



Michigan Child Welfare Improvement Task Force

Improving the safe, fair, and equitable treatment of all Michigan's children and families.



Welcome!

2023 Membership and Structure

Taskforce Members

Judge Gregory Pittman (Co-Chair)	Rep. Luke Meerman
Michael Williams (Co-Chair)	Kayla Morgan
Judge Stuart Black	*Patricia Neitman
Lara Bouse	Debra Pinals
Sen. Marshall Bullock	Lillie Pinder
Justice Elizabeth Clement	Leticia Pittman
Cami Fraser	Joseph Ryan
Lenier Holston	Janet Reynolds Snyder
*Sandra Lindsey	Rep. Stephanie Young

Backbone Support

Kristine Andrews
Ashlee Barnes-Lee
Alexandra Citrin
Anne Farrell
Ali Jawetz
Shayne Machen
Mary Lou Mahoney
Lisa Mishraky-Javier
Kim Reese
Lew Roubal
Kelly Sesti
Anita Shannon
Demetrius Starling
Selene Wadhawan Weiss

Child Welfare Improvement Task Force

Charge Statement

Purpose: Time-limited task force to provide legislative, policy, and practice recommendations to MDHHS on:

- Redesigning a front-end response to allegations of abuse and neglect that is free from bias and distinguishes between crisis and a need for family services and support.
- Reducing racial disparities in child welfare outcomes by:
 - Increased use of supported, safe kinship care
 - Improved access to community mental health services
 - Elimination of improper placements in residential settings





MDHHS Updates



Orchards Children's Services Update

Legislative Request Update:

Family Finding Pilot & Kinship Advisory Council (KAC)

The Request

Total 1 Year Funding Request: \$606,240





- MDHHS will pilot a **Family Finding Pilot** in Muskegon County.
 - This approach centers around a concerted family search effort and engagement process.
 - Muskegon will serve as the first MI site in which staff are trained in the effort; monitoring will determine whether the effort is associated with an increase in the proportion of kinship placements.
- The KAC advises the MDHHS on issues related to kinship, including identification, licensing, and the needs of kinship caregivers and children in their care. We recommend the following **support for the KAC**:
 - A dedicated, full-time position to staff the KAC to assist in developing plans and means for decision making, data analysis, and related efforts to inform and monitor related initiatives.
 - Consult with national experts and conduct a kinship service gap analysis.
 - Outreach and education events (conference, public awareness campaign) to raise awareness of kinship care statewide.



Implementation Workgroup Update

Michigan Child Welfare Improvement Task Force Recommendations

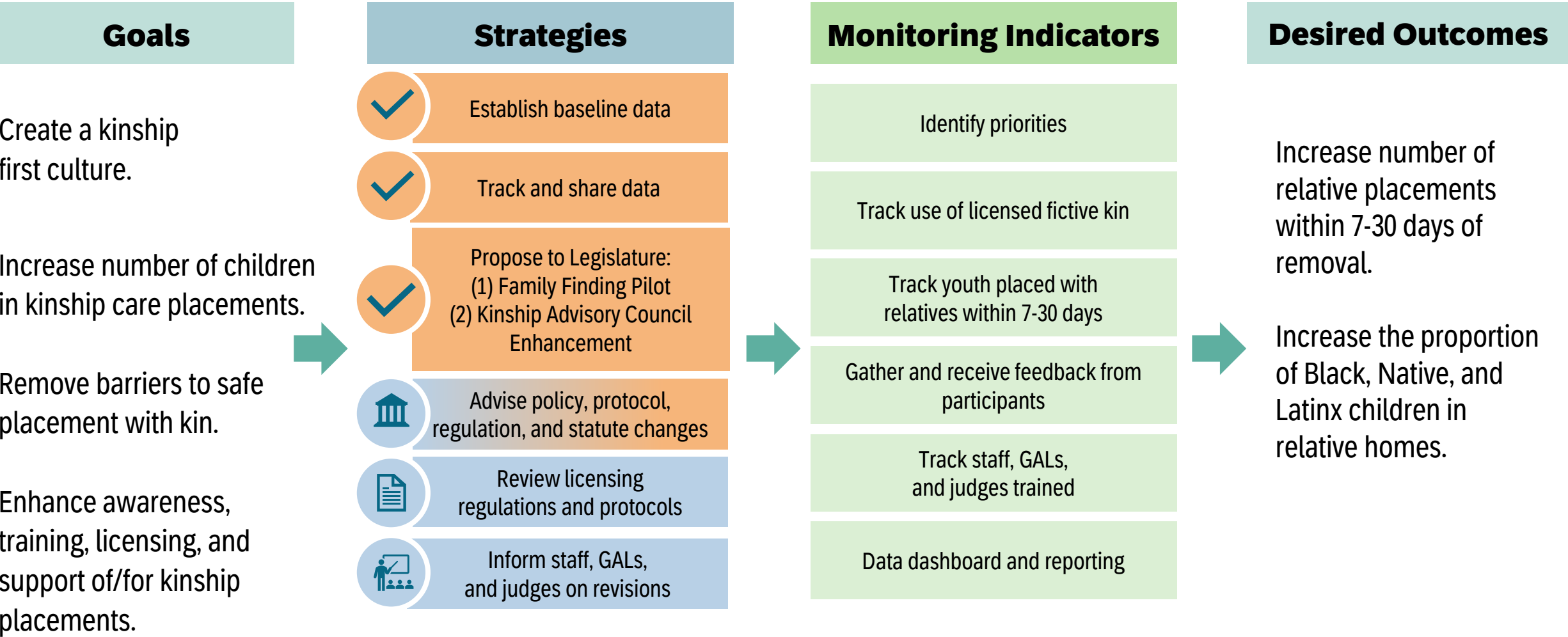
Redesigning a front-end response to allegations of abuse and neglect that reduce bias and distinguish between crisis and a need for family services and support. Each Task Force recommendation addresses the CSA core priorities.

Recommendations	CSA Priorities			
	 Ensuring Equitable Practices in Child Welfare	 Keep Children Safe with their Families	 Safety & Wellbeing in Care	 Timely Reunification & Permanency
1. Increase specialized services and supports for relative and fictive kin caregivers	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Implement appropriate services to reduce child caring institution (CCI) placements and length of stay	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. Secure funding to implement the recommendations	✓	✓	✓	✓
4. Implement New Structured Decision Making (SDM) Tools	✓	✓	✓	✓
5. Redefine Abuse and Neglect/Physical Neglect	✓	✓	✓	✓
6. Increase Access to Mental Health Services for Children and Families	✓	✓	✓	✓

Working Kinship Care Action Plan

Problem Statement: Children are entering foster care when they could be placed safely with relatives or fictive kin

Recommendation: Increase specialized services and supports for relative and fictive kin caregivers



Recent Legislative Changes

HB 5974, HB 6073, HB 6074 and HB 6075

- In October 2022, definitions of relative were updated within the legislative above.
- These laws updated:
 - The definitions of “relative” and “related” in the Juvenile Code, Child Care Licensing Act, Adoption code, and the Guardianship Assistance Act.
 - Fictive kin relationships are now included in the updated definitions.
 - As a result, staff can now assess adults who have a strong positive emotional tie or role in a child’s life, or the parent’s life if the child is an infant, as a relative for placement.

Recent Legislative Changes

- The definition of relative found throughout policy manuals will be amended to include the following:
 - A relative is also defined as an individual who is at least 18 years of age and not related to a child within the fifth degree by blood, marriage, or adoption but who has a strong positive emotional tie or role in the child's life or the child's parent's life if the child is an infant, as determined by the department or, if the child is an Indian child, as determined solely by the Indian child's tribe. (Term fictive kin is replaced by relative.)
 - As used in this section, "Indian child" and "Indian child's tribe" mean those terms as defined in section 3 of chapter XIIB;
 - See NAA 215, placement/replacement priorities for Indian child(ren).

Rationale for Increasing Prevalence of Kinship Care

- Kinship care: Foster care placement with relatives
- Ample research evidence demonstrates significant benefits of kinship care (over placement with strangers):
 - Enhanced placement stability
 - Positive identity formation
 - Better behavioral outcomes
 - Preservation of sibling ties
 - Higher HS graduation rates
- In addition, Kinship placements that offer a range of supports for children and kin are more likely to be stable and successful.

Barriers

Barriers

- Kin cannot care for family unless they know about imminent placements.
- Kin may believe they lack the resources and supports to take in their relative.
- Requirements are unclear; processes required can be long, burdensome, and intrusive.
- Reluctance among families of color to invite the authorities into their homes and; historical experiences with child welfare and law enforcement can lead to mistrust and fear of unintended consequences.

Facilitators

Facilitators: States with high kinship placement use a range of strategies:

- Move to kin-preference policies at the legislative, regulatory, and agency levels
- Modify practices to prioritize relative placements and reduce administrative burden to kin
- Engage in concerted efforts to locate kin and promote kinship care (technological solutions)
- Create a culture of kinship, employing family finding initiatives, and assign dedicated kinship staff

Current State: Kinship Care in Michigan

Like many states, MI counties vary in the % of children placed with kin, and in racial/ethnic disparities in placement. Future monitoring will address variation.

January 2022:

- 9,991 Michigan children were in out-of-home placements (foster care), among whom 52.9% were placed with family members (kin).

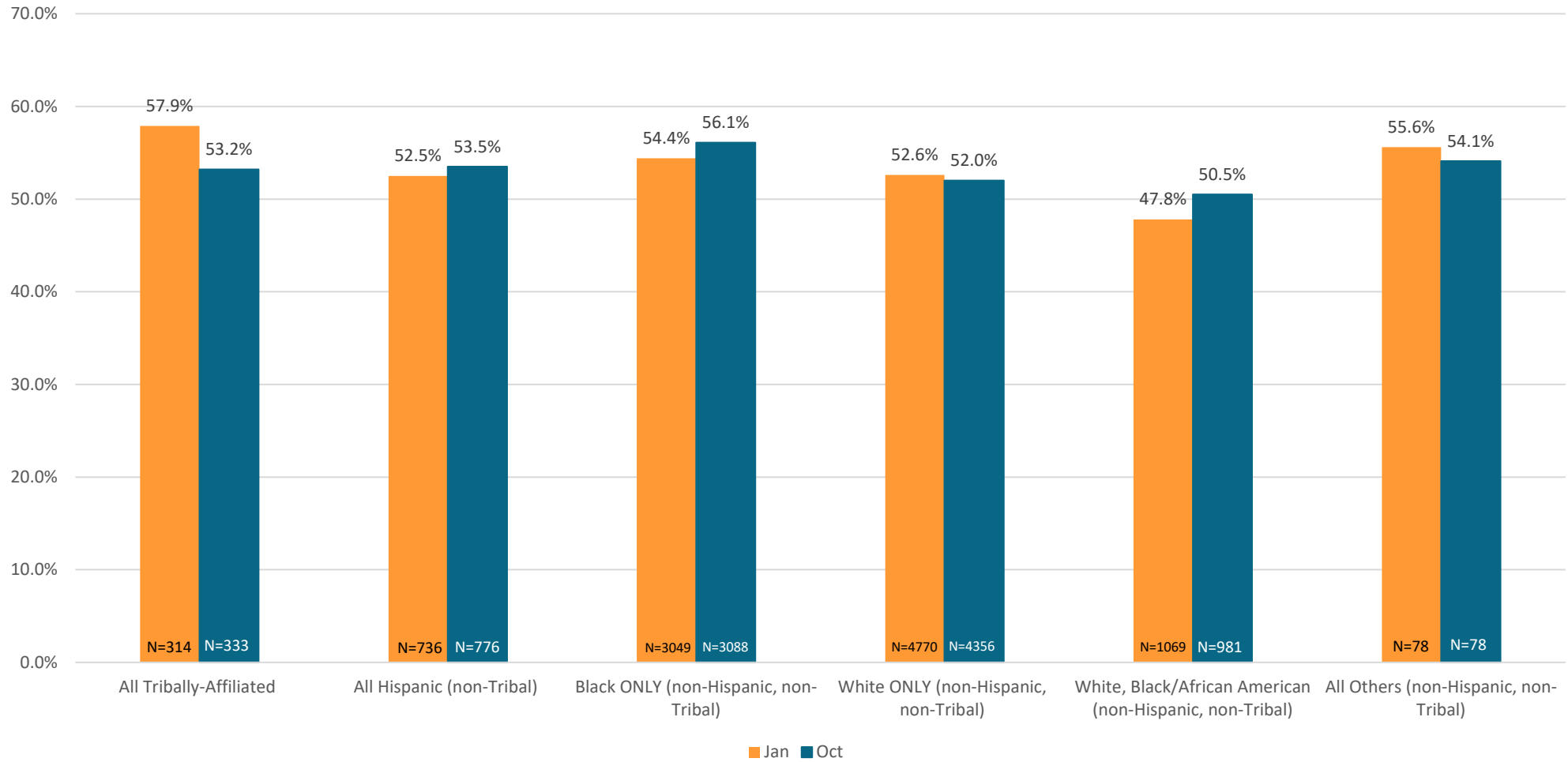
October 2022:

- 9,578 Michigan children were in out-of-home placements (foster care), among whom 53.4% were placed with family members (kin).

Disparity:

- In MI's Business Service Center 3 (Muskegon), that number is 46.1% of the total children placed and 31.6% of Black/African American children (Oct 22).

Percent of Michigan Children Placed in Relative Care by Race/Ethnicity January and October 2022

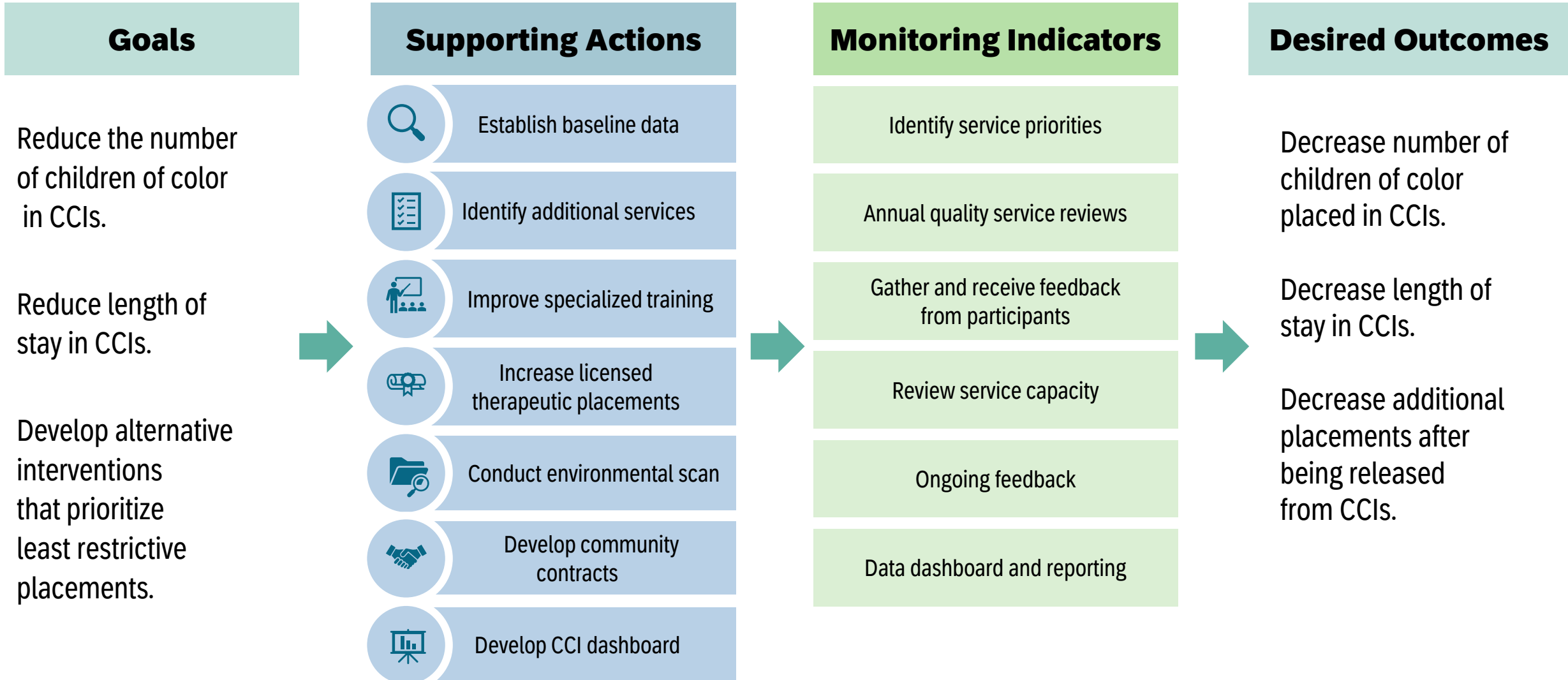


Source: Custom Report by MDHHS CSA

This figure does not reflect updated relative definitions.

DRAFT: CCI Action Plan

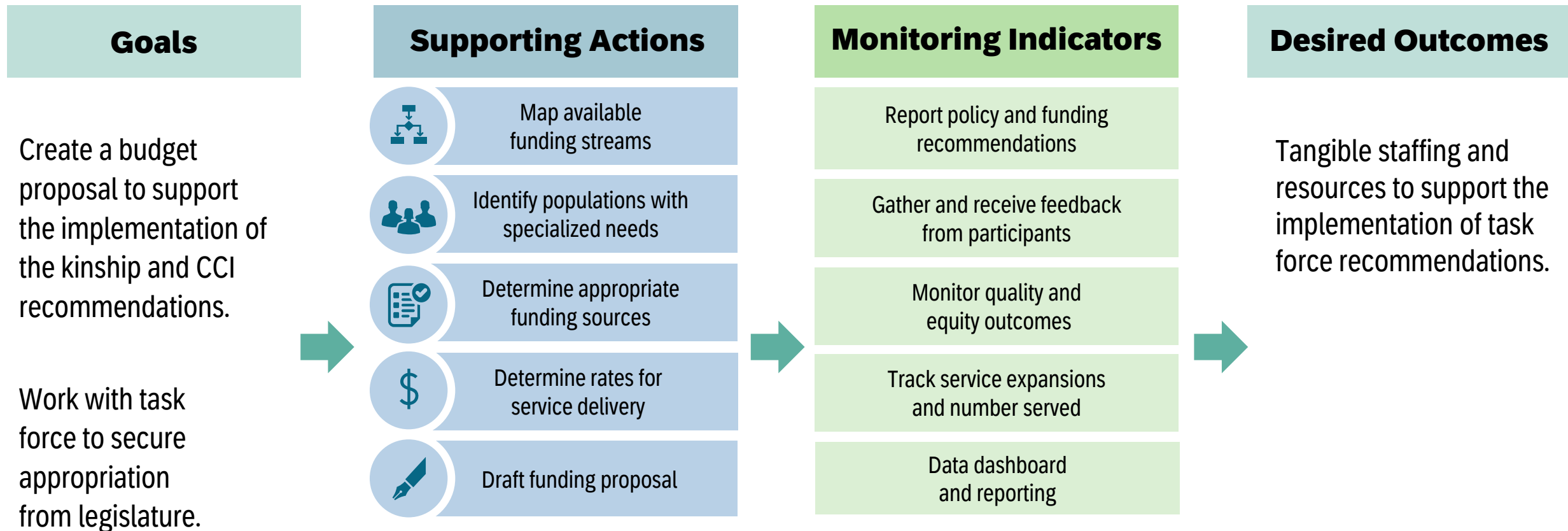
Problem Statement: Children of color are disproportionately placed in CCIs and have longer lengths of stay.
Recommendation: Implement appropriate services to reduce CCI placements and length of stay.



DRAFT: Funding Action Plan

Problem Statement: CSA's current budget does not provide adequate resources to advance these two recommendations.

Recommendation: Secure funding to implement the recommendations.



Action Items

- Establish workgroup leadership to advance CCI Recommendations
- Establish small group to work with co-chairs to review kinship care models
 - <https://forchildwelfare.org/30-days-to-family/>
 - <https://www.casey.org/family-search-engagement/>
 - <http://www.grandfamilies.org/Portals/0/Documents/General%20Kinship%20Publications/kin-promising-practice%202022%20Final.pdf>
- Others?

2023 Task Force Timeline

