

# Engaging and integrating Parent Leadership

*Process evaluation results of the Parent  
Leadership Initiative funded by the  
Minnesota Department of Human Services  
Children's Trust Fund*

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# Summary

In an effort to integrate parent voice into Minnesota's child welfare system, the Minnesota Department of Human Services Children's Trust Fund (CTF), in cooperation with Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota (PCAMN), implemented the *Parent Leadership for Child Safety and Permanency* team in 2009. This team is comprised of up to 10 "Parent Consultants" from across Minnesota with firsthand knowledge of family support programs and/or the child welfare system. The Consultants are active members of their communities and able to effectively communicate community concerns and opinions.

Wilder Research conducted a process evaluation of this initiative, focused on the implementation of the Parent Leadership team, and assessed parent leadership skills and growth; the integration of parent leadership within DHS; and the implementation process. Information was gathered from multiple sources, including the Parent Consultants, DHS staff, PCAMN staff, and administrative records and reports. The following summarizes the key findings from this evaluation.

## *Parent leadership activities*

As part of their voluntary service, the 10 Parent Consultants selected to participate in this initiative serve at least two years on the team, attend various trainings and conferences, serve on at least one State committee or workgroup, participate in semi-annual meetings, and serve as mentors and role models for other parents. Upon joining the team, the Parent Consultants expressed confidence in and enthusiasm for their new role, excited about the opportunity to advocate for other parents and influence the child welfare system. Not all parents, however, felt knowledgeable about State systems, policies, and the five Strengthening Families Protective Factors.

To get up to speed on this information, the Parent Consultants participated in a range of trainings about the child welfare/child protection systems, the Protective Factors, and the Parent and Community Café model. Parents also joined various State committees devoted to issues such as reducing disparities in the child welfare system, involving non-custodial fathers in child protection, engaging the protective capabilities of culture, and many more, in an effort to integrate the parent voice at this level of decision-making. In addition, Parent Consultants presented at multiple events across the State, sharing information about their role as Parent Leaders and the importance of parent voice, and participated in Parent/Community Cafés across the State, promoting the Protective Factors. These activities were coordinated by members of the PCAMN staff, who provided training, technical assistance, supervision, and support to the Consultants.

## *Experiences with the initiative*

### **Parent perceptions**

Parents were generally very satisfied with the DHS/PCAMN trainings in which they participated, and with their experience on the State committees. They felt welcome and respected, and found the experiences to be meaningful. To further support their work, the Consultants identified additional topics in which they would like more training, including authoring a bill, grant writing, research skills, a focus on teaching, and administrative reviews. Overall, the Parent Consultants felt supported by PCAMN staff and appreciated the efforts of DHS to involve parent leaders. They report feeling empowered by their training and experiences as a team, and they developed an increased understanding of community issues along the way, leading to an increased level of commitment to the initiative. To enhance their efforts, the Parent Consultants suggested having more training/sharing opportunities for their team, including more parents in the initiative (especially from Greater Minnesota), and offering educational credits for some activities.

### **DHS staff perceptions**

Although limited information was available, the DHS staff who served on State committees with Parent Consultants generally seemed positive about their role on the committees and appreciated hearing the parent perspective. Some staff suggested additional training in presentation skills and more orientation for Parent Consultants to enhance their contributions to the committees. More broadly speaking, DHS Child Permanency and Safety staff are supportive of efforts to integrate parent voice into DHS decision-making, citing benefits such as fresh ideas to address child welfare issues and improved outcomes for families. However, not all staff feel they have the time, support, or resources to necessarily do so, and expressed concerns about the knowledge-level of Parent Consultants and the amount of time involved for parents.

## *Issues to consider*

Results of the process evaluation to date are promising, but only document the initial stages of development. Further study is necessary as the Parent Leadership initiative begins to mature. The following are issues to consider as the project continues:

- **Recognize the need for time to fully implement.** In order to be successful, there is a need for dedicated coordination and follow-up with DHS staff and Parent Consultants. Dedicated staff time will also allow the initiative to focus beyond implementation issues to outcomes.

- **Continue to focus on developing the Parent team.** A two-year tenure, frequent meetings, and group trainings helped to create a feeling of cohesion and purpose in the Parent Leadership team. Parent Consultants felt strongly that their experiences working together furthered their leadership skills and comfort leading discussions with community members.
- **Ensure funding for training opportunities throughout Parent Consultant's tenure.** Parent Consultants valued training opportunities provided to them in the first 6 to 12 months of the initiative, and expressed the need for and their interest in further learning as they began to work directly with community members.
- **Continue to integrate Parent Consultants into DHS workgroups and committees.** Parent Consultants felt their work is important and needed in their communities. Feedback obtained from Parent Consultants over the course of the initiative consistently emphasized the need for parent voices to be represented and incorporated in State systems. They also recognized the importance of sharing the concepts they learned in parent leadership trainings and activities – such as the Protective Factors – with other parents in their communities.
- **Sustain efforts toward changing systems.** Parent Consultants felt valued for their contributions when working with State Human Service committees, but were unclear on how these systems will respond to issues brought forth by parent voices. DHS staff also voiced concerns about having the resources and staff time to sustain these activities. Both groups had previously experienced lack of follow-through on other new initiatives. There is a need to ensure that activities are continued, policies and procedures are changed, and the changes are brought back to the parents who gave feedback.
- **Continue evaluation and document impact.** Further evaluation can provide insight into what aspects of the initiative worked well, how Parent Consultants increased their confidence as leaders, how DHS staff and work were impacted, and how communities responded to the efforts of Parent Consultants. Much of the evaluation to date focused on implementation of a new initiative. Follow-up data collection can measure changes. For instance, a Follow-up Parent Survey can measure changes in Parent Consultants' skills, and a Follow-up DHS Staff Survey can measure changes in the perceptions of parent leadership over the time of the initiative. In addition, it will be important to continue documenting evidence of the impact of shared leadership on child protection policies and procedures. Because of limited funding for external evaluation services, internal DHS staff may wish to continue the evaluation activities using the tools that have already been developed.



# Introduction

In 2008, the Minnesota Children’s Trust Fund (CTF) began making extensive efforts to integrate parent leadership into activities and decision making of the Child Safety and Permanency division, Department of Human Services (DHS). Parent leadership occurs when parents gain the knowledge and skills to function in meaningful roles and present a “parent voice” to help shape the direction of their families, programs, and communities. A parent leader may be a parent, grandparent, foster parent, or anyone else in a parenting role who speaks or acts from his or her perspective to effect change. Parent leaders can ensure that programs, policies, and institutions respond to their experiences and build capacity for effective community support and create equal opportunities for all families.

The DHS Children’s Trust Fund and Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota (PCAMN) are collaborating to support the integration of parent voice into the child welfare system by implementing the *Parent Leadership for Child Safety and Permanency* team and a *Parent Partnership Committee*.

## ***The Parent Leadership team***

In September 2009, the *Parent Leadership for Child Safety and Permanency* (“Parent Leadership”) team was established. The Parent Leadership team is comprised of up to 10 parents from across Minnesota who are selected through a competitive process. The parents (referred to as Parent Consultants) have firsthand knowledge of family support programs and/or the child welfare system. Parent Consultants are active in their communities and able to effectively communicate community concerns and opinions. Goals of the Parent Leadership team include:

- Connect other parents to policy and practice initiatives
- Develop and promote strategies for prevention and child safety public awareness
- Promote the Protective Factors that help keep parents and their families strong including: parental resiliency, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and children’s social and emotional development
- Address systemic and programmatic issues around race/ethnicity and cultural issues

The Parent Leadership team represents the parent perspective on a wide range of state committees, workgroups, and efforts. Parent Consultants receive a stipend for their time as well as support, guidance, and training related to their active participation in systems work.

## ***The Parent Partnership Committee***

The *Parent Partnership Committee* (formerly the Steering Committee) is comprised of parent leaders, community-based representatives, and child welfare stakeholders. The Parent Partnership Committee was instrumental in developing the initial vision of the Parent Leadership team as well as promoting the initiative and recruiting applicants for the team. This Committee meets periodically to provide guidance and support to the Parent Leadership team, helping them integrate the parent voice into the child welfare system's policy, program, and practice enhancements.

Wilder Research was asked to conduct an evaluation of the Parent Leadership Initiative as part of its overall efforts to evaluate Children's Trust Fund activities. Because this was a new initiative, in the initial stages of development, the evaluation of Parent Leadership activities focused on "process" or implementation with three primary goals:

- 1) Assess parent leadership skills and growth
- 2) Assess the integration of parent leadership within DHS
- 3) Document the implementation process

# Methods

Wilder Research worked closely with DHS and PCAMN staff to develop several data collection tools designed to track the activities and feedback of Parent Consultants and DHS staff involved in the initiative, including:

- **Initial Parent Leader Survey:**<sup>1</sup> completed by Parent Consultants at baseline to assess leadership skills, roles, and engagement. Ten Parent Consultants completed the survey.
- **Parent Leader Meeting/Event Self-Assessments:** completed by Parent Consultants after attending a Parent Leadership committee/task force meeting or training.
- **DHS Committee Feedback Forms:** completed by DHS staff chairing committees/task forces in which Parent Consultants participated, to gather information about the influence of Parent Consultants on committee activities (ongoing, following each meeting).
- **Initial DHS Staff Survey:**<sup>2</sup> web survey developed by Wilder Research and administered to DHS Child Safety and Permanency Division staff to assess baseline staff knowledge, perceptions, and integration of parent leadership/partnership concepts into their work. In all, 72 of 92 employees completed the web survey in February 2010.
- **Focus group with Parent Consultants:** conducted by Wilder Research with Parent Consultants to gather in-depth information about their experience on the team to date. Seven Parent Consultants participated in the focus group in January 2011.
- **Parent Leader Coordination - Monthly Parent Leader Activity Form:** completed by PCAMN staff implementing the Parent Leadership Initiative about the type and frequency of support provided to individual Parent Consultants.
- **Parent Leader Coordination - Quarterly Form:** completed by PCAMN staff implementing the Parent Leadership Initiative about the overall time invested in various coordination tasks.

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<sup>1</sup> The Initial Parent Consultant surveys were designed to gather baseline information that could be compared with a post-test survey conducted towards the end of the Parent Consultants' two-year term. Because of funding limitations, it was not possible for Wilder Research to conduct the post-tests.

<sup>2</sup> The DHS staff survey was intended to be conducted again in 2012 as a post-test to assess changes in staff views about integrating parent leadership into their work. Because of funding limitations, it was not possible for Wilder Research to conduct the follow-up survey.

Administrative records and reports produced by CTF and PCAMN were also used to understand program procedures and processes. Frequent meetings with CTF, DHS, and PCAMN staff also informed the evaluation efforts.

This report summarizes the development and implementation of activities related to parent leadership and covers the time period of July 2009 to March 2011.

# Parent leadership activities

Multiple activities were involved in the development and implementation of the Parent Leadership Initiative. Figure 1 summarizes these activities and the time frame for each activity.

## 1. Timeline of DHS/PCAMN Parent Leadership activities

Major activity	Time frame
<b>Activities that occurred prior to the Parent Leadership team</b>	
DHS Children's Trust Fund partnered with PCAMN to conduct parent leadership trainings of Child Abuse Prevention Councils and CTF Strengthening Families grantees	Beginning in August 2008
<b>Activities related to the Parent Leadership team</b>	
Recruit and hire PCAMN Parent Leadership Coordinator	April 2009
Initial meeting of the Parent Partnership Committee (formerly the Steering Committee)	June 2009
Steering Committee trained on shared leadership by Parents Anonymous	July 2009
Recruit and select parents for Parent Leadership team	August-September 2009
Kick-off meeting	October 2009
Trainings begin for Parent Consultants (members of Parent Leadership team)	October 2009
Parent Consultants begin participating in DHS committees	December 2009
Parent Consultants begin participating in Parent Cafés	December 2009
<b>Activities related to Parent/Community Cafés</b>	
Parent Café held at the Minnesota Head Start Association Policy Council Annual meeting and Circle of Parents state gathering; 22 parents wanted to be table hosts	October-December 2009
Community Café orientation	April 2010
Parent Consultants begin as table hosts for Parent Cafés	April 2010
<b>Activities related to DHS staff</b>	
Presentation to Child Safety and Permanency Division staff on CTF activities including Parent Leadership	July 2010
Presentation/discussion with Child Safety and Permanency Division managers and supervisors introducing Parent Leadership/Partnership	September 2010
Presentation/discussion with Child Safety and Permanency Division managers and supervisors regarding Parent Leadership/Partnership	March 2011

## *Developing the team*

The *Parent Leadership for Child Safety and Permanency* team was first formed in 2009. The *Parent Partnership Committee* (formally known as the Steering Committee) developed guidelines, forms, and applicant recruitment materials for the Parent Leadership team during monthly meetings held in June and July 2009. To be considered for a position on the Parent Leadership team, applicants were required to have participated in community-based family support, child welfare or child protection agency programs, either presently or in the past. Recruitment materials also outlined the expectations of those selected for the team, such as:

- Serve a minimum two-year term, and spend two to eight hours per month (on average) on parent leadership activities
- Attend trainings/conferences to receive the necessary background and knowledge to successfully interact with the State system
- Serve on at least one State committee, taskforce and/or workgroup as requested by DHS
- Participate in at least two face-to-face team meetings annually and other required team assignments
- Serve as mentors, educators, and/or role models for other parents
- Be willing to relate personal experiences to the broader issues faced by Minnesota families
- Be willing to build mutually respectful relationships with others from diverse ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic and educational backgrounds

In their applications, prospective Parent Consultants were required to submit six written responses that addressed the following topics: prior experience(s) with community-based family support programs; prior experiences with child welfare or child protection system agencies and staff; previous volunteer positions or community involvement efforts; and personal qualities they feel would contribute to the team. Two references – one from an agency/organization, the other a personal reference – were also requested.

The *Parent Partnership Committee* shared and distributed the recruitment materials to CTF grantees and Child Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC) members across the state; however, outreach to these sources did not yield any applicants. Most applicants were recruited by staff from PCAMN.

By August 31, 2009, 20 parents from across the state submitted applications for the Parent Leadership team. A subgroup within the *Parent Partnership Committee* conducted telephone interviews with each applicant. In September 2009, seven individuals were selected to join the *Parent Leadership for Child Safety and Permanency* team. Three positions were reserved to recruit for greater diversity on the team; these positions were later filled (in March 2010 and January 2011). One person has left the team since its inception in the fall of 2009 due to relocation out-of-state.

In October 2009, the official kick-off for the *Parent Leadership for Child Safety and Permanency* team was held at the Minnesota Humanities Commission. In front of a crowd of 120 people, the seven selected parents were recognized for their new roles on the Parent Leadership team.

### **Team characteristics**

As of March 2011, the *Parent Leadership for Child Safety and Permanency* team consisted of 10 Parent Consultants who are:

- Residents of Greater Minnesota (N=2) and the Metro Region (N=8)
- Males/fathers (N=2) and females/mothers (N=8)
- Racially and ethnically diverse, including persons from African American, African native, American Indian, Caucasian, and Hispanic/Latino communities

Furthermore, the Parent Consultants currently serving on the Parent Leadership team bring a broad range of personal histories, volunteer experiences, community organizing, and professional backgrounds.

### **Baseline leadership skills assessment**

Upon joining the Parent Leadership team, Parent Consultants completed an Initial Parent Leader Survey developed by Wilder Research as a self-assessment of their leadership skills and beliefs, and their familiarity with child welfare systems and child abuse prevention, including the five Protective Factors as defined by Strengthening Families.<sup>3</sup> Nearly all Parent Consultants “strongly agreed” that they possessed: confidence in their new role as a Parent Consultant, energy and enthusiasm to lead, and comfort speaking in front of and leading groups.

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<sup>3</sup> The five Protective Factors are the foundation of the Strengthening Families approach. Extensive research supports these Protective Factors as reducing the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. They are: parental resiliency, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and children’s social and emotional development.

Somewhat fewer Parent Consultants (70% - 90%) “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they had knowledge of State systems, policies, and the Protective Factors, indicating they could benefit from additional information and training on these topics (Figure 2).

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## 2. Parent Consultant baseline leadership skills self-assessment

<b>N=10</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents who “Strongly agree” or “Agree”</b>
I know about the five Protective Factors that strengthen the well-being of children and families.	70%
I know about policies and laws about child abuse and child abuse prevention.	80%
I know about how the child protection and child welfare system works.	90%
I am regularly involved in leadership activities in my community.	90%
I know how to talk with parents about their children’s development and good parenting techniques.	90%
I am able to lead efforts to make the system better for children and families.	100%

Parent Consultants were also asked why they wanted to become a member of the Parent Leadership team and what they hoped to gain from the experience. Their responses drew upon their personal interactions with the system, and their motivations ranged from wanting to serve their communities, to their desire to see and affect change in child welfare systems.

- I am looking to improve my parenting skills as well as reach out to support other parents within the community.
- I decided to become a parent leader because I wanted to become part of the solution instead of part of the problem. I feel that coming together and working throughout our communities is where the change will begin.
- I hope to learn about other people's life stories and how they are affected by governmental systems, community expectations, cultural influence, and family obligations.
- More ways to advocate and educate myself and my community. For all families to become stable and productive.
- Our family was unexpectedly thrown into the system in order to adopt [a child due to a relative’s death]. We had no idea of the policies and procedures and were disappointed many times over because the system seemed to protect the parental rights instead of [relative caregivers or child’s].



To make a difference in parents' lives that have their children/child placed out of the home. To assure that they understand what is happening, why it is happening. What needs to be done to reunite them with their child. To work with DHS [so] that the parent is informed in the best possible way.

## *Training the team*

In addition to selecting the members of the *Parent Leadership for Child Safety and Permanency* team, the *Parent Partnership Committee* – in collaboration with DHS staff – developed an orientation manual, handbook, and 2010 training schedule for the Parent Consultants and others involved in the initiative.

The main purpose of the trainings was to educate Parent Consultants about the child welfare and child protection systems, the Protective Factors, and the Parent and Community Café<sup>4</sup> curriculum and facilitation so they, in turn, could begin structured outreach to their respective communities.

Figure 3 summarizes the trainings provided to the Parent Consultants to date (October 2009 to March 2011). In some cases, training attendees also included *Parent Partnership Committee* members and select DHS staff involved in the initiative.

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<sup>4</sup> Developed by Strengthening Families Illinois as part of a parent-lead public awareness campaign, Parent Cafés are small group discussions for parents facilitated by Parent Hosts and held in early childhood centers and other friendly environments. The purpose of these discussions is to explore questions important to parents, including how to address issues challenging families and how to build strong family relationships. The Protective Factors are integrated into these discussions, raising the awareness of evidence-based research on what keeps families strong.

### 3. Parent leadership trainings

Title and Presenter	Description	Date	Attendees
"Shared leadership" by Parent Anonymous®, National Center on Shared Leadership	An overview of shared leadership and completed practice activities around communication.	October 2009	Selected DHS staff, Parent Consultants, Parent Partnership Committee
"The Parent Café Model" by Strengthening Families Illinois	Two-day retreat and overview of the parent café model and training on the curriculum, including how to organize and facilitate a café	November 2009	Parent Consultants
PCAMN/Parent Leadership Training	Topics included: Child Welfare Systems (March, April, & May 2010), Protective Factors (June 2010), Social Justice (August & September 2010)	March, April, May, June, August, September, 2010; January & April 2011	Parent Consultants
"The Public Child Welfare System" by DHS	<p>A three-part overview on policy, best practices, and procedures on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child maltreatment screening</li> <li>• Structured Decision Making tools</li> <li>• Continuum from prevention to permanency</li> <li>• Out-of-home care</li> </ul> <p>Current data and trends regarding racial/ethnic disparities and strategies underway</p>	March & May 2010	Parent Consultants
"The Community Café Model" by The National Alliance of Children's Trust & Prevention Funds	One day training on the community café model implemented by Parent Consultants from Washington State	St. Cloud: April 29, 2010 Minneapolis: April 30, 2010	Child Care Resource and Referral staff and Parent Consultants new to the team or those who had not attended the prior 2-day Café training
"Strengthening Families Approach" and "Protective Factors Framework" by DHS	State and local strategies reflecting the Strengthening Families Approach and the five Protective Factors that have an impact on child abuse and neglect prevention	June 2010	Parent Consultants
"Listening Activator Language of the Protective Factors" by Dialog One Translation Services	How to use language effectively and how to translate the Protective Factors for communication in various communities	July 2010	Parent Consultants, PCAMN and DHS staff
"The Intersect of Race and Poverty in Child Welfare" by the Organizing Apprenticeship Project	Racial Justice Training: Participants received information and conducted practice activities regarding the intersection of race, poverty and the child welfare system	August & September 2010	Parent Consultants, DHS and PCAMN staff

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### 3. Parent leadership trainings (continued)

Title and Presenter	Description	Date	Attendees
PCAMN conference 2010	A variety of prevention issues in breakouts	April 2010	4 Parent Consultants
PCAMN conference 2011	Consultants attended and served as table hosts at: Parent Leadership: Moving Protective Factors from Research to Action	March 2011	9 Parent Consultants

### *Integrating the team into the State's human services work*

As part of their role as Parent Consultants, each parent was asked to participate in at least one DHS committee or task force as requested by DHS. The PCAMN Parent Leader Coordinator interviewed each Parent Consultant to determine the best match between each parent's skills and interests and the needs of the various State committees.

In addition, a DHS Children's Trust Fund staff member was designated to facilitate Parent Consultant participation in committees and workgroups. The CTF Parent Leadership Program Specialist was responsible for encouraging DHS staff to invite members of the Parent Leadership team to meetings, help prepare the Parent Consultants for meeting participation, and follow-up with DHS staff to gather feedback about the process. The CTF Parent Leadership Program Specialist worked closely with the PCAMN Parent Leader Coordinator to plan trainings, educate Parent Consultants about logistics related to committees, gather feedback from Parent Consultants and DHS staff about the process, and plan evaluation activities.

Figure 4 shows the committees and workgroups that Parent Consultants have actively participated on.

#### 4. Parent Consultant participation in State system workgroups or committees

Name of workgroup/committee	Description	Dates of Parent Consultant participation	Number of Parent Consultants involved
<b>Workgroups through the DHS Child Safety and Permanency Division</b>			
Children Justice Act Task Force	Their purpose is to review and assess how the Minnesota Child Protection and Criminal Justice Systems handle child maltreatment cases and for the task force to make recommendations.	2 times: June & August 2010	2
Engaging the Protective Capacities of Culture (formerly the Culture as the 6 <sup>th</sup> Protective Factor Workgroup of the Strengthening Families Stakeholder Group)	The group is committed to exploring how culture can be integrated into the five Protective Factors. This multi-cultural public-private group provides guidance on the development of programs, policies, practices and products of the Children's Trust Fund.	3 times: May, June, & September 2010	6
African American Disparities Committee	Committee identifies disparities in service access and outcomes, setting goals and implementing targeted and coordinated strategies to help reduce disparities among African American families.	6 times: January, April, May 6 & 20, June 8 & 18, 2010	2
Ombudsperson Meeting	To engage community members in the work of the Ombudsperson office and its relationship to DHS and diverse families.	2 times: February & October 2010	8
Strengthening Child Welfare Supervision Initiative	This monthly workgroup is focusing on the development of the strategic plan for strengthening child welfare supervision across the state.	2 times: April & June 2010	2
Involving Non-Custodial Fathers in Child Protection Cases Follow-Up Committee	2 Parent Consultants participated in 3 committee meetings, 2 focus groups, and 2 individual interviews with fathers. Parent Consultants arranged the focus group to help ensure the fathers' perspective was integrated into the process.	5 times: July, August, September 9 & 28. & October 2010	2
Public Private Adoption Initiative Request for Proposal Selection Committee	Review of project proposal designed to assist adoption of children/youth in foster care. Parent Consultant was asked to rate proposals and discuss ratings.	1 time: November 2010	1
Parent Support Outreach Program – American Indian Initiative (PSOP-AI) Request for Proposal Selection Committee	Native American Parent Consultants invited to review grant proposals submitted by American Indian communities to access appropriate support services provided in traditional Native ways.	1 time: March 17, 2010	2

#### 4. Parent Consultant participation in State system workgroups or committees (continued)

Name of workgroup/committee	Description	Dates of Parent Consultant participation	Number of Parent Consultants involved
<b>Workgroups through the DHS divisions</b>			
Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division (ADAD) Women Services RFP Planning Meeting	Parent Consultant gave input into the RFP to provide services for women and children in recovery from alcohol or drug abuse.	1 meeting: May 2010	1
Engaging Fathers Workgroups	Respond to the Federal Program Improvement plan regarding the strategy to improve father engagement in case planning.	2 times: February & March 2010	2
Reduce Disparities Community/DHS Group	The Disparities Reduction Advisory Group and DHS seek solutions to Disparities Reduction in access and outcomes to human services for cultural and ethnic populations. This group will join with DHS in support of its efforts around Disparities Reduction: to track, monitor, and learn more about the disparities in order to help DHS arrive at successful outcomes for all communities.	3 times: October, November, & December 2010	2
Strategic Planning Committee for the Governor's Early Childhood Council  Request came from the Minnesota Department of Health-Minnesota Comprehensive Early Childhood Systems (MCECS)	The two trained Parent Leaders (one metro and one rural) actively participate in the Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council Comprehensive Planning Retreat meetings.  Parents attended the Strong Foundation conference.	1 time: January 2011	2
<b>Other workgroups</b>			
Parent Partnership Council – National Alliance of Children's Trust Funds	Parents from different states inform the Alliance of the work that is being done with Parents as Partners within their CTFs. The Alliance uses this input to develop strategies to support state trust funds in creating strategies on partnering with parents.	Monthly calls and one face to face meeting/year	1
Ramsey County Citizens Review Council	Minnesota has five county-based Citizen Review Panels (CRP). Volunteer citizen members are recruited, screened, and trained to look at their child protection system and make recommendations to improve it and keep children in their communities safe from abuse and neglect. The panel members review child protection policies, practices, procedures and resources. They bring their community standards to the child protection system.	7 times: February 3, March 2, April 6, May 5, May 20, June 18, August 4, 2010	2

## **Presentations at events**

Lastly, Parent Consultants have presented at the following one-time events:

### **Strong Foundations Conference: January 2010**

**One** Parent Consultant co-presented a workshop entitled “Parent Leadership: Moving Protective Factors from Research to Action”

- 32 participants attended

### **Annual Citizen Review Panel for Child Protection Services Training and Recognition Event: April 2010**

**Two** Parent Consultants spoke about their role on the Parent Leadership team, the concept of shared leadership, and the importance of involving fathers in child protection cases

- 27 participants attended

### **Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota Prevention Conference: April 2010**

**Four** Parent Consultants presented a workshop entitled “Parent Café”

- 28 participants attended

### **Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota Prevention Conference: March 2011**

**One** Parent Consultant co-presented a workshop entitled “Parent Leadership: Moving Protective Factors from Research to Action”;  
**Four** Parent Consultants served as table hosts in the workshop

- 50 participants attended

### **Hennepin County Citizen Review Panel presentation: May 11, 2011**

**Three** Parent Consultants gave their perspective on child welfare services and how their own experiences could be used to improve the system for other families

- 20 participants attended

Several Parent Consultants participated in opportunities to further their involvement in the Parent Leadership initiative on a wider scale. For example, Parent Consultants have been requested by organizations within and outside the state to share their involvement; and two Parent Consultants traveled to Washington, D.C. with PCAMN staff to provide technical assistance to three states working on the National Quality Improvement Center on Differential Response in Child Protection (May 2011). Parent Consultants have been requested to testify at a legislative briefing on Minnesota Child Welfare in the area of Minnesota's Family Assessment process and supports that strengthen families. Lastly, Casey Family Programs will work with two Parent Consultants to become co-facilitators in Strategic Sharing training in June 2011.

### ***Integrating the team into Parent/Community Café work***

The initiative to begin integrating parent voice throughout Minnesota's human service systems extended to activities beyond the Parent Leadership team. This includes the Parent and Community Cafés facilitated by PCAMN throughout the state. The Parent and Community Cafés were hosted by community organizations and involved Parent Consultants from the Parent Leadership team as well as other parent leaders. The main goal of this work was to integrate parent voice and promote the Protective Factors. Participants included informal (family, friends, and neighbors) and formal child care providers, parents, as well as staff at organizations that serve families. Cafés were conducted in the Metro and Greater Minnesota, as well as in Ethiopian, Latino, and Somali communities.

Twenty parent leaders and five family friend and neighbor outreach workers have been trained to deliver cafés in Minnesota. Of these, eight are Parent Consultant members of the Parent Leadership Team.

#### **Parent or Community Cafés in which Parent Consultants were involved**

- Parent Café with Minnesota Head Start Association parent leaders and Head Start staff: Head Start Parent Training Conference, Brainerd (October 2009) and Head Start Training, St. Cloud (December 2009)  
2 Parent Consultants hosted 27 participants
- Parent Café with parent leaders, DHS staff, and other human service professionals: McKnight Foundation Strengthening Families Minnesota, Minneapolis (December 2009)  
3 Parent Consultants hosted 32 participants

- Parent Café with parent leaders and human service professionals: National Coalition of Title I Parents Conference, Bloomington (March 2010)  
3 Parent Consultants hosted 28 participants
- Parent Café with Spanish-speaking families in Benton, Sherburne, Stearns, and Wright Counties: STARS (System Transformation of Area Resources and Services) for Children’s Mental Health: Cold Spring (April and October 2010)  
2 Spanish-speaking Parent Consultants trained 56 participants in two different cafés
- Brainerd Parent Cafés: partners, Brainerd Early Childhood Family Education and School District, Child Care Resource and Referral, Head Start and other Crow Wing County agencies in Brainerd  
Brainerd community agency partner café (June 2010); 1 Parent Consultant trained 19 participants  
Brainerd School District staff development (August 2010); 2 Parent Consultants trained 120 participants  
Child Care Providers (August 2010); 2 Parent Consultants trained 35 participants  
Brainerd Café 1 (October 2010); 2 Parent Consultants trained 25 participants  
Brainerd Café 2 (November 2010); 2 Parent Consultants trained 15 participants  
Brainerd Café 3 (December 2010); 2 Parent Consultants trained 8 parents

**Other Parent or Community Cafés**

- Community Café Orientation to family, friend, and neighbor child care providers: presented by the National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds (April 29 & 30, 2010).  
National Alliance of Children’s Trust staff trained; 30 participants in Saint Cloud and 20 participants in Minneapolis
- Parent Café with parents leaders: Minnesota Association of Children’s Mental Health Parent Catalyst Statewide Team, Eden Prairie (April 2010)  
PCAMN staff trained; 27 parent leader participants



## ***Overall coordination and support activities***

Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota coordinates training, technical assistance, supervision, and support for Parent Consultants (under contract from DHS). The main providers of this training and support are the Parent Leadership Coordinator and the Director of Civic Parent Leadership. PCAMN's Parent Leadership Coordinator acts as the liaison between the Children's Trust Fund, Parent Consultants, and PCAMN.

In order to understand implementation and to assist with possible replication efforts, PCAMN staff tracked time spent on coordination activities related to the Parent Leadership work. This includes:

- Direct work with parent leaders including phone or email support, webinar or in-person training and other in-person contact.
- Work with DHS and counties, including contact with the Minnesota Department of Human Services workgroup facilitators, promotion of Parent Leadership with County or State staff and direct participation in workgroups. The Parent Leader Coordinator spent most of her time on these activities during the first quarter of the project.
- Training the community, which consists of both planning and facilitating Parent Cafés, Community Cafés, and other types of training for Parent Consultants.
- Other activities including travel, self-training, general administrative tasks and other planned activities. Most of this time was spent in the last two quarters of the project.

Figure 5 summarizes the average amount of time spent on these coordination activities during the first full year of the initiative (2010).

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### **5. Estimated time spent on overall program coordination by quarter**

	<b>January – March 2010</b>	<b>April – June 2010</b>	<b>July – September 2010</b>	<b>October – December 2010</b>
Coordination with parent leaders	16 hours	16 hours	16 hours	16 hours
Work with DHS and counties	16 hours	9 hours	9 hours	9 hours
Training in the community	16 hours	16 hours	16 hours	16 hours
Other activities	16 hours	28 hours	28 hours	22 hours

## Coordination with Parent Consultants

As part of the process evaluation, the PCAMN Parent Leader Coordinator was asked to track the amount of time spent working directly with Parent Consultants including phone calls and email messages; the type of support provided; the Parent Consultants' participation in committee workgroups, trainings and Parent Cafes; and the level of engagement by the Parent Consultant each month.

Monthly Parent Leader Activity Forms for 7 of the 11 Parent Consultants were received by Wilder Research. Most records covered activities from October 2010 through September 2011; however, many of the forms for some activities may have been missing.

According to these data, the Parent Leader Coordinator had an estimated 220 direct communications with the seven Parent Consultants over the one-year time period (on average, 3-4 contacts per month) totaling 105 hours. Forty-eight committee/task force meetings and 37 trainings/café's between the seven Parent Consultants were recorded. This is very likely to be an undercount of both the time spent with Parent Consultants by PCAMN staff and the number of activities completed by Parent Consultants over a one-year period as not all coordination time was submitted.

In addition to tracking the type and amount of coordination invested in the initiative, project staff tracked the funds spent through the initiative. The Parent Leader Coordinator and PCAMN staff were also responsible for managing reimbursements and stipend payments to Parent Consultants for their time, travel, and child care expenses. From October 2009 to March 2011, a total of \$41,459 was paid to Parent Consultants according to administrative records provided by PCAMN (Figure 6).

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### 6. Stipends paid to Parent Consultants

	2009*	2010	2011**	Total
Stipends	\$3,716	\$16,045	\$6,000	\$25,761
Travel (includes mileage and lodging)	\$3,778	\$5,094	\$1,041	\$9,913
Child Care	\$1,600	\$3,425	\$760	\$5,785
Total	\$9,094	\$24,564	\$7,801	\$41,459

\* Parent Leadership activities began in October 2009.

\*\* Includes January – March 2011 only.

In addition to monetary support, PCAMN staff provides technical assistance to the Parent Consultants; they have access to photo copiers, computers, and graphic design services.

However, human capital may be the greatest contribution; during the focus group, Parent Consultants said they feel very supported and included by the PCAMN staff in coordinating the project. Several mentioned the outreach and recruitment by specific PCAMN staff as a main reason they first became involved.

# Parent Consultant experiences with the initiative

## *Feedback about training provided to Parent Consultants*

During the focus group conducted by Wilder Research (January 2011), Parent Consultants (N=7) expressed their appreciation for the intensive training/sharing opportunities they had on a frequent basis at the beginning of the project. Because of funding limitations, these opportunities became less frequent as the project continued; however, parents highly value and prefer frequent sharing/learning opportunities.

Throughout the Parent Leadership Initiative, Parent Consultants were asked to provide feedback on meetings they attended related to their work on State committees and task forces using the Parent Consultant Meeting/Event Self-Assessment form developed by Wilder Research. Although this form was not intended to evaluate parent leadership *trainings* specifically, several Parent Consultants completed self-assessment forms on the **Racial Justice training** (N=6), a **Parent Café training “Culture as the 6<sup>th</sup> Protective Factor”** (N=4) and a full day **Parent Leadership training** led by PCAMN (N=6).

**Racial Justice training:** Parent Consultants’ feedback about the Racial Justice training was positive:

- 100% of Parent Consultants (N=6) felt welcomed and respected by the group, and most (93%) found the training experiences meaningful.
- All of the Parent Consultants (100%) felt they were able to share their honest thoughts and feelings during the session, and perceived their participation as valuable.
- They appreciated the data-driven approach of the presenter, and the discussion of framing issues.

Six Parent Consultants completed a short satisfaction questionnaire used more broadly in CTF initiatives at the Racial Justice training (“The Intersect of Race and Poverty in Child Welfare”). Parent Consultant comments on the training:

My experience here was enlightening and eye-opening.

The opportunity to move the conversation of race forward is vital to addressing social issues of our state’s child protection system.

Every child of any race/ethnicity needs strong parents behind them. We are united for them.

**Parent Café training (Culture as a 6<sup>th</sup> Protective Factor):** Participating Parent Consultants (N=4) said they learned more about the Parent Café model and appreciated the dialogue it generated for everyone at the table.

**Parent Leadership team meeting (January 2011) led by PCAMN:** Parent Consultants described the training as inspiring and reaffirming to connect with their colleagues and discuss their recent parent leadership activities and personal stories with the group.

### *Feedback about Parent Consultants’ experience with State committees and workgroups*

Parent Consultants were instructed to complete a self-assessment form after attending a State committee or task force meeting so evaluators and program staff could gain a better understanding of how they participated in and contributed to the conversation, and note observations or insights into DHS systems improvement.

Five Parent Consultants submitted a total of 12 feedback forms about their participation in various committee/task force meetings over the course of the initiative.

Overall, these Parent Consultants did not report experiencing any barriers to attending the meetings. Once there, nearly all Consultants felt prepared, welcomed and respected, and that the experience was meaningful (Figure 7). However, given the small number of forms received, these findings may not be representative of the experiences of all Parent Consultants and should be interpreted with caution.

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#### **7. Parent Consultant feedback on state committees/workgroups**

<b>N=12</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents saying “yes”</b>
Do you feel prepared to share your insights or solutions with other team members?	100%
Was this a meaningful experience?	100%
Did you receive adequate information in order to prepare for the meeting or event ahead of time?	92%
Did you feel welcomed and respected by the group?	92%

Participants offered the following comments about their experiences on the State committees and workgroups:

I was treated equal to the professionals in the room.

They asked my opinion – they incorporated my input directly after asking for it. It is not often people ask me my opinion and actually take the time to listen to it.

I brought a new voice from another cultural perspective.

Everyone respects others right to speak, raising hands instead of interjecting.

The Protective Factors were at the forefront of our meeting.

Being able to present information regarding PCAMN and [Parent] Cafés was empowering.

One participant who felt only “somewhat” welcomed by the committee noted:

It wasn't mentioned by [committee] that our presence was appreciated.

When asked how PCAMN can support sharing insights with other team members, one Parent Consultant commented on the support received through the initiative:

Continue to support the parent the way you have, i.e., child care, transportation assistance, mileage reimbursement and stipends. These support services are vital to our contributions as Parent Consultants.

Parent Consultants were asked on every self-assessment form to specify new skills they wanted to develop, generally coinciding with their work on committee/task force groups. They specified the following:

- Authoring a bill
- Grant writing
- More research skills
- Focus on teaching
- Administrative reviews

## ***Feedback from focus group with Parent Consultants***

Wilder Research staff conducted a one-hour focus group with seven experienced Parent Consultants at the end of a full-day training at the PCAMN offices on January 29, 2011. Two new parent leaders attended the full-day training, but they were not asked to participate in the focus group because the training was their first day involved with the initiative. Six of the participants were female; one was male. Two participants resided in Greater Minnesota, and five were from the Twin Cities metro area. Participants represented diverse backgrounds including African immigrant communities.

Parent Consultants were asked about their experience in the initiative so far; their perceptions of how their work and feedback was being incorporated into their State committees, workgroups, and DHS more generally; how supported they felt by the program staff; and whether or not they had experienced any challenges in participating in the program.

The Parent Consultants offered the following:

- Parent Consultants are aware that the initiative is in its initial stages and that growth and learning is continuing to occur both within their team and within DHS.
- Parent Consultants feel very supported and included by the PCAMN staff coordinating the project. Several mentioned the outreach and recruitment by specific PCAMN staff as a main reason they first became involved.
- Parent Consultants appreciate the efforts of DHS around involving and integrating parent leaders.
- Parent Consultants feel that some DHS staff are limited in the ways in which they can incorporate parent feedback. Parent Consultants felt this may be due to their role as state agency staff and the limitations of “the system.” Parent Consultants also mentioned that it might be helpful if DHS staff were more involved in the parent leadership “team” training and team building activities.
- Parent Consultants feel empowered by their training and experiences as a team. They have grown to trust and learn from one another. They feel that their development as a team has led to increased understanding of community issues, improved leadership skills, and an increased level of commitment to the initiative. Several expressed the notion that once they felt fully integrated as a team, the financial incentives provided by the project became less important. They feel a commitment to stay involved with parent leadership activities because of their experiences with and the support of the team.

## **Suggestions**

- Parent Consultants express a desire to include more parents in the initiative. This includes parents from other areas of Greater Minnesota.
- Parent Consultants suggest that the project find ways of offering parent leaders educational credits for their participation in training and related activities. They feel that they are gaining knowledge in areas such as child development and social work. Parent Consultants are interested in receiving college credit for their work.
- Parent Consultants are interested in keeping abreast of the evaluation results related to the initiative as time goes on.



# DHS staff experiences with the initiative

Children's Trust Fund, Child Safety and Permanency Division of DHS works collaboratively with PCAMN to provide technical assistance and develop training for Parent Consultants; coordinates evaluation of parent leadership strategies and the *Parent Leadership for Child Safety and Permanency* initiative; and provides access to DHS staff and necessary data and materials that promote and support parent leadership throughout the division.

The main contacts are the CTF Parent Leadership Program Specialist and CTF supervisor.

As mentioned previously, DHS staff were also involved in the Parent Partnership Committee (formerly known as the Steering Committee). This committee was comprised of DHS supervisors and staff, parent leaders, and staff from PCAMN. They provided leadership and support and acted as champions for parent leadership. They currently work in partnership with the Parent Leadership team to make recommendations to Child Safety and Permanency Administration on decision points and move "lessons learned" and principles of parent partnership and shared leadership to a broader community.

## ***Feedback from DHS staff on Parent Consultant role on committees and workgroups***

As part of the Parent Leadership Initiative, CTF and PCAMN staff worked with other DHS staff to involve Parent Consultants in various committees or workgroups. In cases where Parent Consultants participated in committees or workgroups, DHS staff who facilitated the meetings were asked to complete a Committee Feedback Form. Five DHS staff who facilitated seven committees completed the forms.

Feedback was positive, but limited to the experience of the five staff and the work of seven committees. DHS staff stated that the Parent Consultants were prepared for the meetings. In six of the seven committees, the Parent Consultants attended every meeting.

Some highlights reported by DHS staff who completed the forms include:

- Parent Consultants were instrumental in providing the parent perspectives of non-custodial parents.
- Parent Consultants assisted with recruiting other parents (specifically fathers) for the committee to gather feedback from and also provided other fathers for the committee members to interview about child protection policies/procedures.

- Parent Consultants were enthusiastic about including other parent voices.
- Parent Consultants educated participating county workers and DHS committee members about the importance of shared leadership.
- Parent Consultants gave a helpful perspective in the review of grant proposals. It was also helpful to know that the grant review process was understandable to a person not involved in government work.
- At times, Parent Consultants shared personal stories; these gave a helpful perspective of a child welfare issue. One example was the need for a licensing waiver for foster care.
- Parent Consultants promoted the need for transparency of process between the county child welfare system and community members.
- Parent Consultants increased participating county worker awareness of the need to involve parents, especially fathers, in child protection case plans, hearings, meetings and dispositions.

Suggestions included:

- For Parent Consultants who do public speaking or presentations: training in professional presentation skills such as organizing a presentation; making sure all presenters are on the same page and presenting as a team; having handouts; having stories or anecdotes to illustrate points; and presenting so all can hear and be involved, interested, and invested.
- For Parent Consultants who participate in Citizen Review Panel related committees/ activities: attending the 3-hour annual Citizen Review Panel Orientation by the Minnesota Department of Human Services. It familiarizes panel members with the purpose, operating procedures, history, and tasks of Minnesota's Citizen Review Panels.

### ***Baseline staff perceptions of Parent Leadership***

In February 2010, DHS staff worked with Wilder Research to conduct a baseline web survey of DHS Child Safety and Permanency Division staff regarding their perceptions of integrating parent leadership into the work of the division. A full copy of the report *Initial views: Partnering with parents for child safety and permanency*, November 2010, detailing the results of the baseline survey, is available from the Children's Trust Fund or Wilder Research.

Seventy-two of 92 employees (78%) from the Child Safety and Permanency Division completed the survey. Most respondents (8 in 10) were not in supervisory roles. Three-quarters (77%) had worked for the Child Safety and Permanency Division for three years or more. Half of the respondents (50%) stated they do not have contact with parents/ caregivers or children for any part of their job.

### **Baseline views about integrating parent voice**

- Almost all (94%) of the survey participants believed integrating parent voice into DHS decisions is important.
- 38 percent of all respondents stated they had a conversation with their supervisor or manager about integrating Parent Consultants or shared parent partnership into their work. Responses varied greatly by staff role, in that 92 percent of managerial staff responded “yes” compared to 25 percent of program staff and administrative support.
- When asked if they would have the time to integrate parents into their work, 60 percent of all respondents answered “yes, definitely true” or “yes, somewhat true.”
- 56 percent of respondents believed they would have supervision or support from management to integrate parent leadership in their work.
- Just over half (54%) of respondents believed promoting parent engagement is part of their job.
- Although there is a genuine interest in involving parents, only 40 percent of survey participants believed they would have the resources or training to integrate Parent Consultants into their work (Figure 8).

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### **8. DHS staff views about the availability of resources and training to integrate Parent Consultants into their work**

**Do you feel you have the resources and training to integrate parent leaders or shared parent leadership into your work?**

<b>Current role at DHS</b>	<b>Yes, definitely true</b>	<b>Yes, somewhat true</b>	<b>No, not true</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Manager/Director, Supervisor (N=13)	31%	46%	23%	0%
Program Staff, Administrative Support, Other staff (N=59)	7%	25%	44%	24%
All respondents (N=72)	11%	29%	40%	19%

## **Benefits to including Parent Consultants in DHS work**

When asked to state, in their own words, the benefits of including Parent Consultants in their work, many respondents believed that parent contributions would be valuable and parent efforts would be visible and meaningful. Response themes included:

- **Inform practice to have a greater impact on children and their families.** Thirteen survey participants indicated that including parents in their work at DHS could ultimately provide better outcomes for children and families.
- **Shared learning.** Eight respondents stated that parents would bring new ideas to the table, and expand the way DHS thinks about different issues.
- **Reflect the needs of the communities DHS serves.** Seven respondents mentioned that taking parent input into account would help DHS get a better idea of what is occurring within communities, and the concerns of the families they serve.

## **Barriers or potential drawbacks to including parent leaders in DHS work**

In addition to benefits, respondents were asked to identify potential drawbacks to involving Parent Consultants in DHS activities. When responses were grouped, themes included:

- **Lack of time and other resources to train parent leaders.** Twelve survey participants indicated they would not have the time to adequately train Parent Consultants on DHS policies and processes.
- **Need for increased knowledge of DHS policies and processes.** Nine respondents indicated that some Parent Consultants would not have sufficient knowledge of the policies and processes involved in child welfare.
- **Perceptions that parents would be over-burdened by participating.** Four respondents felt it was a burden on parents who would have to take time off work to participate, or who would not have adequate transportation or child care to attend meetings. Respondents also mentioned a need to reimburse parents for their time.
- **Parents may have an agenda for their involvement.** Two respondents expressed concern that some Parent Consultants would approach their involvement with DHS with a personal agenda.
- **Parent leader involvement will not be used in a meaningful way.** Two survey participants feared that parental contributions would not be taken seriously, or would not be used to influence significant changes.

## **Next steps**

The results of the Child Safety and Permanency Division staff survey give helpful feedback about staff perceptions of integrating parent leadership. There are some indications that division staff may not be fully aware of parent leadership activities currently underway. There may need to be an emphasis on communication with Division staff. Some potential next steps include:

- Continuing formal and informal discussions around the issue of parent leadership across the Child Safety and Permanency Division
- Promoting parent leadership as a best practice throughout the division's work
- Integrating shared leadership into staff training
- Promoting parent leadership on the DHS intranet and public website
- Expanding the assessment and alignment of parent leadership across Children and Family Services Administration

# Issues to consider

Since the launch of the *Parent Leadership for Child Safety and Permanency* (“Parent Leadership”) team in October 2009, many activities have been successfully implemented to engage, train, and integrate Parent Consultants into the work of the Department of Human Services. DHS and PCAMN staff have been actively involved in efforts with Parent Consultants and DHS committee members to develop procedures to integrate parent voice into workgroup activities. Results of the process evaluation to date are promising, but only document the initial stages of development. Further study is necessary as the Parent Leadership initiative begins to mature.

Ten DHS committees worked directly with Parent Consultants over the course of the initiative, increasing awareness of parent leadership. Parent Consultants contributed to committees by sharing stories of families (including their own) describing their experience in State systems, presenting on shared leadership and other trainings, and providing feedback on proposals, policies and procedures. DHS staff valued the perspective of those outside the government system.

The following are issues to consider as the project continues:

- **Recognize the need for time to fully implement.** In order to be successful, there is a need for dedicated coordination and follow-up with DHS staff and Parent Consultants. This coordination and follow-up are necessary for all stakeholders to feel that the initiative is a success. Dedicated staff time will also allow the initiative to focus beyond implementation issues to outcomes.
- **Continue to focus on developing the Parent team.** A two-year tenure, frequent meetings, and group trainings helped to create a feeling of cohesion and purpose in the Parent Leadership team. Parent Consultants felt strongly that their experiences working together furthered their leadership skills and comfort leading discussions with community members.
- **Ensure funding for training opportunities throughout Parent Consultant’s tenure.** Parent Consultants valued training opportunities provided to them in the first 6 to 12 months of the initiative, and expressed the need for and their interest in further learning as they began to work directly with community members.
- **Continue to integrate Parent Consultants into DHS workgroups and committees.** Parent Consultants felt their work is important and needed in their communities. Feedback obtained from Parent Consultants over the course of the initiative consistently emphasized the need for parent voices to be represented and incorporated

in State systems. They also recognized the importance of sharing the concepts they learned in parent leadership trainings and activities – such as the Protective Factors – with other parents in their communities.

- **Sustain efforts toward changing systems.** Parent Consultants felt valued for their contributions when working with State Human Service committees, but were unclear on how these systems will respond to issues brought forth by parent voices. DHS staff also voiced concerns about having the resources and staff time to sustain these activities. Both groups had previously experienced lack of follow-through on other new initiatives. There is a need to ensure that activities are continued, policies and procedures are changed, and the changes are brought back to the parents who gave feedback.
- **Continue evaluation and document impact.** Further evaluation can provide insight into what aspects of the initiative worked well, how Parent Consultants increased their confidence as leaders, how DHS staff and work were impacted, and how communities responded to the efforts of Parent Consultants. Much of the evaluation to date focused on implementation of a new initiative. Follow-up data collection can measure changes. For instance, a Follow-up Parent Survey can measure changes in Parent Consultants' skills, and a Follow-up DHS Staff Survey can measure changes in the perceptions of parent leadership over the time of the initiative. In addition, it will be important to continue documenting evidence of the impact of shared leadership on child protection policies and procedures. Because of limited funding for external evaluation services, internal DHS staff may wish to continue the evaluation activities using the tools that have already been developed.

# Appendix

*DHS staff survey*

*Parent Leadership Initiative logic model*





## ***Initial DHS Staff Survey***

*Email invite:*

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From: Wilder Research <mich@wilder.org>  
Subject: Parent Leadership – DHS Child Safety and Permanency Division staff Survey

We are asking DHS Child Safety and Permanency Division staff to complete a brief survey to help us understand current staff practices, perceptions, and attitudes regarding parent leadership.

DHS has recently launched a statewide parent leader team to advance parent engagement and involvement in strengthening families and preventing child abuse and neglect. The 10-member team will work with DHS and Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota to plan, implement, and evaluate policies and programs to improve family support and child welfare services. Wilder Research has begun the process of evaluating the team's effectiveness.

We need your help! There are no right or wrong answers, and your participation is completely voluntary. The survey takes about 5 minutes to complete.

Answers will be collected and reported by Wilder Research. All information will be kept completely confidential by Wilder, and no reports will be made that allow an individual respondent to be identified. A summary of the results will be provided to staff. Your answers may help determine future parent leadership activities. Please contact Michelle Gerrard at Wilder Research if you have any questions about the survey or the results. Michelle can be reached at mich@wilder.org or (651) 280-2695.

Please respond by March 1<sup>st</sup>.

Thanks for your help!  
Erin Sullivan Sutton  
[Erin.Sullivan-Sutton@state.mn.us](mailto:Erin.Sullivan-Sutton@state.mn.us)

[INSERT: Standard email footer with instructions/opt-out/WR name and address.]

*Survey:*

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Children's Trust Fund Parent Leadership Project  
DHS Child Safety and Permanency Division Staff Survey

**Section 1**

1. What is your current role at DHS?

<sup>1</sup> Manager/Director

<sup>2</sup> Supervisor

<sup>3</sup> Program Staff

<sup>4</sup> Administrative Support

<sup>5</sup> Other (please list) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you have contact with parents/caregivers or children for any part of your job?

<sup>1</sup> Yes

<sup>2</sup> No

**Section 2**

For each of the statements below, please indicate the response that most closely matches your opinion.

3. It is hard to find parents willing to commit to the process of policy work.

<sup>1</sup> Strongly agree

<sup>2</sup> Agree

<sup>3</sup> Disagree

<sup>4</sup> Strongly disagree

4. Integrating parent voice into DHS decisions is important.

<sup>1</sup> Strongly agree

<sup>2</sup> Agree

<sup>3</sup> Disagree

<sup>4</sup> Strongly disagree

5. DHS engages parents in the community to help advance, at the local level, family-centered, strengths based practices.

<sup>1</sup> Strongly agree

<sup>2</sup> Agree

<sup>3</sup> Disagree

<sup>4</sup> Strongly disagree

6. I know how to make parent/community members feel comfortable and included in meetings.

<sup>1</sup> Strongly agree

<sup>2</sup> Agree

<sup>3</sup> Disagree

<sup>4</sup> Strongly disagree

7. I understand what shared leadership with parent leaders means to my work.

<sup>1</sup> Strongly agree

<sup>2</sup> Agree

<sup>3</sup> Disagree

<sup>4</sup> Strongly disagree

8. Promoting parent engagement is a part of my job.

<sup>1</sup> Strongly agree

<sup>2</sup> Agree

<sup>3</sup> Disagree

<sup>4</sup> Strongly disagree

9. I know about the five Protective Factors that strengthen the well-being of children, families, and communities.

<sup>1</sup> Strongly agree

<sup>2</sup> Agree

<sup>3</sup> Disagree

<sup>4</sup> Strongly disagree

10. Have you had a conversation with your supervisor or manager about integrating parent leaders or shared parent leadership into your work?  
<sup>1</sup> Yes      <sup>2</sup> No      <sup>8</sup> Don't know
11. Do you feel you have the time to integrate parent leaders or shared parent leadership into your work?  
<sup>1</sup> Yes, definitely true    <sup>2</sup> Yes, somewhat true      <sup>3</sup> No, not true  
<sup>8</sup> Don't know
12. Do you feel you have the supervision/support from management to integrate parent leaders or shared parent leadership into your work?  
<sup>1</sup> Yes, definitely true    <sup>2</sup> Yes, somewhat true      <sup>3</sup> No, not true  
<sup>8</sup> Don't know
13. Do you feel you have the resources and training to integrate parent leaders or shared parent leadership into your work?  
<sup>1</sup> Yes, definitely true    <sup>2</sup> Yes, somewhat true      <sup>3</sup> No, not true  
<sup>8</sup> Don't know
14. What activities in your work could have potential for parent leader involvement?  
 (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)
- <sup>1</sup> Proposal review (RFPs)
  - <sup>2</sup> Creation/review of written materials
  - <sup>3</sup> Creation/review of curricula
  - <sup>4</sup> Review of policies or procedures
  - <sup>5</sup> Participation/input at Work Groups
  - <sup>6</sup> Help with trainings
  - <sup>7</sup> Involvement in development of 5 Year Plan and/or CFSR Program Improvement Plan
  - <sup>8</sup> CFSR Reviewer
  - <sup>9</sup> Other ideas? \_\_\_\_\_
15. Have you had a conversation with your supervisor or manager about integrating Protective Factors into your work?  
<sup>1</sup> Yes      <sup>2</sup> No      <sup>8</sup> Don't know
16. How much have you integrated the Protective Factors into your work?  
<sup>1</sup> Fully Integrated    <sup>2</sup> A lot    <sup>3</sup> A little    <sup>4</sup> Not at all    <sup>8</sup> Don't know

### Section 3

17. What are your perceptions of the benefits of including parent leaders in your work?

18. What are your perceptions of the barriers or potential drawbacks to including parent leaders in your work?

19. Finally, to help us group responses, please tell us how long you have worked for the Child Safety and Permanency Division?

<sup>1</sup> Less than one year

<sup>2</sup> At least one year but less than three years

<sup>3</sup> At least three years but less than five years

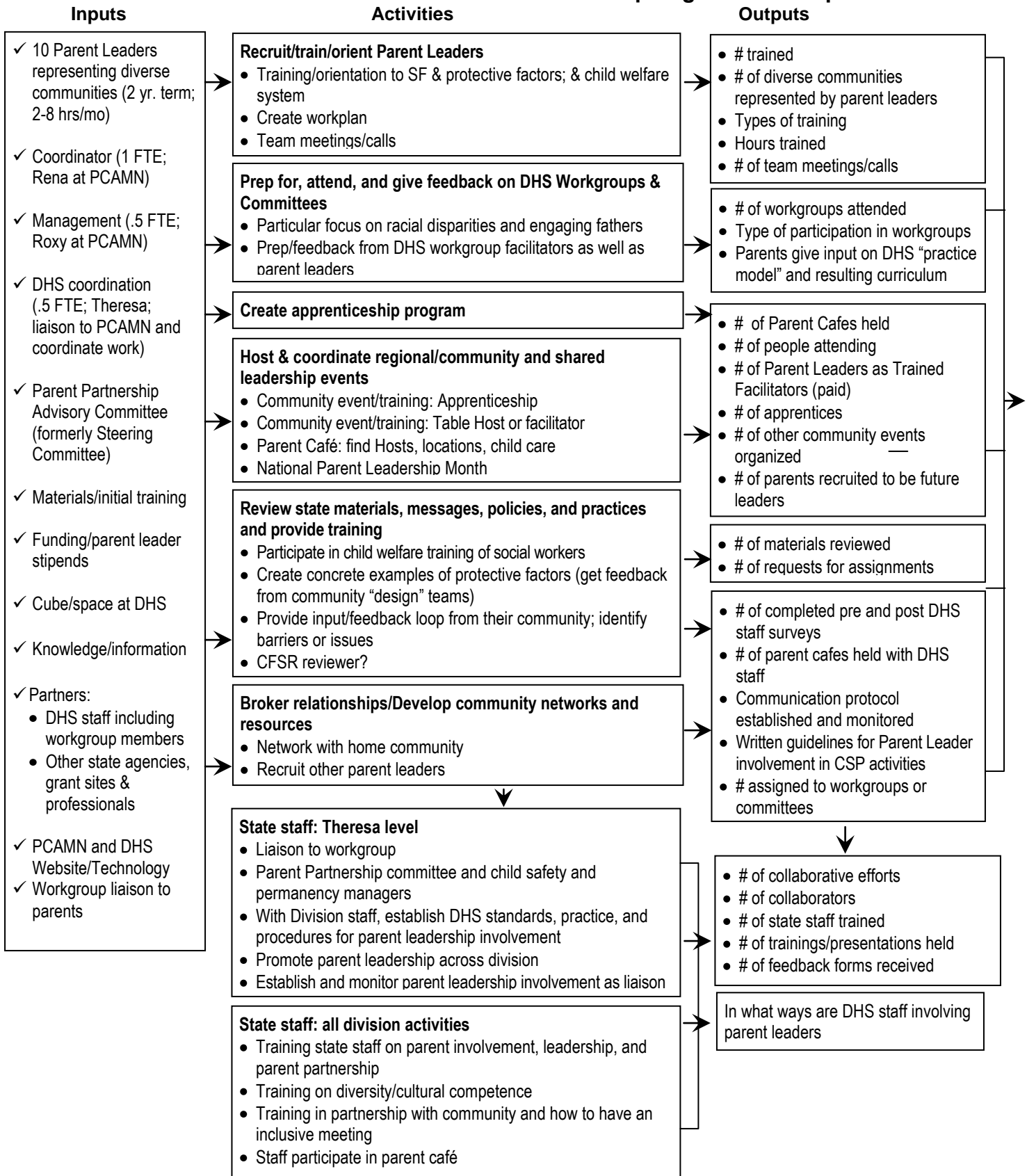
<sup>4</sup> Five years or more

*Thank you very much for your help.*

[INSERT: Standard final page of web survey with comments box.]

*Parent Leadership Initiative logic model*

# Minnesota Children's Trust Fund: Parent Leadership Logic Model – April 2010



## Short-term outcomes

### For Parent Leaders

- Increased knowledge of:
  - A) How DHS, state and local government works;
  - B) Protective factors
- Parents feel valued for their contributions
- Increase connections with community and constituencies
- Parent leaders understand that work is guided by the model
- Realistic about how change happens

### For DHS

- Impact on management and committee dynamics
- Increased knowledge and skills of various cultural communities around preventions
- Policies informed by parent feedback
- Parents as trainers in the MN Child Welfare Training System
- Increased value of parent voice at the administrative level
- Increased knowledge of the principals of shared leadership and how to promote parent leadership
- Increased knowledge of why shared leadership can cause change
- DHS staff promote parent leadership
- Parent partnership informs the “practice model.”
- Knowledge about SF framework and PF’s; How to frame prevention
- Knowledge of shared leadership principles

### For PCAMN

- 10 certified Parent/Community Café facilitators
- 10 Parent/Community Café trainings delivered in 4 regions of the state
- 4 partnerships created with CTF grantees and Child Abuse Prevention Councils to implement Parent Cafes
- Increased awareness of Circle of Parents statewide
- 10 parent leaders prepared and partnering with DHS

## Intermediate outcomes

### For Parent Leaders

- Increased core competencies including
  - A) Knowledge of racial disparities and other disparities in the child welfare system and what is being done to address them
  - B) Improved communication skills including: public speaking skills and willingness to speak out
  - C) Increased level of confidence and comfort as leader
  - D) Increased cohesiveness & engagement as team
  - E) Increased sense of purpose as parent leader
  - F) Increased leadership in community
  - G) Increased knowledge about using data & research to advocate
  - H) Feel that they are having an impact on their own lives and in their communities

### For DHS

- Increased partnerships among parents. Community, and DHS
- Parents are valued for their contributions
- More effective (parent informed) communications tools and trainings
- DHS staff have increased skills in working with parent leaders?

### For Communities

- Increased engagement as a feedback loop for child abused prevention policies and practices
- Increased participation by local parent leaders

## Long-term outcomes

### 3 Overarching goals of CTF

Sustained and effective strengthening families approach for prevention of child abuse/neglect with resources coordinated across the state

Parents and communities are well-informed & have self-determination of strengthening families to prevent Child abuse/neglect

Parent Leaders

integrated in state decision making process (expansion/ spread/ and regular part of budgeting)

Shared leadership integrated in CSP activities

Reduction of disparities

Parent partnerships are infused in DHS work

Policy and practice adapted or changed to reduce the incidents of child abuse and neglect throughout