepin	0	0	0	1	1
Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe	Ramsey	0	0	0	1	1
St. Croix Chippewa	Hennepin	0	0	2	0	2
Other US tribe	Hennepin	0	0	1	0	1
		20	2	79	14	115

**Table C-2, continued**

<b>Control &amp; Match</b>		<b>Assignment County</b>					
<b>TRIBE of child</b>	<b>Provider County</b>	<b>Carlton</b>	<b>Cass</b>	<b>Dakota</b>	<b>Hennepin</b>	<b>Ramsey</b>	<b>Total</b>
Unknown tribe	Becker	2	0	1	0	0	3
Unknown tribe	Cass	1	0	0	0	0	1
Unknown tribe	Mahnomen	0	0	2	0	0	2
Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska	LeSueur	0	0	0	1	0	1
Fond du Lac Band of Chippewa Indians	Ramsey	0	0	0	1	0	1
Leech Lake Band of Chippewa Indians	Beltrami	1	1	0	2	0	4
Leech Lake Band of Chippewa Indians	Dakota	0	0	0	1	0	1
Leech Lake Band of Chippewa Indians	Hennepin	0	0	0	2	0	2
Leech Lake Band of Chippewa Indians	Itasca	1	0	0	0	0	1
Leech Lake Band of Chippewa Indians	Wright	0	0	0	1	0	1
Leech Lake Band of Chippewa Indians	Unknown	0	0	0	1	0	1
Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians	Crow Wing	1	0	0	0	0	1
Mille Lacs Band of Chippewa Indians	Hennepin	0	0	0	3	0	3
Bois Forte (Nett Lake) Band of Chippewa Indians	Ramsey	0	0	0	0	1	1
Bois Forte (Nett Lake) Band of Chippewa Indians	Sherburne	0	0	0	1	0	1
White Earth Band of Chippewa Indians	Becker	4	0	0	3	0	7
White Earth Band of Chippewa Indians	Dakota	0	0	0	0	1	1
White Earth Band of Chippewa Indians	Isanti	0	0	0	1	0	1
White Earth Band of Chippewa Indians	Itasca	1	0	0	0	0	1
White Earth Band of Chippewa Indians	Washington	0	0	0	2	0	2
Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians	Beltrami	1	0	0	0	0	1
Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians	Clearwater	0	0	1	0	0	1
Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians	Hennepin	0	0	0	4	0	4
Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians	Ramsey	0	0	0	2	1	3
Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians	Washington	0	0	0	3	0	3
Devils Lake Sioux Tribe	Hennepin	0	0	0	2	0	2
Devils Lake Sioux Tribe	Olmsted	2	0	0	0	0	2
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe	Mille Lacs	0	0	0	1	0	1
Three Affiliated Tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation	Ramsey	0	0	0	1	0	1
Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians	Anoka	0	0	0	2	0	2
Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians	Hennepin	0	0	0	1	0	1
Oglala Sioux Tribe - Pine Ridge	Hennepin	0	0	0	1	0	1
Oglala Sioux Tribe - Pine Ridge	Itasca	1	0	0	0	0	1
Rosebud Sioux Tribe	Isanti	0	0	0	1	0	1
Rosebud Sioux Tribe	Lincoln	1	0	0	0	0	1
Rosebud Sioux Tribe	Ramsey	0	0	0	2	0	2
Rosebud Sioux Tribe	Wright	0	0	0	3	0	3
Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe	Ramsey	0	0	0	0	1	1
Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe	Renville	1	0	0	0	0	1
Unknown Chippewa	St. Louis	1	0	0	0	0	1
Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Chippewa	Ramsey	1	0	0	0	0	1
Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Chippewa	Out of State	0	0	0	1	0	1
Other US tribe	Hennepin	0	0	0	4	0	4
Other US tribe	Otter Tail	1	0	0	0	0	1
Other US tribe	Out of State	0	1	0	0	0	1
		20	2	4	47	4	77

