

# ANNUAL PROGRESS AND SERVICES REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2023



Wisconsin Department of  
Children and Families

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## Glossary of Acronyms and Terms

**Act 109** = 2001, Wisconsin Act 109, enacted in July 2002, provided additional state statutory direction for implementation of the Adoption and Safe Families Act and Federal Title IV-E requirements.

**AFCARS** = Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System. The Federal Foster Care Data System, where states submit information, is a source of permanency and placement data.

**AODA** = Alcohol and Drug Abuse.

**ASFA** = Adoption and Safe Families Act, particularly the ASFA requirement to pursue termination of parental rights after a child has been in Out-of-Home Care (OHC) for 15 months.

**BCRA** = Bureau of Child Welfare Research and Analytics (BCRA) is responsible for the oversight and management of the data analytics and program integrity of DSP programs and policies related to child welfare to ensure compliance with Federal Title IV-E requirements.

**BITS** = Bureau of Information Technology Services in the Division of Management Services (DMS).

**BOS** = Balance of State refers to information and/or data that describes the counties outside Milwaukee.

**BPOHC** = Bureau of Permanence and Out-of-Home Care that coordinates the state adoption program, provides technical assistance on foster care, out-of-home care, independent living services, and licenses child welfare facilities.

**BPM** = Bureau of Performance Management in the Division of Management Services is responsible for continuous quality improvement, performance review and evaluation, and research/program evaluation.

**BRO** = Bureau of Regional Operations in the Division of Management Services works with local agencies administering DCF programs, including child welfare, child care subsidy, child support, and W-2 financial assistance.

**BSWB** = Bureau of Safety and Well Being in the Division of Management Services is the state unit responsible for child welfare program policy and practice standards.

**DCF** = The Bureau of Youth Services (DCF) is responsible for the Chafee Programs recently renamed the Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood, Brighter Futures Initiative, Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs, community-based Youth Justice programs, and other youth development initiatives.

**CFSR** = Federal Child and Family Services Review.

**CFS 40** = Division of Safety and Permanence form used to collect information on child abuse and neglect investigations previously used by Wisconsin to collect data for the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System.

**Ch. DCF 43** = Division of Safety and Permanence administrative rule on child welfare staff training.

**Ch. DCF 56** = Division of Safety and Permanence administrative rule on foster home licensing.

**Chapter 48** = Wisconsin Children's Administrative Code.

**Chapter 938** = Wisconsin Juvenile Justice Administrative Code.

**CANPB** = Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board

**CFA** = Children and Family Aids is a state level block grant funding source distributed to counties.

**CFSP** = Child and Family Services Plan.

**CCIP** = Children's Court Improvement Program, Wisconsin's Court Improvement program.

**COKC** = Court-Ordered Kinship Care placements for which providers receive a monthly payment.

**CPS** = Child Protective Services.

**CQI** = Continuous Quality Improvement which is DCF's Quality Assurance System.

**CY** = Calendar Year (January – December).

**DCF** = Department of Children and Families. The Department was created in July 2008 and includes child welfare services, prevention services, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (W-2), child care regulation and licensing, child support, and youth development initiatives.

**DCFS** = Former Division of Children and Family Services in the Department of Health and Family Services. In July 2008, the division moved, in its entirety, to the new Department of Children and Families and its name was changed to the Division of Safety and Permanence. In addition, child welfare programming originally coordinated by DCFS was spread out amongst several divisions/offices in the new department.

**DHCAA** = Division of Health Care Access and Accountability in the Department of Health Services, the state Medicaid agency in Wisconsin.

**DHFS** = Former Department of Health and Family Services. Prior to July 2008, child welfare services were part of the Department of Health and Family Services.

**DHS** = Department of Health Services. Department that coordinates health services for the state of Wisconsin, including Medicaid, mental health and substance abuse services, and the Food Share program.

**DMS** = Division of Management Services is responsible for finance, information technology, performance management, and regional operations.

**DMCPS** = Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services directly operates child welfare services in Milwaukee and coordinates with DSP and DCF in state child welfare planning.

**DSP** = Division of Safety and Permanence in the Department of Children and Families, the state child welfare agency in Wisconsin.

**dWiSACWIS** = DCF's system that works with Business Intelligence (BI) staff to maintain current BI reporting tools and to implement enhancements to its BI data warehouse.

**eWiSACWIS** = Wisconsin Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS system).

**eWiSACWIS Project Team** = Staff supporting operations of eWiSACWIS system.

**ETV** = Education Training Voucher program.

**FFPSA** = Family First Prevention and Services Act.

**FFY** = Federal Fiscal Year (October – September).

**FCARC** = Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center; statewide resource center that provides information and materials on foster care and adoption.

**GPR** = General Purpose Revenues from state tax revenue.



**GPRS** = State Geographic Placement Resources system.

**ICPC** = Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children.

**ICWA** = Indian Child Welfare Act.

**Kinship Care** = Payment program to support children living with relatives.

**NCANDS** = National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System. The Federal child abuse and neglect data system is a source of safety data submitted by states.

**NYTD** = National Youth in Transition Data Base.

**Ongoing Services Standards** = The five Child Protective Services Standards and Practice Guidelines issued by DSP that establish program standards for ongoing child welfare services.

**OHC** = Out-of-Home Care including children placed under court order in foster care, group homes, residential care centers and kinship care. This is equivalent to the federal definition of foster care.

**PAC** = Policy Advisory Committee

**PACE** = Partners in Alternate Care, now Foundations Training, which is a competency-based pre-service training curriculum for foster and adoptive parents.

**PDSA** = Plan Do Study Act is a continuous quality improvement approach to improving practices that incorporates extensive feedback.

**PIP** = Wisconsin Program Improvement Plan for Round 3 of the Federal CFSR.

**QIC-AG** = Quality Improvement Center for Adoption and Guardianship (QIC-AG). WI implemented an Adoption and Guardianship Enhanced Support (AGES) program.

**QRTP** = Qualified Residential Treatment Program.

**Rate Regulation** = Payment system that ensures that providers are licensed to provide a certain level of care, based on the types of services they offer, and receive a pre-defined amount for providing those services to a child who needs them.

**SAFE** = Structure Analysis Family Evaluation.

**SFY** = State Fiscal Year.

**TPR** = Termination of Parental Rights.

**WAFCA** = Wisconsin Association of Child and Family Agencies.

**WCWPDS** = Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System is Wisconsin's School of Social Work operated training system that operates at the state level.

**WCWPDS Steering Committee** = leadership entity comprised of UW School of Social Work, WCWPDS, DCF, DMCPD and counties charged with oversight of the Professional Development System.

**WiAPS** = Wisconsin Adoption and Permanency Supports.

**WICWA** = Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act.

**YAC** = Youth Advisory Council.

**YJ** = Youth Justice is Wisconsin's preferred term for Juvenile Justice.

**YLT** = Youth Leadership Team.

# 1. Overview and Agency Administering the Child and Family Services Plan

## Overview

In this document, the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) provides its annual update on the 2020-2024 five-year plan and describes the use of new federal resources provided in the last year. This report is jointly guided by the Child Welfare Model for Practice and Wisconsin's approved Program Improvement Plan (PIP), which builds on the most recent Child and Family Services Review Process in 2018. It is further defined by DCF's Putting Families First approach focused on strengthening and supporting families in home. This is in alignment with the Children's Bureau (CB) focus on strengthening families as articulated in the CB Call to Action from November 2018 and the goals of the Family First Prevention and Services Act (FFPSA). It is also consistent with guidance offered through federally sponsored state team planning meetings, Children and Family Service Review (CFSR) Round 4 kickoff meetings, PIP progress reviews and the growing emphasis to empower, engage, and apply the voice of lived experience through family and youth voice. The plan is data-driven and informed by stakeholders.

## Administering Agency for Title IV-B, Title IV-E, CAPTA, Chafee and ETV

Wisconsin Department of Children and Families  
201 West Washington Avenue  
Madison, WI 53703

The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) is the state agency dedicated to promoting the social and economic well-being of Wisconsin's children and families. The department is committed to protecting children, strengthening families, and building communities. DCF is responsible for the human service program areas of child and family services including child welfare, community-based youth justice, child care subsidy, childcare licensing, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families income support, refugee services, child support, and youth development initiatives. The department organizational chart is available at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/about-us>.

## Organizational Structure

### *Division of Safety and Permanence*

Children, youth, and family services are located in the Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP), the unit within the department responsible for title IV-B Subpart 1, Stephanie Tubbs Jones (Child Welfare Services), IV-B Subpart 2 (Promoting Safe and Stable Families) and Monthly Caseworker Visit grant programs, title IV-E (Foster Care, Adoption Assistance and Subsidized Guardianship), Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood ("Chafee," formerly known as Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP)) and Chafee Education and Training Vouchers (ETV).

DSP is responsible for supervising Wisconsin's child welfare system. Services are delivered through county and tribal-administered child welfare programs, except in Milwaukee County and for the public adoption program, both of which are operated by the state.

### *Bureau of Safety and Well Being*

The Bureau of Safety and Well Being (BSWB) within DSP provides policy guidance and statewide leadership on child protective services, including matters related to CAPTA. The bureau manages statewide prevention programs for the department, including Promoting Safe and Stable Families (IV-B Subpart 2), domestic violence programs, and the Wisconsin Trauma Project. BSWB staff collaborate with the Department of Health Services (the State Public Health Agency) to manage the Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting Programs. BSWB is responsible for Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) for the statewide child welfare system.

### *Bureau of Permanence and Out-of-Home Care*

The Bureau of Permanence and Out of Home Care (BPOHC) within DSP is responsible for oversight and licensing of child placing agencies, group homes, shelter care facilities, residential care centers and qualified residential treatment programs for children and youth. It also provides policy guidance and statewide leadership on foster care, guardianship, and kinship care programs. BPOHC administers the public adoption program, the adoption search program, and the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC). BPOHC also administers initiatives related to health outcomes for children involved in the child welfare system.

### *Bureau of Child Welfare Research and Analytics*

The Bureau of Child Welfare Research and Analytics (BCRA) within DSP is responsible for the oversight and management of the data analytics and program integrity of DSP programs, as well as policy and DSP compliance with federal title IV-E requirements.

### *Bureau of Youth Services*

The Bureau of Youth Services (BYS) within DSP is responsible for overseeing and supporting youth development initiatives and programs. DCF has administration and oversight responsibility for the community-based youth justice (YJ) population. The bureau also oversees the Federal Chafee Transition to Independence Program, the Educational and Training Vouchers Program (ETV), the Wisconsin Brighter Futures Initiative, the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) program, Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs, and other youth development efforts.

### *Division Administrator's Office*

In addition to providing overall leadership for the division, the Administrator's Office (AO) is responsible for oversight of eWiSACWIS (WI's state child welfare data system), tracking state and federal legislative issues, leading child welfare strategic planning efforts and major federally-required projects, including preparation for the Children and Family Services Review (CFSR) and PIP development. The Administrator's Office is also responsible for working with tribes in Wisconsin to address tribal child welfare issues, including implementation of the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA).

### *Division of Management Services*

The Bureaus of Finance, Regional Operations and Performance Management are part of the Division of Management Services (DMS). Additionally, the Bureau of Regional Operations (BRO) located in DMS is involved in child welfare program quality assurance on behalf of DCF. BRO provides child welfare technical assistance and training to counties, communicates and collaborates with the state's eleven federally-recognized tribes, and connects child welfare to other areas of DCF programming (child care, employment services, child support and refugee services). In addition to providing regional support to child welfare agencies, BRO staff coordinate with other human services programs.

### *Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services*

The Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS) administers child welfare services in Milwaukee County, the state's largest county. DMCPS administers initial assessment and ongoing services for child welfare in Milwaukee County and collaborates with DSP on statewide child welfare issues.

### *Programs Included in the Child and Family Services Five Year Report*

This report provides an update on the state goals and objectives established in the 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) submitted in 2019. It details the activities DCF supports through titles IV-B Subparts 1 and 2, Adoption, Chafee and Education and Training Vouchers, Indian Child Welfare, Kinship Care, and title IV-E Foster Care, Subsidized Guardianship and Adoption programs. Further information about state use of disaster relief, COVID Relief or CARES Act, the Family First Prevention and Services Act transition funding, Title X and the American Rescue Plan (ARP) are included in this update. Additionally, this report includes CAPTA updates, information concerning Juvenile Justice Transfers, information required by the Child and Family Services Innovation Act, and all requirements related to 45 CFR 1357. Information and data on state achievement of national performance standards and case-related outcomes are also included in the report.

### *Data Sources*

In accordance with 45 CFR 1355.53, Wisconsin utilized the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (eWISACWIS) in developing this Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR). In addition, the following data sources were used by the division to evaluate Wisconsin's APSR:

- Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Data
- Children's Court Improvement Project (CCIP) Review Data
- Information and reports from counties, tribes, and others
- State administrative data

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## Collaboration

Over the next year, DCF will continue to build on the extensive collaboration that serves as the hallmark of DCF operations and its coordination of the state child welfare system. Of particular significance in the last year has been DCF's efforts around system transformation efforts called in Wisconsin: Putting Families First. These have further framed and supported a collaborative approach to strategic planning and extensive stakeholder engagement. A stronger emphasis on the meaningful and systematic inclusion of lived experience has been a prominent feature of this year's effort that will continue going forward. A significant infusion of federal support reinforced critical collaboration and system building to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and support our overall child welfare system.

DCF focuses collaborative efforts on meaningful engagement of families, youth, partner agencies, counties, and tribes all working toward shared goals for improving the child welfare system and providing child and family safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes. Some of the ways in which DCF assures collaboration include:

- Securing feedback, collaboration and ongoing input from counties, tribes, and other stakeholder organizations on DCF's Putting Families First strategic planning process, including securing feedback on agency strengths, areas needing improvement, goals, and objectives;
- Coordinating, facilitating, and/or participating in standing bi-monthly meetings with the Indian Child Welfare (ICW) Committee and with a subset of county directors through the Wisconsin County Human Services Association's Policy Advisory Committee (WCHSA PAC);
- Elevating and engaging individuals, youth, and families with lived experience in policy and procedure development and decision-making;
- Spearheading stakeholder groups comprised of county staff at different levels and specializations, and receiving critical advice, feedback and comment from tribal members on the specifics of the state emerging efforts to outline and implement the Putting Families First vision and meet key requirements of FFPSA;
- Ensuring representatives of group home and congregate care facilities were included through stakeholder meetings throughout the year and a series of town hall meetings in 2021;
- Effectively collaborating with judges and other legal stakeholders; and,
- Soliciting input on federal and state plans and reviews, in part by sharing relevant federal, state, and administrative data about child welfare system trends and issues and requesting feedback on data and information shared to prioritize data-driven decision-making. Examples include input on the CFSR, CFSP, APSR, PIP and current DCF Putting Families First efforts.

DCF's plan for enacting the state's vision is built around a Putting Families First initiative that was initiated in 2021, which is detailed at: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/budget/families-first>.

DCF leadership developed an overall framework for the future of child welfare that includes a vision that:

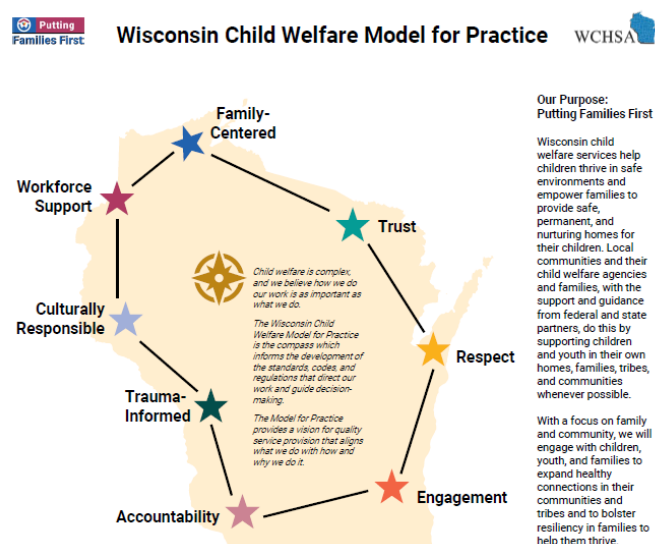
*“All Wisconsin children are safe and loved members of thriving families and communities. The Wisconsin Child Welfare System will strengthen all Wisconsin families to support their children because children belong with their families.”*

Implementing this framework requires transformational change in Wisconsin’s child welfare system. Key planning related to the following is already underway:

- Building local prevention services in part through increasing state investment in prevention services;
- Increasing children served in family settings by expanding the use of relative and foster parent settings; and,
- Reducing congregate care stays to short, clinical bursts of treatment by supporting providers to transition to the Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) service model and planning for the development of high-quality clinical care when clinically necessary.

More information on the strategic teams developed in 2019 that continued work throughout FY 2023 and workplans related to strategic planning goals and requirements are detailed at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/family-first/teams>.

These teams continue to be driven by work necessary to meet the requirements of the Family First Prevention and Service Act that encompass initiatives in the CFSP and the approved 2020 PIP. The Wisconsin Child Welfare Model for Practice is an overarching framework and prescribes that interactions and services in the child welfare system are based on the principles of trust, engagement, accountability, trauma-informed practice, cultural responsiveness, workforce support, and family-centered practices. The Wisconsin Child Welfare Model for Practice is the compass that guides DCF’s work and decision-making:





### *COVID-19 Response*

DCF worked closely with Wisconsin's county-administered child welfare agencies and their workforce, as well as tribes in 2020, 2021 and 2022 to respond to COVID-19 in the child welfare system. This included collaborating to identify and help respond to emerging needs. Key efforts included: tracking data patterns, identifying tribal, county and provider needs (including foster homes, relatives, residential providers, and contracted partners), and providing resources, guidance documents and policy, and other supports.

Wisconsin appreciated the infusion of federal dollars in 2020 to support the state's response to COVID-19 and help address needs related to the child welfare system, domestic violence prevention, and others. Funding was a critical resource in supporting ongoing collaboration. DCF worked closely with stakeholders to identify and prioritize high need areas resulting from the impact of the public health crisis. Funding available through the Family First Transition Act of 2020, the COVID Relief Act in late 2020 and 2021, and the American Rescue Plan (ARP) have supported needs identified.

DCF continued COVID-19 updates and conversation through opportunities with counties, tribes, and contracted providers to both share and receive information as well as, gauge the need for resources, guidance, and/or training. Driven by stakeholder need, DCF met weekly at first, then bi-weekly and is currently meeting bi-monthly to share and receive information directly with county and tribal child welfare supervisors. DCF provided specific guidance and resources relative to child welfare through 2020, 2021 and 2022, which is catalogued on the DCF website at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/guidance>. These meetings are a critical communication resource for how counties and tribes are planning to respond to address emerging issues.

### *Collaboration to Support State Policies and Programs*

Wisconsin will continue to collaborate with other agencies and partners to ensure an inclusive and shared vision and ongoing coordination across systems. DCF staff currently chair the following collaborative groups: Out-of-Home Care (OHC)/Adoption Committees, Putting Families First Stakeholder Group, Rate Regulation Advisory Committee, Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Advisory Committee, and others. In addition to these efforts, the agency communicates with county child welfare agencies through department regional meetings for local child welfare agency foster care coordinators, child welfare program supervisors, and fiscal managers to keep them updated about policy and procedures and provide a forum for both state and local child welfare agencies to discuss current child welfare issues. When DCF issues a policy that affects practice requirements, DCF provides the draft policy for comment to counties through the Wisconsin County Human Services Association (WCHSA) and the Indian Child Welfare committee prior to finalizing policy. Comments are solicited and included in updated policy guidance. This process is specified in the state/county contracts. DCF efforts to collaborate and coordinate with Wisconsin tribes are detailed in Section 6 of this report.

The department regularly works with groups representing key constituencies to develop program and policy initiatives to strengthen the child welfare system. These groups include, but are not limited to, WCHSA, the Wisconsin Foster/Adoptive Parent Association, the Wisconsin

Association of Family and Children's Agencies (WAFCA), the Children's Court Improvement Program, the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board (CANPB), the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), Relative Caregiver Stakeholder Group, a Foster and Adoptive Parent Advisory Council, the Office of Children's Mental Health, the Wisconsin Council for Mental Health (WCHM), and other state agencies. In addition to consulting with public and private agencies, DCF values the discussions provided through other lived experience professionals, as detailed in the paragraphs below. Together, the stakeholder groups, and the new lived experience coordinator, offer continuous system improvements and identify service gaps.

#### *Collaboration to Strengthen the Voice of Lived Experience*

In the last year, DCF has built on ongoing efforts with a goal of more effectively and systematically elevating and incorporating the voice of lived experience in DCF policies and programs. In 2021, a lived experience coordinator was hired by DCF with the support of Family First Prevention and Services Act (FFPSA) transition funding. This position has a primary focus on elevating lived experience voice through the engagement, development, and support of lived experience experts, including parents impacted by the child welfare system and the facilitation of lived experience stakeholder groups.

The lived experience coordinator is responsible for identification and support of strategies to build engagement with lived experience at every level of the child welfare and youth justice systems, as well as support local county efforts. In addition, this role will lead the development, coordination, and implementation of policies and procedures which promote elevating and supporting stakeholders with lived experience. While newly created, this position will eventually assist DCF in further supporting a lived experience framework that will support advocacy, education, and training to a wide array of internal and external stakeholders with the goal to promote lived experience expertise across program and policy areas to best serve children, youth, and families. This position will also continue to build DCF's long-standing efforts to reach out to existing relative caregiver, foster, and adoptive parent support groups to engage youth voice throughout all aspects of the child welfare system.

#### *Child Welfare Parent Leaders Workgroup*

This group began in 2021 and is comprised of parents across the state who were involved with the Children Welfare System. The Office of Children's Mental Health and DCF's lived experience coordinator meet monthly with these parents to get insights, provide educational experiences, and build parent capacity to help contribute and make innovative efforts to our Putting Families First approach. Key strategies identified for initial prioritization from this group include:

- Key information parents need about the child welfare system.
- Common service gaps.
- Increasing parent participation in creation of the safety plan and case planning goals.
- Worker/parent engagement.

These efforts, including the collaborative monthly workgroup with the Parent Leaders in Child Welfare Stakeholder Group and monthly planning sessions with the Office of Children's Mental Health, are expected to improve the coordination of services and strengthen efforts around in-

home safety planning and the development of parent-informed prevention plans, by infusing parent voice throughout the prevention planning process, particularly in addressing the above key strategies.

#### *Youth Advisory Council*

DCF continues to support the Wisconsin Youth Advisory Council (W-YAC) to empower youth who have touched the child welfare system (past or present) to advise and contribute to DCF policy and practice as well as strengthen their own advocacy skills. The YAC's efforts were previously identified as a strength in the Wisconsin CFSR, particularly as it relates to efforts to empower youth to organize and testify around key legislative issues. An example of an annual event planned by the YAC is Hands Around the Capitol. The event aims to draw attention to the needs of youth in the child welfare system and advocates for solutions to address these needs. In summer 2022, the W-YAC is planning (in collaboration with DCF) a Legislative Day, which will be specifically for YAC members to receive civic education and advocate for change in the child welfare system. The young people look forward to speaking with legislators on issues that are important to them and others with foster care experience – specifically regarding extending Independent Living services and supports to age 23. In addition, the YAC had youth representatives attend and be a voice for other youth in Wisconsin at the Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative Activating Youth Engagement Summit and Virtual Roundtables. DCF will continue to support the local and statewide YACs to participate in similar future opportunities. See the John H. Chafee section of the report for more information about Wisconsin's Youth Advisory Council. The YAC will also assist DCF in a specific youth engagement strategy that is described in section 3, the Update on the Plan for Enacting the State's Vision.

#### *Youth Leadership Teams*

The purpose of DCF's Youth Leadership Teams (YLT) are to engage youth across the state who have lived experience with the youth justice system (past or present), want to share their perspectives and provide input to DCF. Input includes what is working well, areas for improvement, and feedback on policies, program, and resources. In addition, youth are provided opportunities to develop their leadership/advocacy skills and work on a project of their choosing to improve the system or inform best practice. Thirteen founding partners that were either county agencies or youth-serving organizations continue to support these teams and their members. New partnerships have been developed across Wisconsin as youth justice service providers continue to learn about this opportunity. Adult supporters assist in recruiting and engaging youth participants, transport youth to and from meetings (when meetings were held in-person), and, recently, help youth overcome any barriers to attending virtual meetings. More details on the teams and their work are available at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/yj/pdf/ylt-youthvision.pdf>. In 2020-2021, DCF continued to convene virtual, quarterly meetings. DCF supports youth from the leadership teams to assist with the Governor's Juvenile Justice Commission, a requirement of Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) funding from the Department of Justice.

Both the YAC and YLT members received leadership training in a variety of areas, including, but not limited to strategic sharing/effective advocacy, diversity and inclusion, micro-aggressions, the brain game, and healthy coping skills. DCF will continue to support and consult with these advisory bodies to ensure broad and consistent youth voice in DCF policies and programs. More information about Wisconsin DCF's youth leadership opportunities can be found at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youthservices/leadership>.

#### *Relative Caregiver Stakeholders*

DCF formed a relative caregiver workgroup for the purpose of having more consistent input from relatives caring for children in child welfare. This effort was initiated in 2019 using FY 2018 Kinship Navigator Funding under title IV-B, subpart 2. The group is comprised of family members who are involved in child welfare (Court-ordered -Kinship Care & Licensed Relatives) and those who are not (Voluntary-Kinship Care & Guardians). It also includes families both temporarily and permanently providing care to relative children. This group meets virtually on a bi-monthly basis and subcommittees meet as needed. Efforts were guided by using the 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan and the 2020 PIP as a guide to focus relative caregiver activities. This group provided information to be included in a Relative Caregiver Guided 211 Search for the Kinship Navigator portal (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/kinship/navigator>); and helped plan for and participate in the annual in-person relative caregiver conference; and various other activities. This group also provides meaningful input on Putting Families First, "Kin-First" culture, which prioritizes and centers family and kin, and DCF's strategic plan.

#### *Foster Parent Advisory Group*

DCF has a long-standing foster and adoptive parent advisory group that met regularly with DCF prior to the COVID-19 public health emergency to provide input on policies, programs, foster parent resources, and other needs. They assisted with the development of a foster parent recruitment campaign and resources that supported identified needs for foster families. In 2022 the advisory group is set to resume meeting and will connect with the Wisconsin Foster and Adoptive Parent Association on annual conferences and support needs. More information on the Wisconsin Foster and Adoptive Association can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/wfapa/>

#### *Standing Advisory Bodies for DCF*

DCF established the following standing advisory bodies to provide oversight, direction, and support to the agency to inform its development of policies and programs that support and frame an effective child welfare system.

#### **MILWAUKEE CHILD WELFARE PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL**

Through the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS), DCF directly administers the child welfare system in Milwaukee County, the state's largest county. The Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council is a broad-based advisory body, established by statute in 1998, which advises the department on its administration of the system in Milwaukee County. The Partnership Council meets four times per year and is composed of state legislators, county

elected officials, members of the judicial and legal systems, and community members appointed by the Governor, i.e., health care and child welfare service providers, partners in the birth to five system, advocates, community members, representatives from the K-12 educational system, and representatives from the mental health and alcohol and other drug abuse (AODA) systems. Its members come from varied professional fields and meetings are public to allow for community participation. Section 48.562 of the Wisconsin Statutes specifies the charge of the Partnership Council, which is to recommend policies and plans for the improvement of Milwaukee County child welfare system including outcome measures and recommending processes to evaluate its effectiveness and funding priorities.

#### *Cross-Systems Collaborations Targeted to Well-Being Outcomes*

DCF regularly convenes or partners with other organizations and subject matter experts to assure there is cross-system dialogue about issues affecting families involved with the child welfare system. In the past these have included efforts related to anti-human trafficking, trauma, the opioid crisis, and children with disabilities in the child welfare system. Lessons learned from these efforts are incorporated in DCF's ongoing work.

To continually shape child welfare policies and programs in the best way possible, DCF will be involved with the following issue-specific collaborations related to the following areas of focus.

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#### HEALTH

DCF collaborates with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) for the purpose of improving the quality, access, and timeliness of healthcare services to children and youth in out-of-home care (OHC). This collaboration led to DCF's inclusion on the Wisconsin Council for Mental Health (WCMH) which advises DHS, the Legislature, and the Governor on the use of state and federal resources and on the provision and administration of mental health programs for groups who are not adequately served by the mental health system. Another collaborative example of this work is the implementation of a Medicaid medical home service delivery model called Care4Kids. The Care4Kids program provides comprehensive, coordinated care for children and youth in foster care tailored to each child's individualized needs. Other collaborative health projects include automation of Foster Care State Medicaid certification for children in out-of-home care, and an ongoing DataMart project to track healthcare usage and medication management through the matching of child welfare data from eWiSACWIS with Medicaid utilization data in ForwardHealth.

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#### EDUCATION

DCF collaborates with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), the state education agency, for the purpose of improving educational outcomes of children in child welfare and coordination of services and supports that enhance educational needs. Examples of joint efforts include data matching focused on connecting the child welfare and education data systems. Specifically, collaboration continues on the education portal that is designed to facilitate improved understanding and information sharing of the educational needs and experiences of children. In partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Madison, DCF and DPI

also continue to engage in research about the educational outcomes of children in OHC to inform policy development.

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## YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

DCF has historically coordinated with and provided support to the Foster Youth to College (FYC) advisory group, composed of professionals from child welfare, private colleges, technical colleges, the state university system, former foster youth and DPI. During the COVID-19 public health emergency an additional group of stakeholders with similar and overlapping investments in postsecondary achievement developed as the Foster Youth Advocates (FYA) with DCF historically assisting with meeting coordination. Recently passed legislation provides ongoing funding for Foster Success programs through the University of Wisconsin System enabling the Wisconsin public and private colleges to play a larger role in support and retaining foster care students. The purpose of both groups is to improve access and supports for youth in the child welfare system accessing and succeeding in higher educational opportunities. The groups, with the assistance of the pro-youth network of partners provided by Transition Resource Agencies (TRAs) have been central to continuing the conversation to not only increase youth access to postsecondary programs, but success in post-secondary education via robust programs like Fostering Success, an initiative to help support students through financial and support resources at major college campuses. Information about campus contacts for this program can be found at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youthservices/college>. Youth are also connected to smaller local efforts to help with access to critical resources such as food pantries, mentorships, and/or increased housing options for youth with no alternative address.

Over the past year, the FYA did considerable work to better identify existing individuals and programs involved with these efforts and better support them by developing tangible resources (e.g., tip lists for working with foster youth populations, trainings for existing Foster Youth Campus Contacts, and more). Efforts of both groups are further described in more detail in the Chafee section of the report.

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## EARLY CHILDHOOD

DCF collaborates with the Department of Public Instruction for the purpose of ensuring that young children have access to high-quality learning opportunities and other supports for families with young children, such as home visiting. An example of coordination in this area includes the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) which is co-chaired by the DCF secretary and DPI superintendent. The ECAC is a high-level stakeholder group comprised of public and private leaders that provides advice on the strategic direction for the state's efforts to promote early childhood development. The ECAC has developed a cross-system agenda with the overall goal of having all young children be safe, healthy, and successful. DCF anticipates that its strategic planning efforts may uncover other potential areas of overlap and focus between child welfare and early childhood that could be elevated and discussed by this advisory body. In the last year, DSP assisted the Division of Early Care and Education (DECE) in implementing the federally awarded Preschool Development Grant (Birth to 5 (PDG B-5)). DSP is currently

collaborating around other federal opportunities to provide support for a comprehensive early childhood system for all families. This will be another resource to continue to strengthen coordination between early childhood and child welfare systems. Efforts to address the birth to five population are further described in section 5 of this report.

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#### CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT PREVENTION BOARD (CANPB)

The Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board is the designated Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) lead in Wisconsin. DCF and the Prevention Board will continue to collaborate to leverage resources and implement primary prevention initiatives.

For example, DCF and the Prevention Board collaborate on abusive head trauma prevention. The Prevention Board is charged in Wisconsin Statutes with providing educational materials for parents to prevent abusive head trauma and provides community-based funding to implement the Period of PURPLE Crying® with four grantees. Wisconsin Statutes require home visiting programs to provide parents with newborns educational information on abusive head trauma prevention. The Prevention Board has made funds available for DCF to integrate the Period of PURPLE Crying into the MIECHV funded home visiting programs.

Another example of Prevention Board efforts is through evidence-informed parent education. For the past seven years, the Prevention Board has funded evidence-informed parent education programs through a competitive grant-making process. One of the programs funded is Triple P (Positive Parenting Program). The Prevention Board supports Levels 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the program, including Stepping Stones and Teen which are primary prevention focused. DCF was able to expand its evidence-informed parent education with the new DCF TANF funding for prevention programs and services specifically focused on families with children pre-natal to five years of age. The Prevention Board also coordinates a network of family resource centers that provide prevention and parenting services for families.

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#### COLLABORATION TO SUPPORT THE CHILD WELFARE WORKFORCE

The department's Bureau of Regional Operations (BRO) supports the coordination of child welfare and other key local services, including child care, child support and Wisconsin Works (the Wisconsin program for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families – TANF). BRO works with DCF's child welfare system to provide collaboration, coordinator and technical assistance to counties and the child welfare workforce. Information and support are provided about child welfare policies and programs. BRO regularly shares information with county child welfare supervisors and convenes monthly meetings to offer child welfare supervisors the opportunity to receive DCF updates and guidance, discuss child welfare workforce recruitment and retention issues, provide peer support to each other, and provide information about child welfare professional training. BRO convenes more frequent calls as needed, for example in response to the COVID-19 crisis or FFPSA implementation.

The Wisconsin County Human Services Association's (WCHSA) Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) is a critical collaboration mechanism for coordination with the counties. The WCHSA's



PAC functions as a steering committee for high level child welfare policy and program development and is comprised of the leadership of a subset of counties in the state. Examples of collaboration include working with PAC on DCF's strategic plan, collaboration related to all federal plans, including the development of the 2020 Program Improvement Plan (PIP), providing input on a workload study for the state, and other efforts that help shape the state child welfare system and vision.

In addition, beginning in 2020, supervisors and child welfare professionals from the county level participated regularly in several workgroups to provide input on Wisconsin's Putting Families First approach.

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#### OTHER CROSS-SYSTEM COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

The DCF secretary or secretary's designee will continue to serve on additional statewide councils and workgroups that promote cross-system collaboration and coordination. Some of these include the State Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse, the Wisconsin Council on Mental Health, the Council on Offender Reentry, and the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council.

DCF staff have served on the multidisciplinary Wisconsin Department of Justice State Task Force on Children in Need, as required under sections 107(b)(2) and 107(c)(1) of CAPTA since 1991. This is a key component of Wisconsin's plan to comply with the Children's Justice Act.

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#### CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS

Consistent with CAPTA requirements for citizen review panels (CRP), Wisconsin has eight panels:

- Jefferson County Citizen Review Panel
- Langlade County Citizen Review Panel
- Marathon County Citizen Review Panel
- Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council
- Outagamie County Citizen Review Panel
- Polk County Citizen Review Panel
- St. Croix County Citizen Review Panel
- Wisconsin Youth Advisory Council

All panels fulfilled their responsibilities as required by CAPTA regarding meetings, mission, and submission of annual reports. Each panel received CAPTA funds in the amount of \$10,000 to support their activities, which includes sending panel members to the annual National Citizen Review Panel Conference. The panels engage and coordinate local activities and benefit from attending the national conference, where they can make connections, learn about other states' CRP initiatives, and bring ideas back to Wisconsin. DCF will continue to support the CRP efforts in the next year. For more information about each panel's 2021 activities, please see the citizen review panels' annual reports and DCF responses online at

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/prevention/crp>.



DCF appreciates the efforts put forth by each of the panels and their continued advocacy work and reviews each panel's annual report and recommendations to provide a written response. DCF makes every attempt to identify relevant connections between a panel's state-level improvement recommendations and DCF initiatives that are currently ongoing or anticipated for the future. In addition, DCF uses a variety of opportunities for ongoing engagement and feedback with stakeholders in order to advance priorities for system improvements, including Wisconsin's county human services association, the children's court improvement program, DCF's child welfare continuous quality improvement committee, and recommendations from the citizen review panels.

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#### COLLABORATION SPECIFIC TO FEDERAL PLANS AND REVIEWS

As articulated in the Child Welfare Model for Practice, DCF encourages stakeholder feedback in the development of all federal planning documents focused on system strengths, needs, and strategies for improvement, including the CFSP and APSR, as well as federal review and planning processes such as the CFSR and the PIP. In addition to posting the CFSP and APSR online, DCF briefs its standing advisory bodies and stakeholder groups on these plans to provide updates and secure feedback on DCF efforts. Wisconsin posts all current federal plans at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cfsr>.

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#### COURT SYSTEM COLLABORATION

DCF coordinates with the court system in multiple ways for the purpose of ongoing coordination with judicial and legal partners. The DCF Judicial Workgroup is currently staffed by DCF's Bureau of Youth Services and facilitates efforts in coordination with the Children's Court Improvement Program (CCIP). This group includes 10 judges, CCIP staff, and a representative of the University of Wisconsin Law School. The initial focus of this group was developing an effective court order for use in Wisconsin's youth justice system. Members have advised the DCF on the effort to pilot tailored and effective court orders in youth justice. This process has been piloted in two counties. This group provides additional expertise to DCF and CCIP in the Tailored Dispositional Orders Project in child welfare that is part of Wisconsin's Program Improvement Plan.

Under the Wisconsin Director of State Courts Office, CCIP coordinates with DCF on a wide range of additional projects and collaborations. DCF will continue a long-standing, strong collaboration to support the jointly held goal of improving the safety, permanency, and well-being of children, youth, and families in the state. The two entities are regularly engaged in joint child welfare program planning, policy and legislative development, and improvement activities. Current joint projects include the TPR Timeliness Project, the Tailored Dispositional Orders Project, the title IV-E Legal Representation Program, Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA) Continuous Quality Improvement Project and co-sponsoring the biennial Conference on Child Welfare and the Courts.

DCF and CCIP work together to respond to legislative changes that affect child welfare and local court systems. Over the past two years, this included coordination of efforts related to

codification and implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), which Wisconsin implemented in October 2021. DCF and CCIP formed a workgroup to draft legislation regarding the FFPSA's Qualified Residential Treatment Program procedures. DCF and CCIP conducted multiple trainings on the legislation, including sessions at the Conference on Child Welfare and the Courts for judicial officers, attorneys, agency representatives, and other stakeholders. DCF and CCIP maintain regular contact regarding legislative committees and proposals to determine potential impacts on the child welfare system and to provide information as necessary.

In 2019, DCF collaborated with the CCIP and sent a seven-person team to the National Judicial Summit on Child Welfare in Minneapolis. The Wisconsin team included a judge, CCIP representative, Guardian ad Litem, prosecutor, public defender, a Supreme Court designee, and DCF attorney. The team discussed current joint DCF and CCIP projects such as the TPR Timeliness Project, the Conference on Child Welfare and the Courts, and the Tailored Dispositional Court Order Project within the proposed Program Improvement Plan. The team focused on the summit's themes to develop short-term ideas and bold strategies to advance Wisconsin's work. The team's ideas were then shared with various DCF and CCIP workgroups. CCIP also partnered with DCF to participate in two state team planning meetings and the Adoption Call to Action. Planning from these meetings has been incorporated into Wisconsin's PIP and overall strategic planning efforts. A virtual follow-up meeting occurred in 2020, with another scheduled for June 2022 where the same team members will be invited to attend.

DCF's involvement in committees staffed by CCIP are varied and extensive. For example, the DCF secretary and leadership serve as members of the Wisconsin Commission on Children, Families and the Courts, which is a broad-based stakeholder advisory body that provides input on court improvement projects and child welfare related policies and activities. The commission, chaired by the Wisconsin Supreme Court Chief Justice, is charged with developing and institutionalizing meaningful collaboration across systems to identify and address barriers to safety, permanency, and child and family well-being at the state and local levels.

DCF will continue to utilize the Wisconsin Commission, the Wisconsin Judicial Committee on Child Welfare, and other committees staffed by the Children's Court Improvement Program (CCIP) to provide agency updates to and solicit input from judicial officers, attorneys, and other stakeholders regarding legislation and policies. Recent topics have included the Permanency Plan redesign; Child and Family Services Review (CFSR); Program Improvement Plan (PIP); the Tailored Dispositional Orders Project (a PIP strategy); elevating family voice and lived experience expertise; DCF's Putting Families First approach and town hall events; court and child welfare practice and challenges during COVID-19; Adoption Call to Action Activities & Resources; racial disparity in the Wisconsin child welfare system; and the Family First Prevention Services Act. These committees have also provided input on the Child and Family Services Plans (CFSPs) and Annual Progress and Services Reports (APSRs), and recently provided input on DCF's current strategic planning process.

In addition, staff from CCIP and/or circuit court judicial officers participated in a number of ongoing committees staffed and led by DCF, such as the Child Welfare Continuous Quality Improvement Advisory Committee and the Out of Home Care and Adoption Committees. Most recently, CCIP is providing support to DCF as it starts a pre-petition legal services program to keep families out of the formal court system and as part of the Child Welfare External Change Management Advisory Group.

The department values and is committed to strong collaboration with the judicial branch and the CCIP. The department will continue to include CCIP representatives as part of CFSR/PIP and Title IV-E activities and the development of the CFSP and DCF's strategic planning efforts. DCF also shares AFCARS and eWiSACWIS administrative data with CCIP on an ongoing basis.

## 2. Update on the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes

### Context for State's Current Performance

This section captures data related to the performance outcomes specific to safety, permanency, and well-being, noted trends with respect to the CFSR outcomes and national performance standards, and highlights initiatives to address each area. We would be remiss not to acknowledge that our 2020 data begins to capture the quantitative story of our child welfare system through the lens of the still ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, with which we are still seeing impacts in our 2021 and 2022 data. In 2020, our state saw a sharp decline in reports of suspected maltreatment – as well as other data abnormalities that reflect the impact of the pandemic on our system – and we are committed to continuing to deepen our understanding of the impact of the pandemic on the children, families, and communities we serve. Other deviations related to COVID-19 include a decrease in entries into OHC and longer length of stays.

Data presented includes:

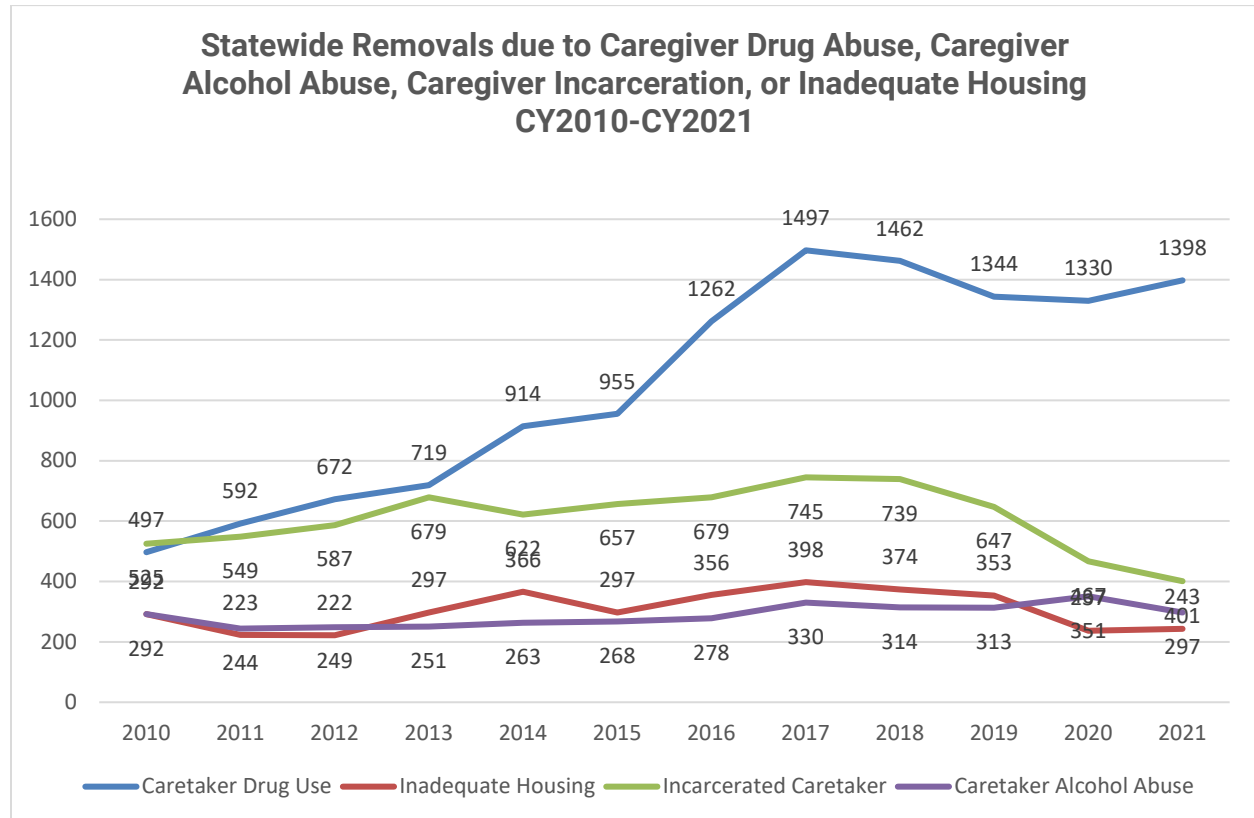
- The most recently available case review data using the federal On-Site Review Instrument (OSRI);
- State administrative data when available;
- Federal performance measures; and,
- Where data is available, information from research partners on specific topics.

Overall trends of note in the last decade include a growth in out-of-home care cases; however, in very recent years there has been a decrease in the number of unique child removals to out-of-home care. Based on analysis of eWISACWIS administrative data shown in the graph on the following page, the factor contributing most significantly to the rise in child welfare cases in the ten-year period is parental drug abuse, which reflects the significant rise in opioid and methamphetamine use in the state. In fact, parental drug and alcohol abuse was one of the only removal reasons where Wisconsin has not seen a significant decrease due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Research has shown that parental drug abuse-related child welfare cases are generally more complex than other child welfare cases, and therefore more costly in terms of caseworker time and services than other child welfare cases.<sup>1</sup> Due to the rise in child welfare cases, workload on child welfare professionals increased significantly. Based on the

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<sup>1</sup> R. Ghertner, M. Baldwin, G. Crouse, L. Radel, and A. Waters, "The Relationship between Substance Use Indicators and Child Welfare Caseloads," *ASPE Research Brief*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, revised March 9, 2018. Available at <https://aspe.hhs.gov/pdf-report/relationship-between-substance-use-indicators-and-child-welfare-caseloads>.

discussions with stakeholders including county caseworkers and managers, prior, during, and after the CFSR, a major root cause of any weaknesses in performance on case practice items is the increased demand workload and caseloads place on child welfare professionals.



	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Caretaker Drug Use	497	592	672	719	914	955	1262	1497	1462	1344	1330	1398
Inadequate Housing	292	223	222	297	366	297	356	398	374	353	237	243
Incarcerated Caretaker	525	549	587	679	622	657	679	745	739	647	467	401
Caretaker Alcohol Abuse	292	244	249	251	263	268	278	330	314	313	351	297
Unique Child Removals	4735	4728	4471	4949	4976	4942	4993	5277	5100	4833	3937	3753

## Child and Family Outcomes

The section that follows represents data specific to each of the eighteen safety, permanency, and well-being case review items. These include the State 2018 CFSR results, performance on the CFSR national standards and available state administrative data for areas of safety,

permanence, and well-being over recent years. Additionally, we report baseline case review data, as well as year one case review data from our Program Improvement Plan measurement plan.

*Safety Outcomes 1 and 2*

**Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.**

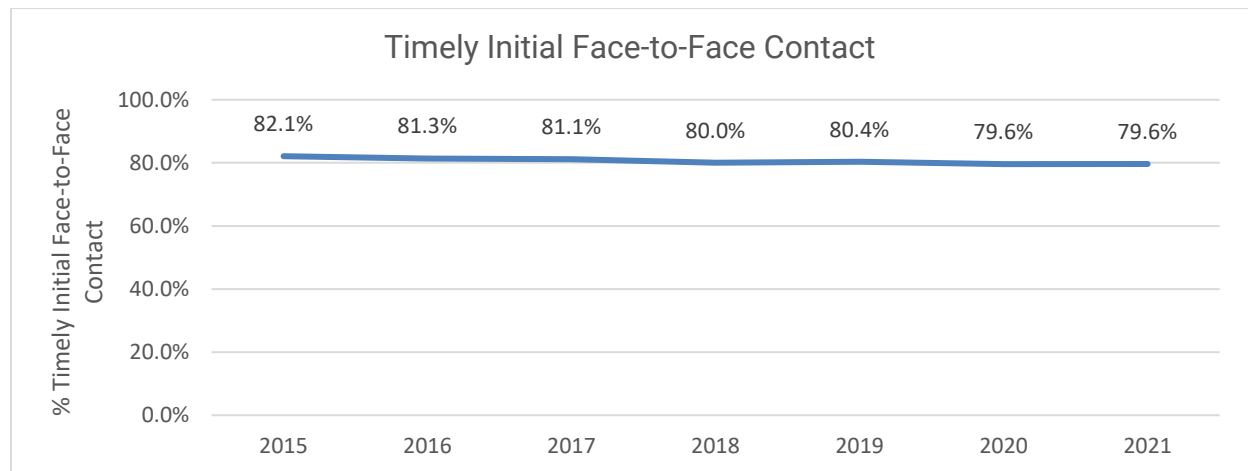
**Item 1: Timelines of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment.**

*Were the agency's responses to all accepted child maltreatment reports initiated, and face-to-face contact with the child(ren) made, within the time frames established by agency policies or state statutes?*

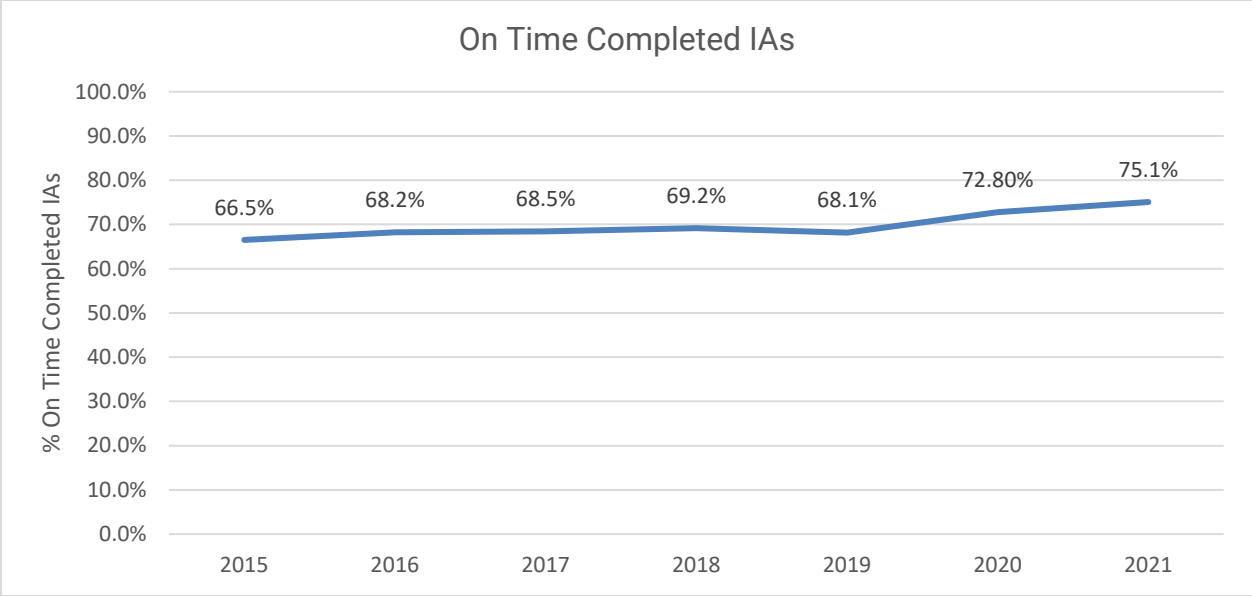
**Improvement Goal: 88%**

	2015 Case Reviews (271)	2016 Case Reviews (266)	2017 Case Reviews (105)	2018 Case Reviews (107)	2018 CF SR (65)	2019-2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020-2021 PIP Year 1 (80)	2021-2022 PIP Year 2 (58)
Item 1	76%	76%	76%	49%	93%	75%	74%	88%

*Administrative Caseworker Contact Data*

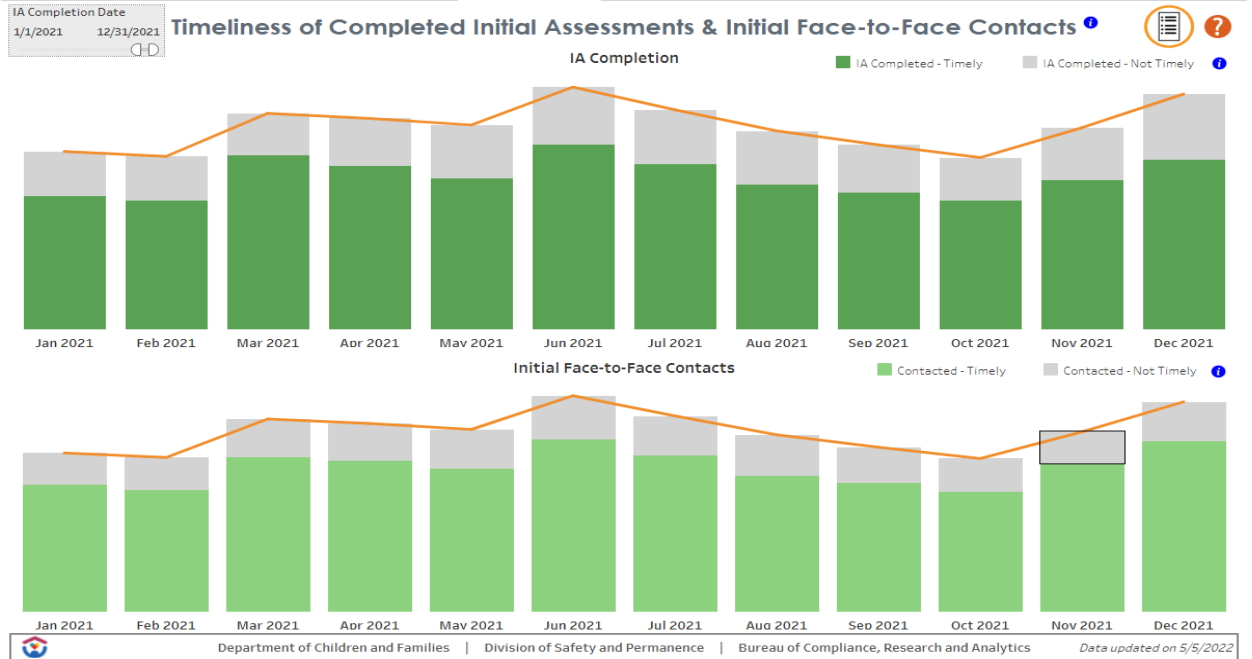


	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Timely Face-to-Face Contact	82.1%	81.3%	81.1%	80.0%	80.4%	79.6%	79.6%
Total IAs Completed	26,956	26,456	26,188	27,148	25,352	22,684	22,180



	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
On Time IAs	66.5%	68.2%	68.5%	69.2%	68.1%	72.80%	75.1%
Total IAs Completed	26,956	26,456	26,188	27,148	25,352	22,684	22,180

*Initial Assessment Dashboard*



**Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.**

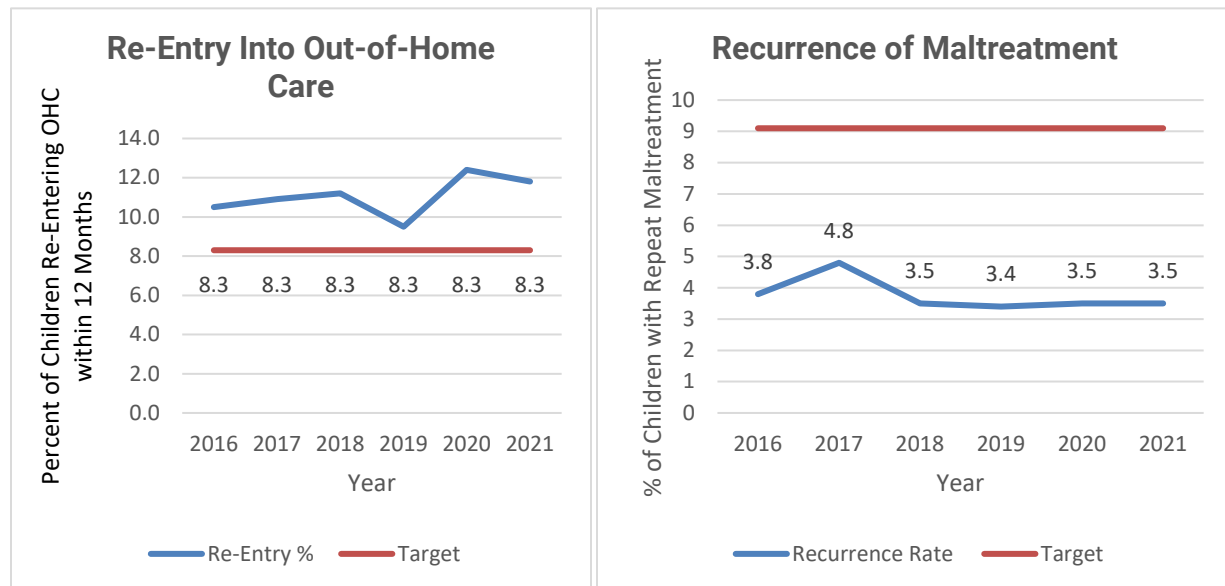
**Item 2: Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry into Foster Care.**

Did the agency make concerted efforts to provide services to the family to **prevent** children’s **entry into foster care or re-entry** after reunification?

**Improvement Goal: 90%**

	2015 Case Reviews (271)	2016 Case Reviews (266)	2017 Case Reviews (105)	2018 Case Reviews (107)	2018 CFSR (65)	2019-2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020-2021 PIP Year 1 (80)	2021-2022 PIP Year 2 (58)
Item 2	88%	86%	82%	83%	58%	82%	82%	95%

*National Performance Data-CFSR 3 Measures\*\**



*\*\*Note, the X axis for both CFSR3 measures above notes performance during the CY Outcome Window.*



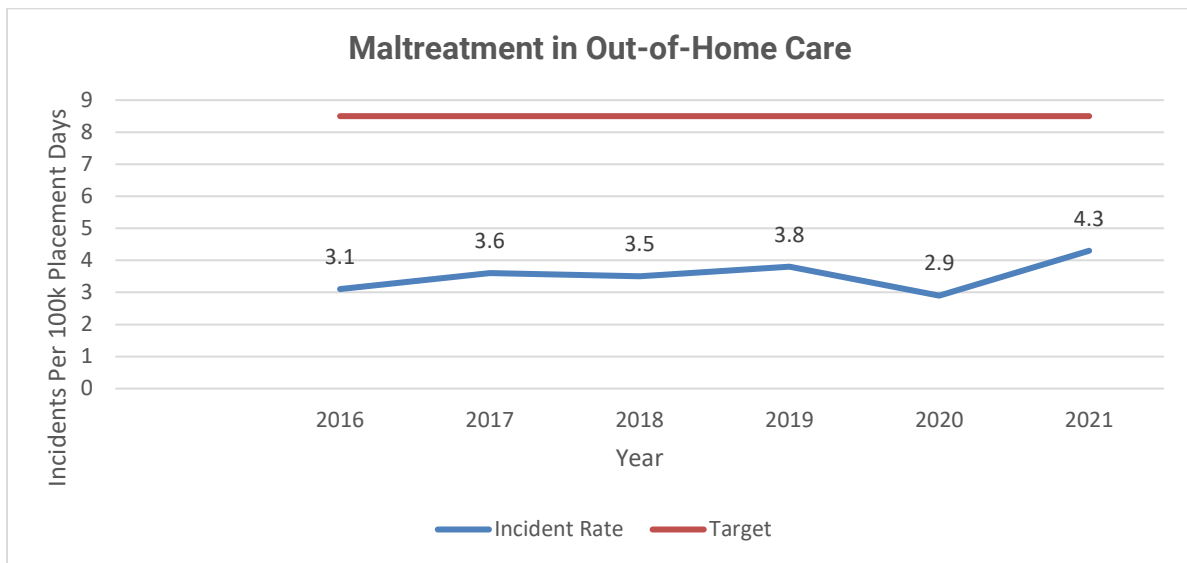
**Item 3: Risk and Safety Assessment and Management.**

Did the agency make concerted efforts to **assess and address the risks and safety** concerns related to the child(ren) in their own homes or while in foster care?

**Improvement Goal: 82%**

	2015 Case Reviews (271)	2016 Case Reviews (266)	2017 Case Reviews (105)	2018 Case Reviews (107)	2018 CFSR (65)	2019-2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020-2021 PIP Year 1 (80)	2021-2022 PIP Year 2 (58)
Item 3	64%	72%	70%	64%	35%	75%	78%	71%

*National Performance Data-CFSR3 Measures\*\**



*\*\*Note, the X axis for the measures above notes performance during the CY Outcome Window.*

*Administrative Initial Assessment Data*

Safety Decision by Initial Assessment Disposition for Primary Caregiver CPS Initial Assessments: Calendar Year 2020

Initial Assessment Disposition	Safe		Unsafe		No Safety Decision		Total	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Case Closed	14,705	71.4%	110	0.5%	333	1.6%	15,148	73.5%
Case Closed – Child Safe and Referred to Community Services	1,934	9.4%	33	0.2%	116	0.6%	2,083	10.1%
Case Opened – Ongoing CPS Services: Petition	206	1.0%	1,755	8.5%	58	0.3%	2,019	9.8%
Case Already Opened – Ongoing CPS Services	226	1.1%	206	1.0%	15	0.1%	447	2.2%
Case Closed – Child Safe and Referred to Community Response Program	237	1.2%	3	0.0%	10	0.0%	250	1.2%
Case Opened – Ongoing CPS Services: Voluntary	194	0.9%	297	1.4%	1	0.0%	492	2.4%
Case Opened – Non-CPS Services	96	0.5%	13	0.1%	2	0.0%	111	0.5%
Case Opened – DMCPs Safety Services	14	0.1%	38	0.2%	0	0.0%	52	0.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,612</b>	<b>85.5%</b>	<b>2,455</b>	<b>11.9%</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>20,602</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*Confirming a Safe Environment*

Confirming Safe Environment (CSE) is an assessment used to confirm the home environment is safe prior to placing a child in OHC. If there is a pre-existing approved CSE, a Reconfirming Safe Environment (RCSE) is completed. CSEs are due ten calendar days after the placement begin date, and RCSEs are due 180 calendar days after the previous RCSE or CSE approval date.

CY 2021 Data:

	CSE	RCSE
Amount Due:	3,374	2,940
Completed:	2,673	2,940
Completed Timely:	767	1,492

*Risk Management Services by Child/Provider Match Category*

When a risk is identified during a CSE/RCSE, a risk management plan must be created to mitigate the risk and ensure the environment is safe for the child. Considerations for a risk management plan include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Additional or special training for placement providers
- Additional contact by agency or other providers
- Re-arranging the living environment

The table below shows the number of risk management services provided to each child/provider match category determined by a child’s approved CSE/RCSE. The table also shows what percentage of the service was received by each match category.

The definition of Child/Provider match category is whether the child’s level of need (LON) matches the provider’s level of care (LOC). These data include the most recently completed CSE/RCSE for each child’s placement with identified risk assessment and management from January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021.

*Risk Management Services Provided*

Risk Management Services	Child/Provider Match Category							
	LOC Exceeds LON (n=386)		LOC matches LON (n=529)		LON exceeds LOC (n=380)		N/A (n=771)	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Special Training	139	39.6%	149	26.6%	60	15.4%	191	26.9%
Additional Contact	117	33.3%	131	23.4%	108	27.8%	206	29.0%
Rearrange Living	55	15.7%	83	14.8%	55	14.1%	99	13.9%
Closer Supervision	225	64.1%	298	53.1%	233	59.9%	375	52.7%
Additional Rules	37	10.5%	54	9.6%	32	8.2%	81	11.4%
Special Equipment	42	12.0%	47	8.4%	36	9.3%	59	8.3%

**Safety Outcomes Strengths and Challenges**

The department continues to orient the child welfare system toward the goal of keeping children with their families; supported in their homes and communities. The safety data captured above reflect the child welfare system’s ability to maintain children safely in their home and assess and address safety concerns. Administrative data shows performance holding relatively steady over the last five years as it relates to timeliness of face-to-face contacts and timely completion of initial assessments, though in 2020 Wisconsin did see a marked improvement in timely completion of initial assessments. National Performance Data suggest Wisconsin continues to exceed federal standards by limiting the recurrence of maltreatment and the incidents of reported maltreatment in out-of-home care.

**Initiatives to Address Safety**

- DCF Initial Assessment Standards spell out policies and practices to support meeting federal safety guidelines.

- Applied Learning Communities (ALCs) provided by the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System have focused on improving safety practices through a collaborative learning model that includes a peer support Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) approach and supported in regions across the state.
- Required Initial and Ongoing training in safety decision making is another key initiative focused on safety practices.
- Dashboards are a valuable tool to help both DCF and counties track and monitor safety outcomes and patterns and identify areas where performance is strong, or improvements are needed. As part of the 2020 PIP, DCF is continuing the practice of reviewing of these dashboards and providing feedback to counties about performance expectations.
- Related to the PIP initiative, DSP has been coordinating with the Bureau of Regional Operations (BRO) since the fall of 2020 to keep track of timely initial face-to-face contacts. These monthly reports are gathered and documented by BRO and sent to the DSP lead for the project to be analyzed. Thus far, the data shows agencies in larger counties in the state make timely initial face-to-face contacts less often than agencies in smaller counties. Since larger agencies account for a larger percentage of cases for the state, there is a larger impact on the overall data. Efforts to work with the larger agencies to enhance success with this measurement is a focus in the upcoming PIP quarter. While it is difficult to quantify, documentation of initial face-to-face contacts is one area that can be improved upon. Anecdotal feedback indicates many of the missed responses are due to documentation errors. Other reasons for missed responses are due to workload and difficult-to-locate families. To address this, DSP elicited the help of BRO to reach out to eleven agencies who show strong success in this area. Agencies were asked a series of questions aimed at learning what strategies they use to consistently meet their initial face-to-face contacts. All of the responses have been received and will be synthesized in a 1-2 page information sheet, which will be distributed statewide once completed. Also included on this informational sheet are details on what constitutes a timely initial face-to-face contact along with what is outlined in Access & IA standards.
- DCF provides flexible funding to agencies through The Targeted Safety Services Funding (TSSF) to prevent removal and re-entry into the child welfare system by keeping children safely in home. This is also a focus of Wisconsin's PIP. This program provides technical assistance to counties and provides a venue for peer support related to meeting safety needs of families. One area identified was the need for more flexible funding to support families in being better able to safely care for children in their own homes. TSSF is available statewide and considered a critical resource to provide flexible funding to families that help them meet their child welfare goals, including avoiding re-entry into the child welfare system.

*Permanency Outcomes 1 and 2*

**Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.**

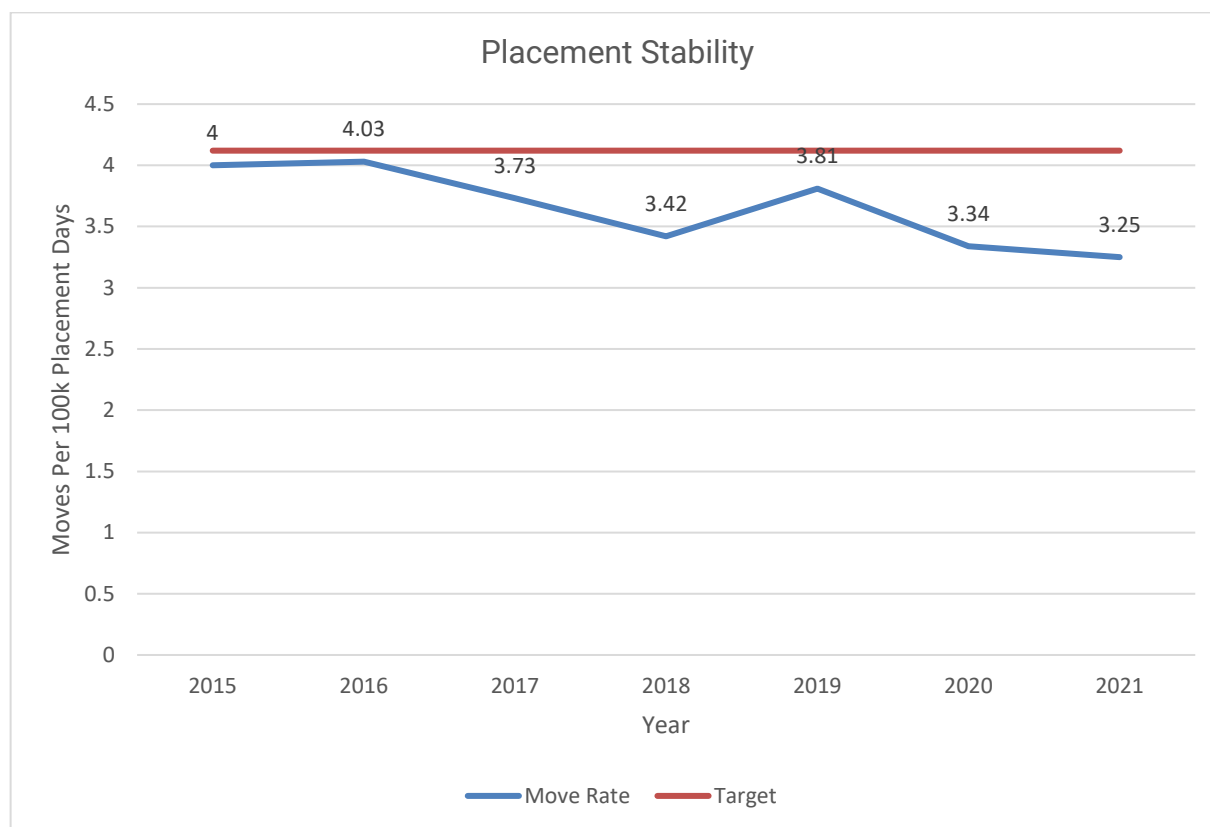
**Item 4: Stability of Foster Care Placement.**

Is the child in foster care in a **stable placement** and were any changes in the child’s placement in the best interests of the child and consistent with achieving the child’s permanency goal(s)?

**Improvement Goal: 81%**

	2015 Case Reviews (271)	2016 Case Reviews (266)	2017 Case Reviews (105)	2018 Case Reviews (107)	2018 CFSR (65)	2019-2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020-2021 PIP Year 1 (80)	2021-2022 PIP Year 2 (58)
Item 4	82%	71%	72%	61%	88%	73%	73%	50%

*National Performance Data- CFSR 3*



**Item 5: Permanency Goal for Child Case Record Review Results.**

Did the agency establish **appropriate permanency goals** for the child in a **timely manner**?

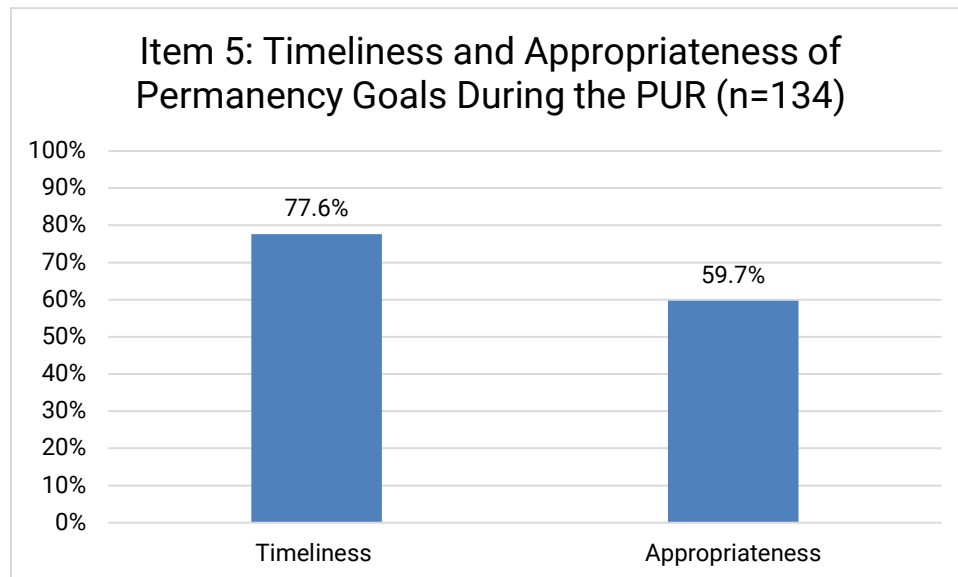
**Improvement Goal: 48%**

	2015 Case Reviews (271)	2016 Case Reviews (266)	2017 Case Reviews (105)	2018 Case Reviews (107)	2018 CFSR (65)	2019-2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020-2021 PIP Year 1 (80)	2021-2022 PIP Year 2 (58)
Item 5	54%	67%	59%	56%	59%	38%	50%	39%

*Case Review Data*

**Item 5B:** Were all the permanency goals that were in effect during the period under review (PUR) established in a **timely manner**?

**Item 5C:** Were all the permanency goals that were in effect during the period under review **appropriate** to the child’s needs for permanency and to the circumstances of the case?



*\*Data includes all cases Approved and Final through Report Period 8 (PUR: 6/1/2018 – 5/1/2021) excluding 4 that were Not Applicable because the target child was in foster care less than 60 days*

In Wisconsin twelve-month permanency review hearings must occur before a judge and in some counties this requirement applies to the six-month hearing. During the COVID-19 pandemic court closures affected the timeliness of both the six- and twelve-month hearings as counties could not schedule them before a judge.

*Administrative Data*

Permanency Plan Goals

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>Adoption</b>	1,178	1,309	1,346	1,584	1,680	1,674	1,759	1,737	1,595
<b>Reunification</b>	4,430	4,781	5,019	5,182	5,848	5,862	5,660	5,271	4,962
<b>Guardianship</b>	583	710	795	945	968	1,095	1,055	1,079	1,003
<b>Permanent Placement with a Fit and Willing Relative</b>	211	162	171	187	157	152	135	93	85
<b>Alt. Permanency Plan</b>	82	6	2	2					
<b>OPPLA</b>	532	500	452	387	370	332	301	320	312
<b>No Permanency Plan Goal Listed</b>	1,713	1,879	1,773	1,765	1,764	1,725	1,603	1,388	1,227
<b>Total</b>	8,729	9,347	9,558	10,052	10,787	10,840	10,513	9,888	9,184

*Qualitative Data*

Wisconsin provides additional data on the timeliness of permanency review hearings under Item 22: Permanency Hearings. This data is pulled from a report created as part of Wisconsin’s overall PIP strategy that allows counties to access and track their internal local timeliness measures. A memo describing the report can be viewed at:

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/memos/2021-34i.pdf>

**Item 6: Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement. Case Record Review Results.**

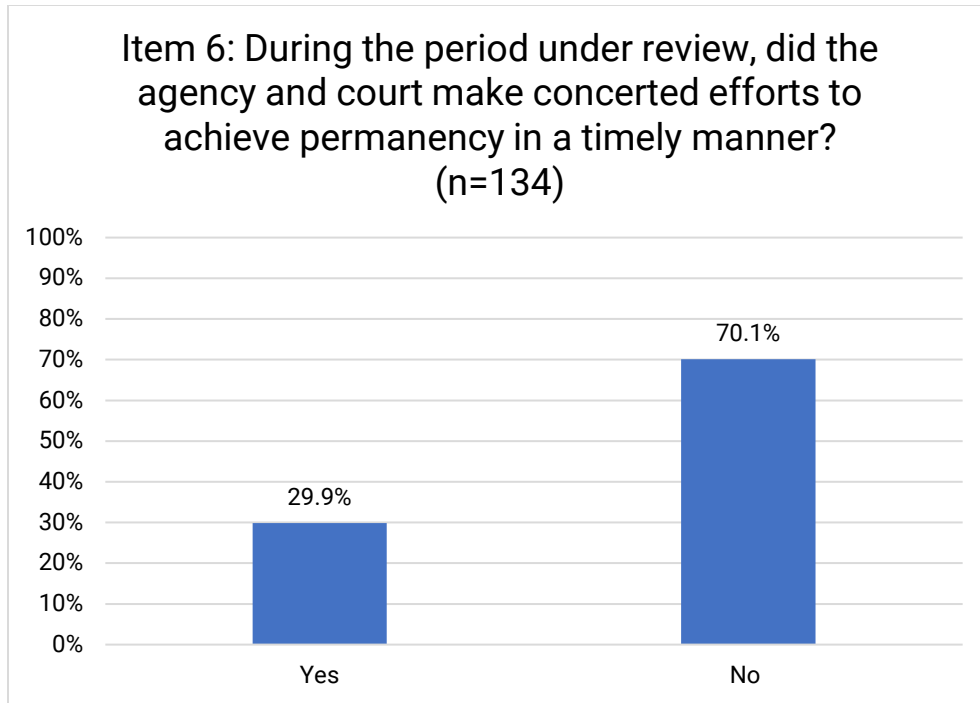
Did the Agency make concerted efforts to **achieve reunification, guardianship, adoption, or other planned permanent living arrangement** for the child?

**Improvement Goal: 39%**

	2015 Case Reviews (271)	2016 Case Reviews (266)	2017 Case Reviews (105)	2018 Case Reviews (107)	2018 CFSR (65)	2019-2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020-2021 PIP Year 1 (80)	2021-2022 PIP Year 2 (58)
Item 6	66%	59%	50%	46%	48%	30%	29%	39%

*Case Review Data*

**Item 6B:** During the period under review, did the agency and court **make concerted efforts** to achieve the permanency in a timely manner?



*\*Data includes all cases Approved and Final through Report Period 8 (PUR: 6/1/2018 – 5/1/2021) excluding 4 that were Not Applicable for 6B because OPPLA was the only permanency goal in effect during the PUR.*

#### *Qualitative Data*

Wisconsin is one of a few states that has a right to a jury trial provision (one of seven for TPR). During the pandemic there were delays associated with CHIPS and particularly TPR cases due to the inability to hold jury trials which created a backlog especially on the TPR side. In the beginning of the pandemic, jury trials were suspended by the Wisconsin Supreme Court through May 22, 2020. After that, counties were required to develop a plan for moving forward with court operations and jury trials. It took until June 1, 2021, for all 72 counties develop plans for resuming in-person operations and jury trials.

Item 6 Case Review examples during Reporting Period 7 (*March 2021 – February 2022*) from cases rated as an Area Needing Improvement (ANI):

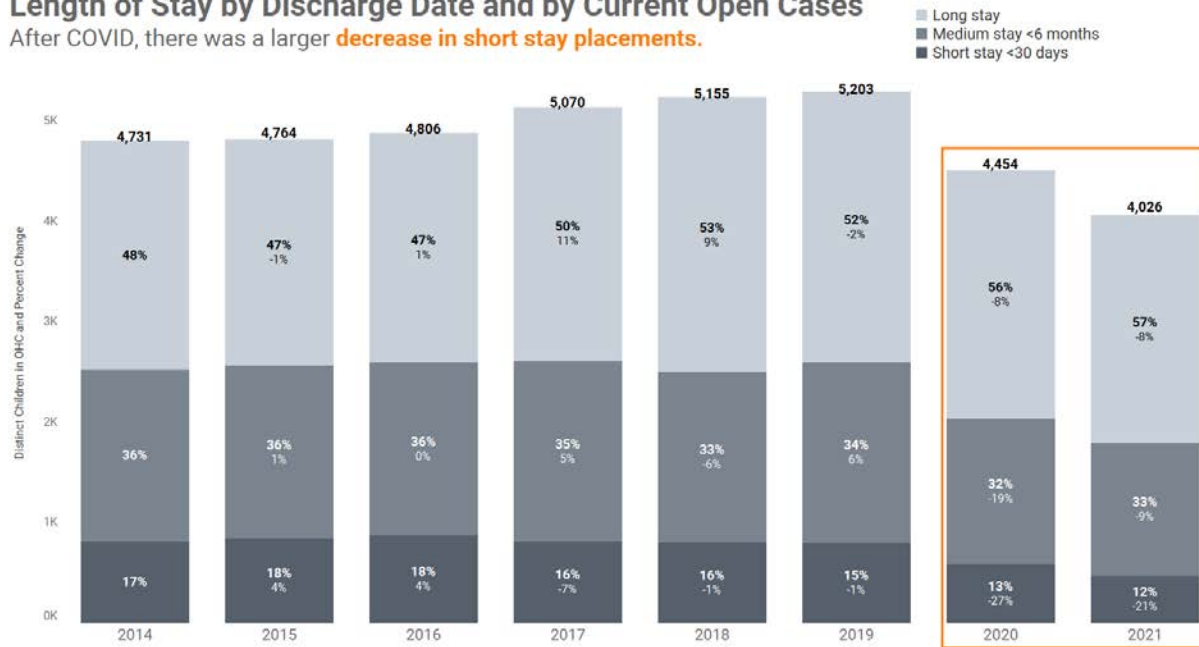
- Corp Counsel attorney left agency which caused backlog of cases – delayed filing of Guardianship petition
- TPR trial – mother requested counsel and counsel requested additional time that exceeded adoption timelines
- TPR order in review by Appellate court (initial TPR referral was also not timely)
- ADA refused to file TPR petition with no adoptive resource identified
- TPR was appropriate, but county's court does not typically terminate parental rights involuntary



During the COVID-19 pandemic Wisconsin saw its discharges from out-of-home care decrease and a larger decrease in the proportion of children with placements less than thirty days:

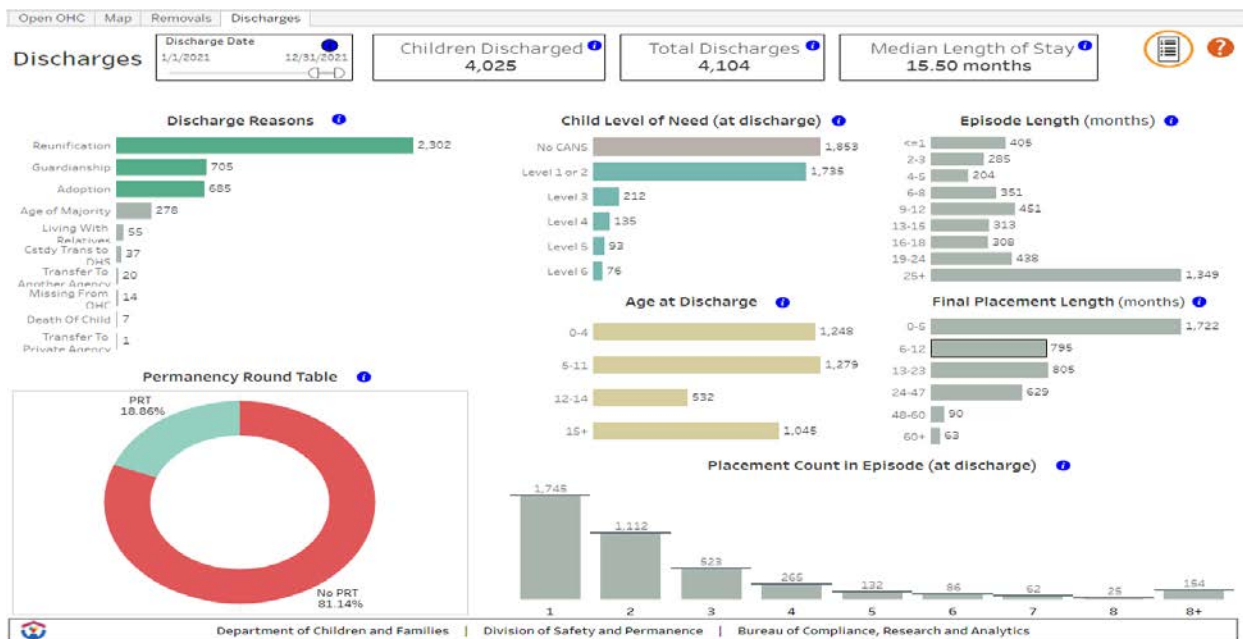
### Length of Stay by Discharge Date and by Current Open Cases

After COVID, there was a larger **decrease in short stay placements.**

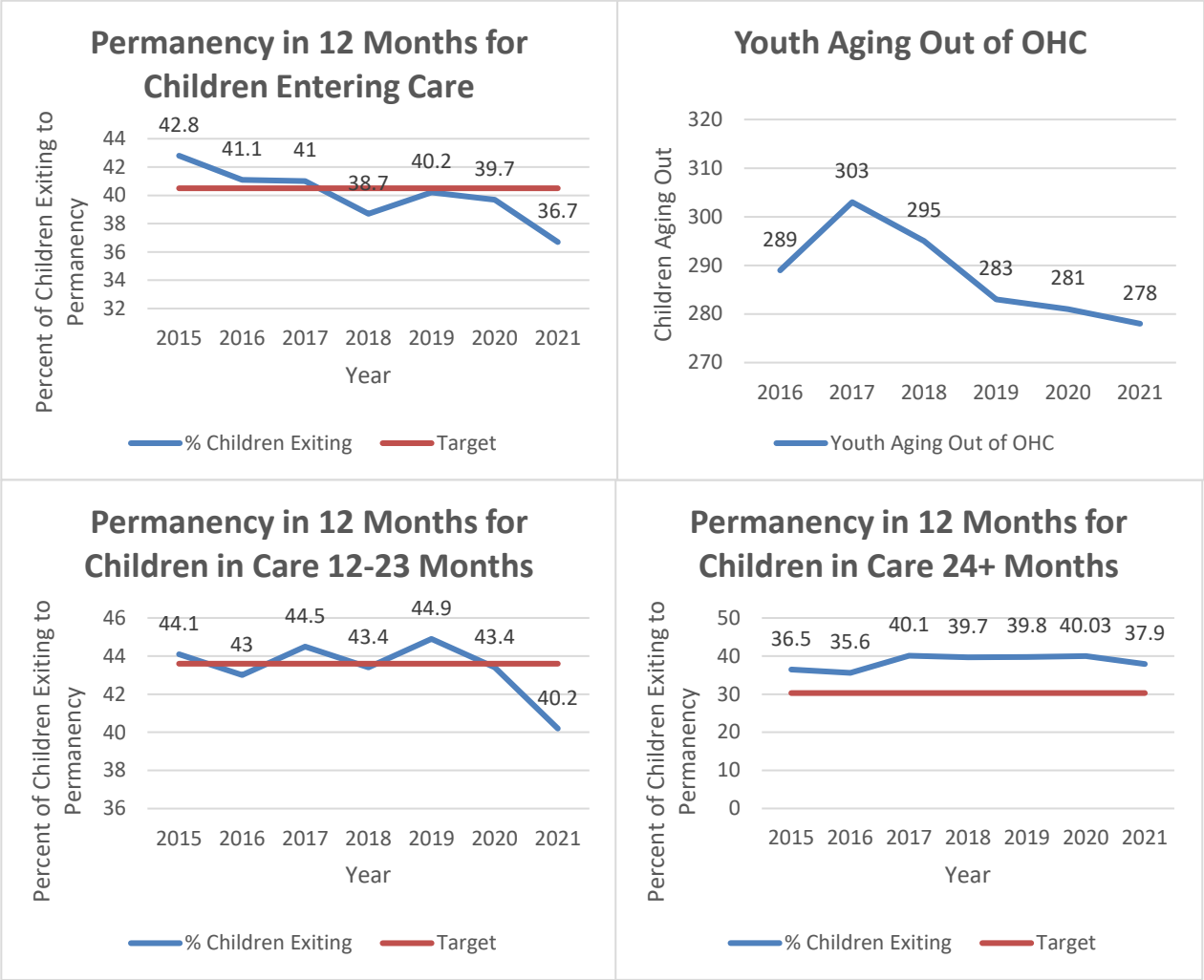


The shrinking population of short-stay children both in terms of those who are getting discharged and the overall population of children in care at one time is inflating Wisconsin's overall median length of stay.

### OHC Discharge Dashboard



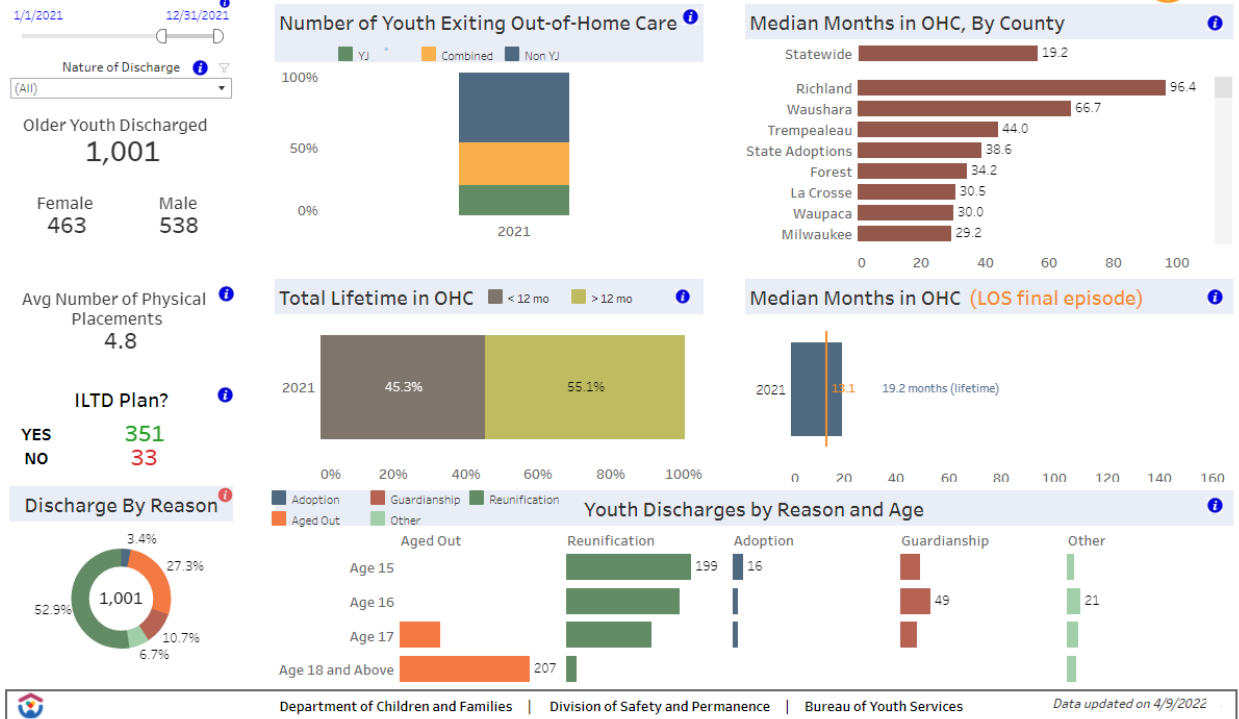
National Performance Data – CFSR3\*\* and Administrative Data



\*\*Note, the X axis for the CFSR3 measures above notes performance during the CY Outcome Window.

## Older Youth Outcomes Dashboard

### Older Youth Outcomes (Age 15 and Older)



**Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.**

### Item 7: Placement with Siblings.

Did the agency make concerted efforts to ensure that **siblings in roster care are placed together** unless separation was necessary to meet the needs of one of the siblings?

	2015 Case Reviews (271)	2016 Case Reviews (266)	2017 Case Reviews (105)	2018 Case Reviews (107)	2018 CF SR (65)	2019-2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020-2021 PIP Year 1 (80)	2021-2022 PIP Year 2 (58)
Item 7	86%	84%	90%	93%	83%	96%	90%	92%

**Item 8: Visiting with Parents and Siblings in Foster Care.**

Did the agency make concerted efforts to ensure that **visitation between a child in foster care and his or her mother, father, and siblings** was of sufficient frequency and quality to promote continuity in the child’s relationships with these close family members?

	2015 Case Reviews (271)	2016 Case Reviews (266)	2017 Case Reviews (105)	2018 Case Reviews (107)	2018 CFSR (65)	2019-2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020-2021 PIP Year 1 (80)	2021-2022 PIP Year 2 (58)
Item 8	57%	68%	65%	58%	66%	63%	73%	77%

**Item 9: Preserving Connections.**

Did the agency make concerted efforts to **preserve the child’s connections** to his or her neighborhood, community, faith, extended family, Tribe, school, and friends?

	2015 Case Reviews (271)	2016 Case Reviews (266)	2017 Case Reviews (105)	2018 Case Reviews (107)	2018 CFSR (65)	2019-2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020-2021 PIP Year 1 (80)	2021-2022 PIP Year 2 (58)
Item 9	75%	81%	78%	64%	65%	73%	73%	74%

*Administrative Data*

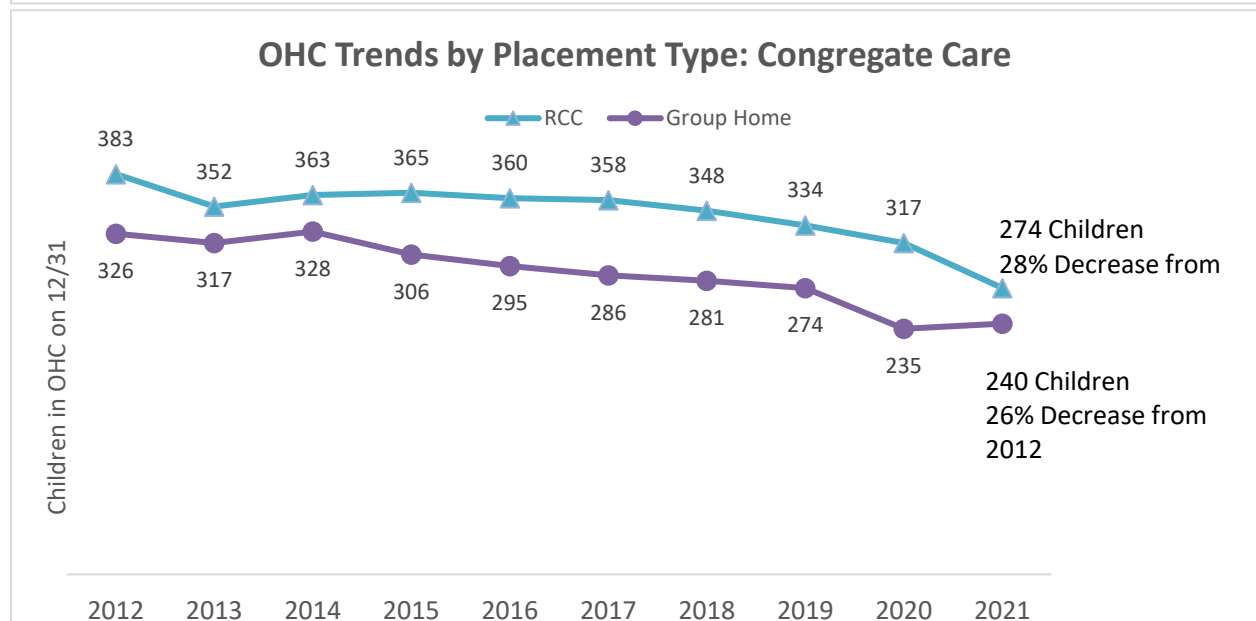
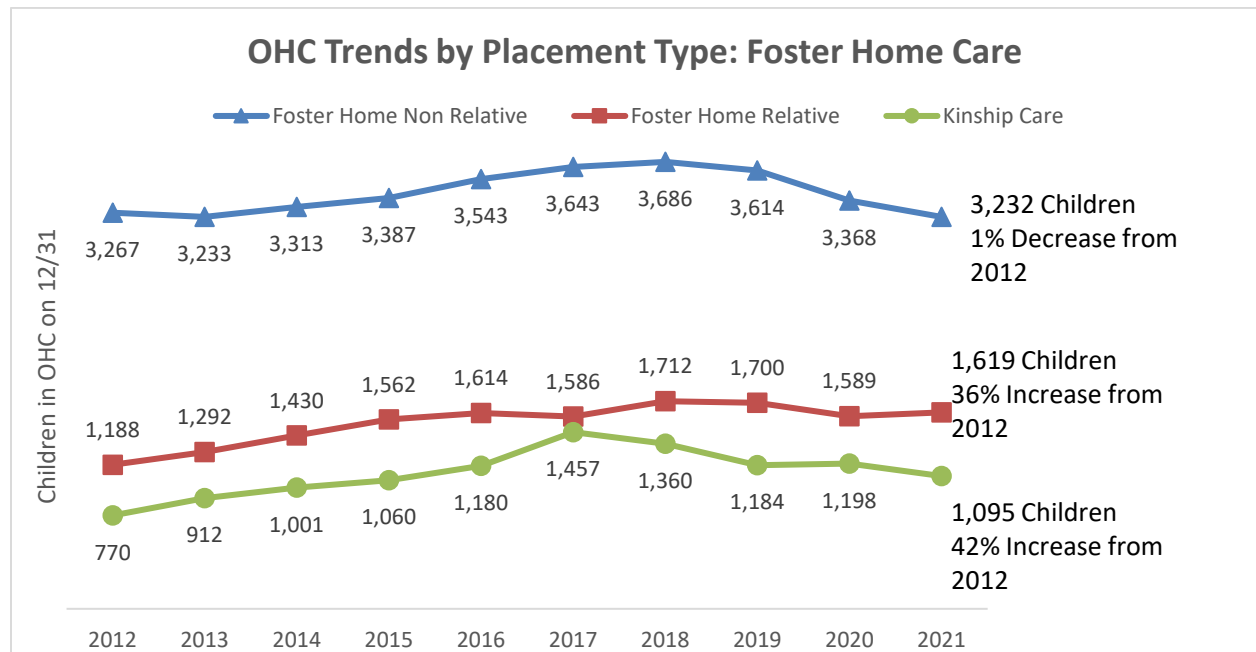
	Number of Children Placed in Homes (at Removal) Within 60 Miles of Home						
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>Children Removed</b>	4,008	4,094	4,442	4,229	4,098	3,225	3,114
<b>Total Removals</b>	4,183	4,292	4,597	4,439	4,303	3,349	3,223
<b>Percentage</b>	96%	95%	97%	95%	95%	96%	97%
<b>Median Distance (miles) from Home</b>	7.73	7.14	7	6.82	6.41	7.13	7.14

**Item 10: Relative Placement.**

Did the agency make concerted efforts to **place the child with relatives** when appropriate?

	2015 Case Reviews (271)	2016 Case Reviews (266)	2017 Case Reviews (105)	2018 Case Reviews (107)	2018 CFR (65)	2019-2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020-2021 PIP Year 1 (80)	2021-2022 PIP Year 2 (58)
Item 10	62%	70%	82%	57%	68%	74%	79%	86%

*Administrative Placement Data*



**Item 11: Relationship of Child in Care with Parents.**

Did the agency make concerted efforts to promote, support, and/or maintain **positive relationships between the child in foster care and his or her mother and father** or other primary caregivers from whom the child had been removed through activities other than just arranging for visitation?

	2015 Case Reviews (271)	2016 Case Reviews (266)	2017 Case Reviews (105)	2018 Case Reviews (107)	2018 CFSR (65)	2019- 2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020- 2021 PIP Year 1 (80)	2021- 2022 PIP Year 2 (58)
Item 11	67%	67%	72%	65%	65%	67%	80%	76%

**Summary of Performance Outcomes 1 and 2**

Wisconsin’s vision for child welfare strongly emphasizes the role of relatives and like-kin in caring for all children and youth who are unable to remain safely in their home. This focus is reflected in the substantial increase in children placed in relative foster homes and in kinship care since 2012. Wisconsin’s focus on keeping children connected to their families and communities aligns with the good practices of relative placement and placement with siblings. Wisconsin is also working toward a vision in which Wisconsin safely reduces the use of congregate care; the system has made measurable progress as the number of children placed in residential care centers and group homes has steadily declined since 2012.

**Initiatives to Address:**

- Ongoing Standards spell out comprehensive policies to assure alignment with federal and state permanency guidelines and requirements focused on promoting timely and safe permanency for children.
- Case practice is focused on planning on avoiding re-entry.
- A key component of standards focuses on the Permanency Plan (“Written Case Plan”) development to identify and address permanency and child and family support needs. In 2021, revisions to the Permanency Plan began in an effort to support the workforce and families in a more streamlined, trauma informed document. This revision will go into effect in 2022. Additional DCF revised the Permanency Plan timeliness report and began providing technical assistance to support timely reviews.
- Family Find and Engagement is a DCF initiative that has worked to significantly expand the pool of relatives to care for children in the OHC system. This initiative is a key focus of the Wisconsin PIP.
- The Relative Caregiver Initiative, or sometimes called the “Kinship Navigator” project, is bolstering ongoing efforts to help caregivers best care for children in their families. This is also a key initiative of the Wisconsin PIP.

- The TPR Timeliness Project is a collaboration with the Children’s Court Improvement Project and the University of Wisconsin’s Institute for Research on Poverty to explore data and practice that will assist with timelines. Additional collaborative training and resources developed with the Children’s Court Improvement Project are described in case review items 21-24.

*Well-Being Outcomes 1, 2, and 3*

**Well-Being 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs.**

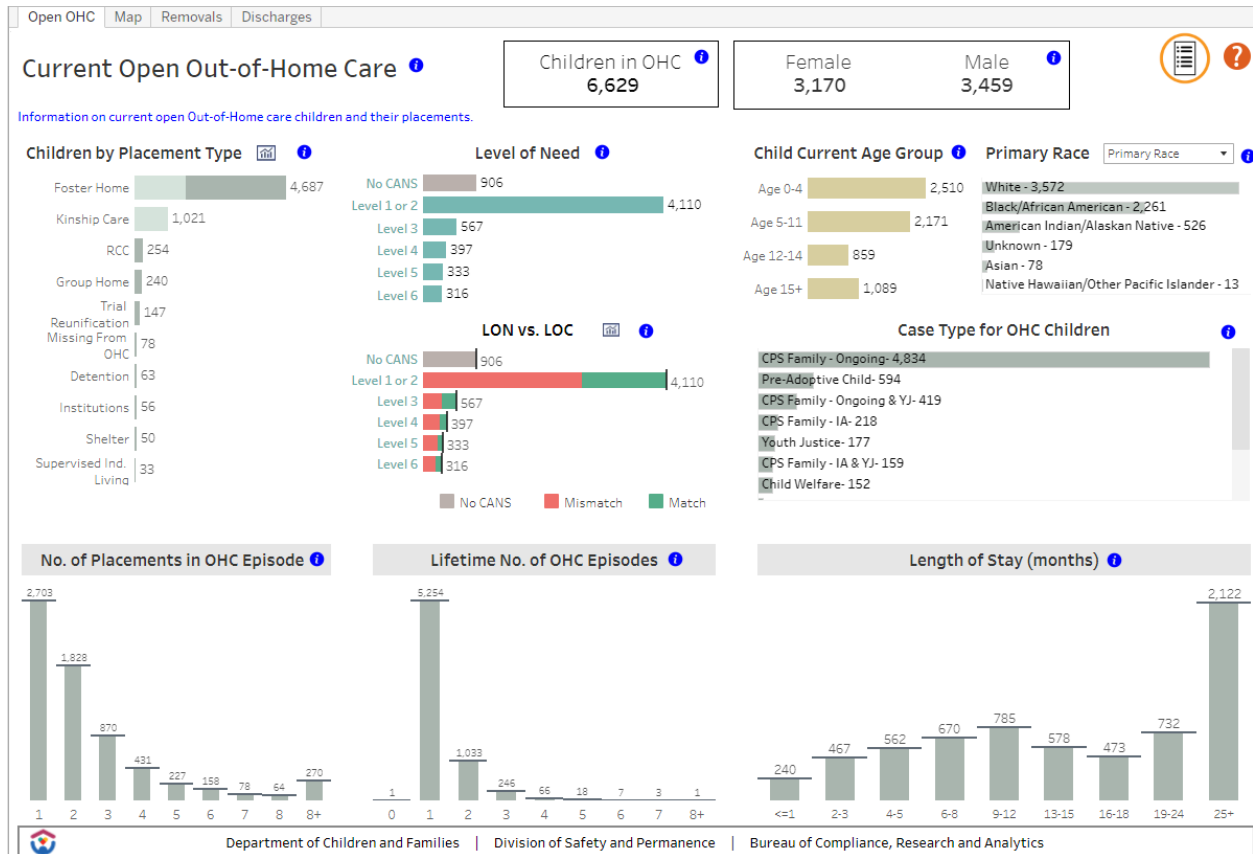
**Item 12: Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents.**

Did the agency make concerted efforts to **assess the needs** of and **provide services** to **children, parents, and foster parents** to identify the services necessary to achieve case goals and adequately address the issues relevant to the agency’s involvement with the family?

**Improvement Goal: 38%**

	<b>2015 Case Reviews (271)</b>	<b>2016 Case Reviews (266)</b>	<b>2017 Case Reviews (105)</b>	<b>2018 Case Reviews (107)</b>	<b>2018 CFSR (65)</b>	<b>2019- 2020 PIP Baseline (65)</b>	<b>2020- 2021 PIP Year 1 (80)</b>	<b>2021- 2022 PIP Year 2 (58)</b>
Item 12	52%	60%	54%	36%	43%	31%	43%	40%

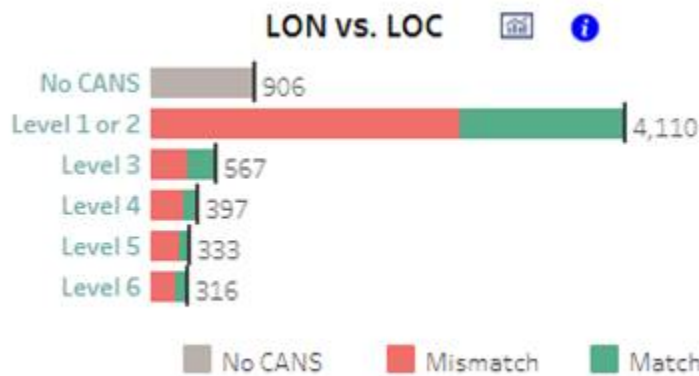
## Current Open Out-of-Home Care Dashboard



### Child Level of Need vs. Level of Care

A Match of Child Level of Need (LON) and placement provider Level of Care (LOC) means that, for example, a LON 3 child is placed with a provider of LOC 3.

A Mismatch means a child is placed above or below their assessed LON.



\*Data includes all children in OHC as of 8/19/22 by their Match/Mismatch of CANS LON and LOC.



**Item 13: Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning.**

Did the agency make concerted efforts to **assess the needs** of and **provide services** to **children, parents, and foster parents** to identify the services necessary to achieve case goals and adequately address the issues relevant to the agency’s involvement with the family?

**Improvement Goal: 36%**

	2015 Case Reviews (271)	2016 Case Reviews (266)	2017 Case Reviews (105)	2018 Case Reviews (107)	2018 CFSR (65)	2019- 2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020- 2021 PIP Year 1 (80)	2021- 2022 PIP Year 2 (58)
Item 13	80%	61%	67%	49%	42%	29%	59%	47%

**Item 14: Caseworker Visits with Child.**

Were the **frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and child(ren)** sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child(ren) and promote achievement of case goals?

**Improvement Goal: 73%**

	2015 Case Reviews (271)	2016 Case Reviews (266)	2017 Case Reviews (105)	2018 Case Reviews (107)	2018 CFSR (65)	2019- 2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020- 2021 PIP Year 1 (80)	2021- 2022 PIP Year 2 (58)
Item 14	69%	69%	68%	60%	55%	66%	81%	72%

*Administrative Data*

Monthly Caseworker Visits with Children in Foster Care; October 1, 2020-September 30, 2021

	Cumulative Number of Children in Foster Care	Number of Required Visits	Number of Successful Contacts	Percent	Number of Visits in Child's Residence	Percent
State Total	9,830	80,661	78,491	97.31%	69,397	88.41%

**Item 15: Caseworker Visits with Parents.**

Were the **frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and the mothers and fathers** of the child(ren) sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child(ren) and promote achievement of case goals?

**Improvement Goal: 33%**

	2015 Case Reviews (271)	2016 Case Reviews (266)	2017 Case Reviews (105)	2018 Case Reviews (107)	2018 CF SR (65)	2019-2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020-2021 PIP Year 1 (80)	2021-2022 PIP Year 2 (58)
Item 15	48%	49%	49%	42%	41%	27%	56%	40%

**Well-Being 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.**

**Item 16: Educational Needs of the Child.**

Did the agency make concerted efforts to assess **children's educational needs**, and appropriately address identified needs in case planning and case management services?

	2015 Case Reviews (271)	2016 Case Reviews (266)	2017 Case Reviews (105)	2018 Case Reviews (107)	2018 CF SR (65)	2019-2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020-2021 PIP Year 1 (80)	2021-2022 PIP Year 2 (58)
Item 16	88%	90%	84%	70%	87%	82%	86%	90%

### *High School Educational Outcomes<sup>2</sup>*

DCF contracted with the Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in order to better understand education outcomes of youth experiencing out-of-home care (OHC); IRP investigated several potential links between OHC and the reduced likelihood of high school graduation. Analysis of education outcomes for students was considered for three different groups:

- (1) "Never SNAP, SI, OHC": These students came from families who did not receive SNAP assistance, had no history of a screened-in CPS report, and were not in OHC;
- (2) "SNAP Only": These students have families who received SNAP but who had no history of a screened-in CPS report or OHC;
- (3) "SI Only": These students had a screened-in CPS report but did not experience OHC.

IRP's work, part of which is captured in the figures below, suggests students in OHC experience a greater number of school moves than other similar students. Additionally, OHC students have fewer accumulated credits and graduation.

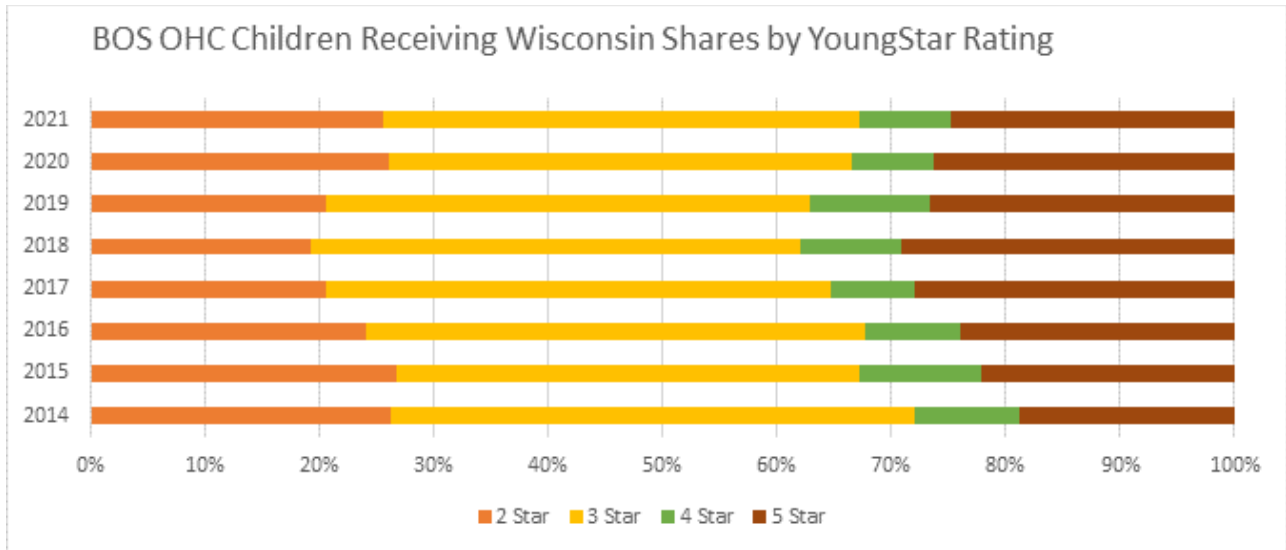
DCF recently received these findings and is continuing to analyze data to understand deeper lessons learned and implications for practice. Overall findings are that students in OHC move schools more often than students who are not in OHC. Additionally, OHC students have fewer accumulated credits which is a barrier to graduation. Both trends are tied to poor educational outcomes. Lastly a joint Elementary and Secondary Education Committee was created with the Department of Public Instruction to continue the collaboration on improving the educational experience and outcomes for kids in OHC.

### *Early Education Data*

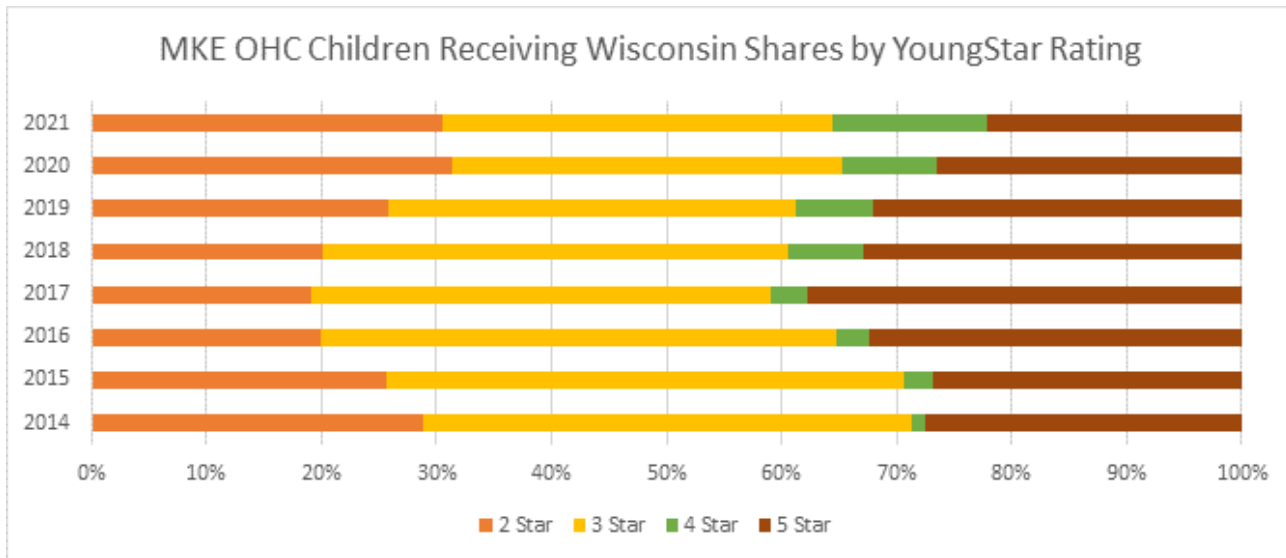
It is critical that early education experiences are high quality to help children get off to a strong start. The Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy program supports low-income working families by subsidizing a portion of the cost of quality child care so that parents or other approved caregivers may work, go to school, or participate in approved work training programs. Families who utilize Wisconsin Shares must attend a program who is participating in YoungStar, which is Wisconsin's child care quality rating and improvement system. Data visualizations on the following page show over-time improvement and sustained improvements in the number of children in OHC that are participating in higher quality early childhood programs.

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<sup>2</sup> L. Berger and H. Kim, "Credit Transfer and High School Graduation Among Wisconsin's Out-of-Home Care Population." Report submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, February, 2020.



<i>BOS OHC Children Receiving Wisconsin Shares by YoungStar Rating</i>								
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>2 Star</b>	26.30%	26.70%	24.10%	20.70%	19.30%	20.70%	26.10%	25.58%
<b>3 Star</b>	45.80%	40.60%	43.70%	44.10%	42.80%	42.20%	40.40%	41.56%
<b>4 Star</b>	9.10%	10.60%	8.20%	7.20%	8.80%	10.40%	7.20%	7.99%
<b>5 Star</b>	18.80%	22.10%	24.00%	28.00%	29.10%	26.70%	26.30%	24.87%



<i>MKE OHC Children Receiving Wisconsin Shares by YoungStar Rating</i>								
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>2 Star</b>	28.90%	25.70%	20.00%	19.10%	20.20%	25.80%	31.40%	30.5%
<b>3 Star</b>	42.40%	44.90%	44.70%	39.90%	40.30%	35.50%	33.90%	33.9%
<b>4 Star</b>	1.20%	2.60%	3.00%	3.30%	6.70%	6.70%	8.20%	13.4%
<b>5 Star</b>	27.50%	26.80%	32.30%	37.70%	32.80%	32.00%	26.50%	22.2%

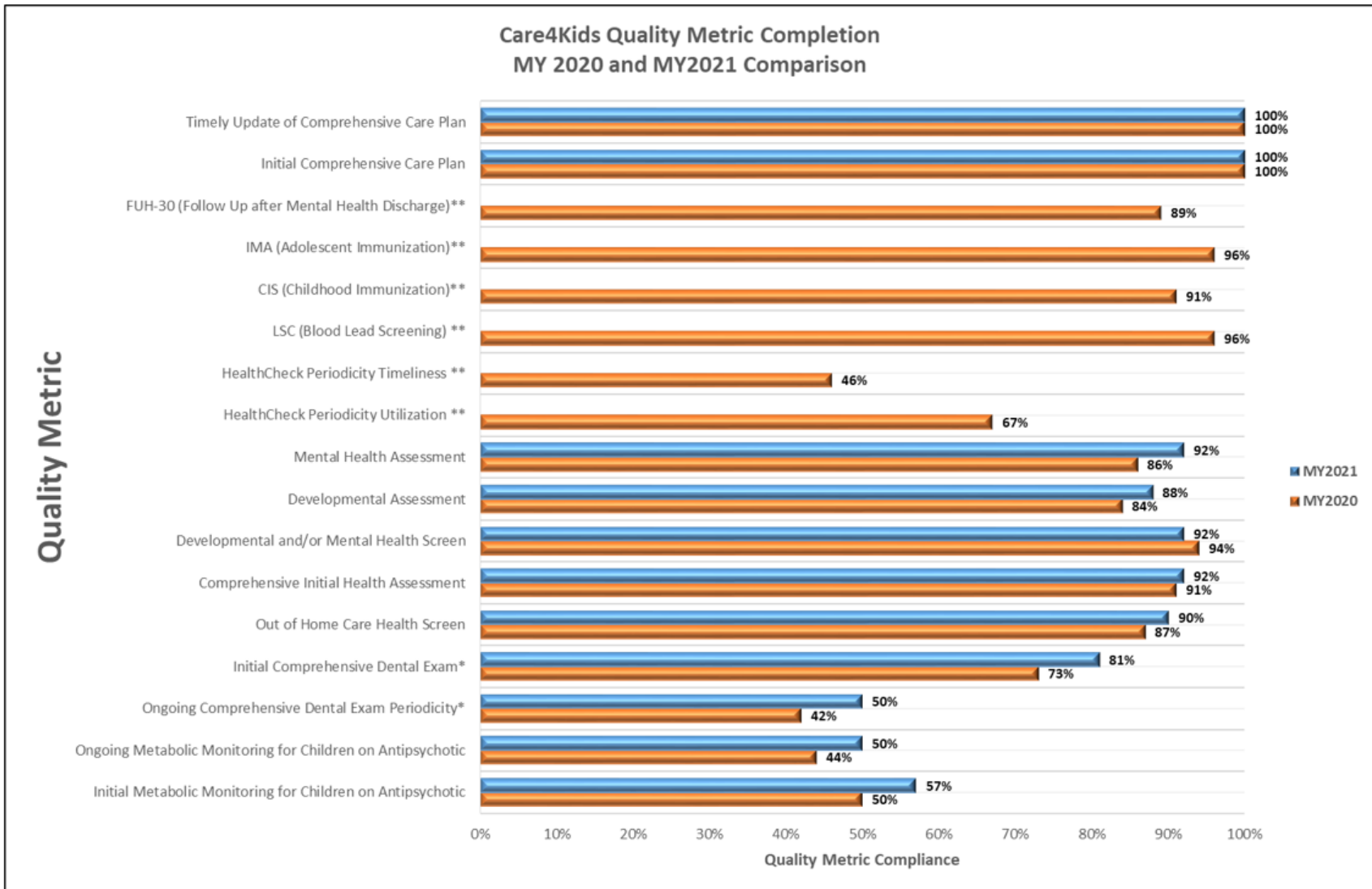
**Well-Being 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.**

**Item 17: Physical Health of the Child.**

Did the agency address the **physical health needs** of children, including dental health needs?

	<b>2015 Case Reviews (271)</b>	<b>2016 Case Reviews (266)</b>	<b>2017 Case Reviews (105)</b>	<b>2018 Case Reviews (107)</b>	<b>2018 CFSR (65)</b>	<b>2019- 2020 PIP Baseline (65)</b>	<b>2020- 2021 PIP Year 1 (80)</b>	<b>2021- 2022 PIP Year 2 (58)</b>
Item 17	61%	60%	60%	53%	72%	77%	74%	71%

DCF and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) closely collaborate to improve the quality, access, and timeliness of health care services to children and youth in OHC through the implementation of a Medicaid medical home service delivery model called Care4Kids. The Care4Kids program provides comprehensive, coordinated care for children and youth in foster care tailored to each child’s individualized needs in six counties.



\*Includes rates only for Semiannual 1 2021, rates for Semiannual 2 2021 will be finalized later this year

\*\*2021 Rates have not yet been reported to DHS or have not yet been received from DHS

**Item 18: Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child.**

Did the agency address the **mental/behavioral health needs** of children?

	<b>2015 Case Reviews (271)</b>	<b>2016 Case Reviews (266)</b>	<b>2017 Case Reviews (105)</b>	<b>2018 Case Reviews (107)</b>	<b>2018 CFSR (65)</b>	<b>2019- 2020 PIP Baseline (65)</b>	<b>2020- 2021 PIP Year 1 (80)</b>	<b>2021- 2022 PIP Year 2 (58)</b>
Item 18	77%	72%	66%	54%	55%	65%	58%	80%

**Summary of Well-Being Performance**

DCF has extensively consulted with key stakeholder groups, families, foster parents, foster youth and others on the state’s performance related to child and family well-being. DCF was noted for performing well in meeting the educational needs of children in OHC in the 2018 CF SR. Additional areas of strength are that DCF continues to maintain a high proportion of children in OHC accessing high-quality child care through the state’s YoungStar program. The Child Adolescent Needs and Strengths Tool (CANS) has been an effective tool in helping identify needs and connecting youth and their families to resources.

**Initiatives to Address:**

- The CANS assessment tool provides a comprehensive assessment of youth and parent needs and helps identify services that will meet the level of need for children and families in the system.
- Care4kids initiative focuses on physical health and mental health and is a critical resource for children in OHC.
- Title IV-B services provide supports to runaway and homeless youth to address educational and well-being needs.
- The Chafee program has a Transitional Regional Agency structure that offers a range of educational, social and well-being initiatives designed to assist youth in successfully transitioning to adulthood.

## Systemic Factors

The following section outlines an annual update to the 2020-2024 CFSP on the seven systemic factors for state child welfare system functioning. Information is presented for each item that are part of the seven systemic factors. For each of the systemic factors, there is a description of what the factor is, a description of available and most current data to demonstrate functioning and a summary of initiatives to address each systemic factor. Some of the systemic factors are described as individual items and some are combined, such as the service array systemic factor.

### *Management Information System (Item 19)*

How well is the **statewide information system** functioning to ensure that, at a minimum, the state can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months has been) in foster care?

According to established policy and practice, every family and child involved with DCF has detailed case information captured in Wisconsin's eWiSACWIS system.

Wisconsin's public-facing out-of-home care dashboard displays this information:

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/dashboard/ohc>

Standards for data entry are articulated throughout DCF's practice standards on the Wisconsin Child Welfare Worker Portal (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal>). For example, the Wisconsin's Ongoing Services Standards (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/ongoing-services-standards.pdf>) reference the specific documentation required in eWiSACWIS including the specific fields, pages, and timelines where appropriate.

The state ensures quality data entry through several complementary mechanisms. At the county agency level, key documents and decisions require a supervisor's approval directly in eWiSACWIS. This requires supervisors to review and sign off on their staff's data entry on a day-to-day basis. The state then conducts continuous quality improvement (CQI - <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cqi>) and monitors performance with both internal and publicly available reports and dashboards to ensure documentation timeliness. The Bureau of Regional Operations within DCF's Division of Management Services has Regional Child Welfare Coordinators who regularly monitor county agencies' performance and metrics. They liaison with supervisors in each county to support and improve practice. Finally, the eWiSACWIS Data Quality Committee, comprised of county child welfare supervisors and DCF staff, supports ongoing enhancements to improve data entry and data quality in eWiSACWIS.

The Wisconsin SACWIS system, known as eWiSACWIS, can identify the status, demographics, and goals for OHC children placements and provides child welfare case management functionality for statewide OHC and adoption services. The user guide specifies how



dashboards are used to track activities in the child welfare system:

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/ewisacwis/cw-yj-reports-guide.pdf>

All 72 Wisconsin counties, selected state agencies, and other external partners use the application statewide. The system supports programs promoting conditions that keep children safe, strengthen families, and provide a permanent and nurturing family home for children. Over the next year Wisconsin will continue to focus on elements required to come into compliance with CCWIS rule. Wisconsin has a robust Management Information System (MIS) to build the CCWIS system on.

DCF documents timeliness of services through the use of the Access and IA Case Review dashboards (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/reports>) that speak to whether certain decisions in access (screening, response time, danger threats) and IA (danger threat identification, safety assessment, maltreatment decision, case disposition) were consistent with standards.

### **Available Data or Information that Demonstrates System Functioning**

Users of the eWiSACWIS system must undergo a security clearance that includes a signed confidentiality agreement. Once it is established that their specific child welfare functions require access, the individual is eligible to access and enter data into the system. There are 11 federally recognized tribes in Wisconsin. All tribes have the option of using the system, but not all of them currently choose to use that option. In most cases, tribes have read-only access and are able to enter case notes. With the exception of one tribe piloting data entry, county child welfare professionals enter all information into eWiSACWIS for tribal children under county court-order.

In the case of private child-placing agencies that issue foster care licenses, a state-approved contractor enters their applicable licensing information into the eWiSACWIS system. This information relates to the licensing process and can include background checks, home studies, or other important information.

Through the eWiSACWIS system, Wisconsin adheres to CPS practice standards for data entry timeliness and casework process requirements. The system has built-in reminders and other edit/check functionality based on the creation of certain required documents that remind child welfare professionals and supervisors of work that needs to be documented and approved. DCF has developed several such reminders and tools to improve child welfare system functioning.

The eWiSACWIS application includes a reporting platform called eWReports, in which analytics staff create a wide variety of reports regarding child welfare and youth justice activity. An issue tracker function allows for local users to continually identify issues requiring attention that are then addressed by the analytics team. Over 200 operational level reports support the monitoring of state and local program, fiscal, and management activities. These reports include summary and detailed information related to critical child welfare service activity and practice requirements, such as CPS referrals, CPS initial assessment decisions, and OHC placement,

including client characteristics and location of services/placement. Other reports in development track certain child well-being data, such as medical and dental information, education data, and mental health screenings. Additional reports are used to support local and state level fiscal management and payment activities and to manage provider-related responsibilities such as licensing and foster home rate setting. For more information about DCF eWReports, please visit <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/knowledgeweb/reports>.

DCF has a history of AFCARS data reports that are compliant with federal standards. The following excerpt from a 2016 review by the Federal ACF of Wisconsin's eWiSACWIS system shows a strong foundation for current practice:

*"The team met with staff from six counties via conference call and conducted in-person interviews with staff from two counties.*

### **Observations**

*During our review, we made the following observations:*

*In general, eWiSACWIS is well integrated into the state's child welfare practice model. Staff reported daily use of eWiSACWIS and the system's reports to manage child welfare related tasks. In particular, we confirmed the consistent exchange of financial data in the eight counties reviewed – all counties automatically uploaded eWiSACWIS financial data to the county financial systems, which returned check numbers and issuance dates.*

*eWiSACWIS supports the counties' preference for multiple reviews of financial data prior to issuing payments. eWiSACWIS generates three consecutive batch runs the last three business days of each month as well as a preliminary and final check runs on the first two business days of the following month.*

*County staff use a variety of manual process to validate financial data, invoices, and preliminary check registers before payments are generated. Financial staff report discovered errors to the responsible staff for correction."*

### **Brief Assessment on Progress to Date**

While the 2018 CFSR noted the Management Information System as an area needing improvement, DCF stakeholders provided positive feedback on efforts to date and have been very engaged in providing feedback and ongoing planning to comply with the CCWIS rule. DCF has engaged in extensive stakeholder engagement over the last several years to solicit feedback and develop communication channels with eWiSACWIS users, as detailed below. Generally, feedback is very positive with users noting the extensive functionality available, including over 200 reports and dashboards. In addition, counties report the ease of sharing data across counties for families that may live and be served in across different jurisdictions. DCF is committed to balancing software updates across three main channels: addressing user feedback to improve efficiency and reflect best practice; meeting regulatory requirements such as CCWIS; and modernizing eWiSACWIS to reduce maintenance, improve security, and position DCF for innovation.

## Initiatives to Address

- A child welfare data warehouse, referred to as dWiSACWIS, includes data related to CPS Access and Initial Assessment casework; caseload demographic and case history information; OHC placements; pre-finalized adoptions; OHC providers; Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Round 3 outcome measures; Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment information; and Title IV-E eligibility and claiming data and reports. Technical enhancements to the data warehouse have included the automation of data repository naming conventions; development of an audit tracking report to support statewide implementation; and evaluation of data management and design documentation tools. The data warehouse also includes a report design platform, which has allowed DCF to enhance its reporting capabilities. The data warehouse reports include embedded charts and figures which allows DCF to run some reports for specific geographic regions on demand.
- Continued expansion of data available within eWiSACWIS. This includes data from both eWiSACWIS and from other administrative data and information gathering systems, such as child educational and medical information from other state agencies, and from the Child Welfare CQI case record reviews. To further supplement and advance use of the above technical and reporting functionality, DCF has implemented interactive dashboards which are available to the public via the DCF website. These same dashboards are available to eWiSACWIS users with additional data to promote use at the local child welfare agency levels to further analyze, monitor, and support data-driven decision-making. The public facing child welfare dashboards can be found at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/reports>.
- Ongoing stakeholder engagement continues to be a focus area, with DCF staff engaging with counties and tribes, families and youth, both directly and through several channels and groups:
  - The Wisconsin County Human Services Association (WCHSA) through regular meetings and workgroups
  - The Inter-Tribal Child Welfare Committee through bi-monthly meetings and the ongoing liaison work of DSP's tribal affairs specialist with state program staff and the eWiSACWIS team
  - DCF's Bureau of Regional Operations provides a regional forum where child welfare policies and supports are discussed at least quarterly with child welfare directors
  - As part of its Putting Families First approach, DCF created an Infrastructure and Workforce Support Team that is focused on child welfare professional training, and software efficiency
  - The eWiSACWIS Focus Group is another venue for the state to solicit feature design input as well as holistic system optimization needs from county partners
  - Project workgroups are formed with state and county staff to lead eWiSACWIS enhancements on a rolling basis. These workgroups focus on human-centered

design and business process re-engineering, including input from families with lived experience, Wisconsin's Youth Advisory Council, judicial and law enforcement partners, and tribes. The first such workgroup formed in 2020 and spent over a year overhauling Wisconsin's permanency and case plans; another workgroup is currently working on reducing implicit bias in the Safety Assessment Plan; another will start later in 2022 to streamline the initial assessment process.

- Finally, Wisconsin's eWiSACWIS Data Quality Committee (eWDQC) provides advisement for decision-making of CCWIS data quality requirements and legacy eWiSACWIS child welfare information system data. The eWDQC serves as the advising body to DCF in addressing data quality plan requirements pursuant to 45 C.F.R. § 1355.52 (d)(5) and is a partnership between the title IV-E State Agency (DCF) and WCHSA.
- All tribes in Wisconsin have a read only access to eWiSACWIS. This access is granted via state-tribal contracts. With read only access, tribes are able to search for cases in the state-wide system that involve their children and read case information such as permanency plans, placement information, safety plans, case notes, etc. They also have the ability to enter a case note but cannot create any other work in the system. Currently, DCF is working with one tribe to pilot their ability to create casework in eWiSACWIS, for Tribal Court cases.
- DCF has begun exploring the best way to support tribal access to CCWIS, understanding tribes will have two separate set of needs, one for WICWA/ICWA cases and the other for tribal court cases. Discussions with the Intertribal Child Welfare Committee have explored what aspects of the system could best support their monitoring of Circuit Court cases where ICWA and WICWA apply. For tribal court cases, tribes may have their own electronic case management system while others may choose to utilize the state system. As sovereign nations, each tribe will make their own decision on whether or not to access a state-run system while considering the best way to protect the confidentiality and data sovereignty. DCF will continue discussions with the ICW Committee, focusing on how to best support their needs and protect any concerns.
- Additional activities to implement and comply with CCWIS are continuing. In addition to the feedback described above, DCF developed and is implementing a comprehensive Data Quality Plan. This plan is monitored and updated in consultation with the eWiSACWIS Data Quality Committee (eWDQC), which is comprised of internal and external stakeholders from across Wisconsin. Recommendations in the Data Quality Plan include policy, practice, and software changes to improve the capture, consistency, and analysis of data in eWiSACWIS.

## Case Review System (Items 20-24)

### WRITTEN CASE PLAN (ITEM 20)

How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that each child has a **written case plan** that is developed jointly with the child's parent and includes the required provisions?

#### Available Data or Information that Demonstrates System Functioning

Wisconsin has a robust and comprehensive process in place for developing a case plan for families in the child welfare system that receive services in OHC. In Wisconsin, the case plan is called a Permanency Plan. Specific details of this process can be found in Wisconsin's Ongoing Standards at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/ongoing-services-standards.pdf>.

CPS intervention standards are also used to assess safety and in-home case planning. These standards are available at:

- <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/safety-intervention-standards.pdf>
- <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/access-ia-standards.pdf>

Detailed guidance has been developed for assuring that written case plans for tribal children meet Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA) guidelines. To view the WICWA desk aid, please visit <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/2536.pdf>.

The Foster Parent Handbook provides critical information on how foster parents are engaged in developing the case plan. The handbook is available at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/fostercare/handbook>.

#### Data or Information on Wisconsin's Performance

This systemic factor was found to be an area needing improvement in the 2018 CFSSR. Efforts have focused on improving the Permanency Plan through an in-depth analysis of the entire written case plan was conducted that demonstrated Wisconsin was adhering to all federal standards.

The following list provides information about how the state tracks that case plans, which include Permanency Planning, are developed jointly with parents so that they include following provisions:

- 1) The child is placed in the least restrictive setting—in a placement that is in close proximity to the parents' home when it is in their best interest.
  - a. This is documented within the Permanency Plan component of the case plan and is updated every six months.

- 2) Visits with children placed out of state occur at least every 12 months.
  - a. This data can be collected from the Caseworker Contacts Dashboard within eWISACWIS.
- 3) Documentation of the steps taken to make and finalize adoptive or OPPLA placements when the child can't return home.
  - a. This information is documented in the Permanency Plan within eWISACWIS, which allows the state to produce the information on-demand. Annual data is provided on page 33 of this report.

Also, WI standards stipulate that case plans must be completed no later than 60 days from a staff transition. The state tracks this provision through an eWISACWIS tickler indicating a case plan is due and when and if it's past due and how long.

### **Stakeholder feedback**

Challenges identified by birth parent interviews during the 2018 CFSR noted that goals could be made clearer to help achieve permanency in a timelier way. Feedback from others who use the Permanency Plan collected through the CFSR and other more recent efforts focused on strategic planning have voiced concerns about efficiency of the process, a desire to make the process more trauma-informed and user-friendly for all audiences.

As a result of this feedback, a key area of focus of Wisconsin's Putting Families First approach is to allow more time for child welfare professionals to spend time with families and less time documenting and completing necessary paperwork.

### **Initiatives to Address**

DCF understands that this improvement must be done within existing federal and state regulations and policy. To that end, a regulatory crosswalk has been created that identifies how all existing federal and state regulations and policies are captured in the Permanency Plan process and in the Permanency Plan application. This process confirmed that DCF is in full compliance with all requirements relative to the Permanency Plan. In FFY 2021 DCF incorporated the FFPSA requirements into the Permanency Plan prior to Wisconsin's implementation date of August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

DCF, in partnership with CGI, launched an effort to improve the Permanency Plan process. Human Centered Design was the method used to incorporate robust stakeholder feedback. The process incorporated mapping of the "as is" process for the Permanency Plan, as described in Item 19, interviews and surveys were conducted with more than thirty-six individuals across the state representing urban, rural, and tribal populations. Interviews were held with all levels of child welfare staff and leadership, judicial and legal officials, adoptive and foster parents, and foster youth to identify how the process currently works, pain points, areas working well and recommendations for improvement. A resulting vision book encompasses the information above and provides an overview of the Permanency Plan process from start to completion and a summary of key personas involved in the process in the child welfare system. A summary of

the vision book is available at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cqi-cfsr/pdf/report/apsr22attchmnt2.pdf>.

Discussions occurred about how to delineate, refine, articulate, and prioritize more specific, concrete recommendations for consideration by DCF in mid-2021. Recommendations were discussed with counties, tribes, and DCF's lived experience workgroup. The regulatory crosswalk served as guardrails to the process of further defining and prioritizing recommendations in the following areas:

1. Incorporate the Model for Practice philosophy to Permanency Planning activities and modify the Permanency Plan template to better meet the needs of multiple user types. The Model for Practice emphasizes culturally competent, trauma-informed and strengths-based principles and use of language.
2. Improve child welfare professional interface and efficiency when updating or viewing Permanency Plan information in eWiSACWIS. This covers a large number of CGI Vision Book recommendations.
3. Improve the Permanency Plan process and experience as it relates to Indian children and families.
4. Improve process by adding data elements to eWiSACWIS.
5. Refresh and improve child welfare professional training pertaining to the Permanency Plan.

DCF collaborated with stakeholders including child welfare professionals from the balance of the state and Milwaukee, took these recommendations and modified the Permanency Plan by restructuring sections of the plan to create a better flow and is more trauma-sensitive to the reader. An ICWA/WICWA section was created that consolidates ICWA/WICWA considerations in a convenient location rather than have the information embedded throughout the plan. The terms "mother/father" have been updated to "Parent 1/Parent 2". The "Goals & Services" sections have been updated to "Conditions and Services" to better reflect the court-ordered and/or proposed conditions of return. Many narrative fields will have a new character limit of either 1,000 or 3,000 characters to encourage concise documentation. Lastly, a new "Help" element will be added in June of 2022 to each tab of the Permanency Plan to assist child welfare professionals throughout the Permanency Plan process.

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#### PERIODIC REVIEW (ITEM 21)

How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that a **periodic review** for each child occurs no less frequently than once every six months, either by a court or by administrative review?

DCF works closely with CCIP to assess, measure and address Item 21 as they relate to processes that occur in the court system but impact child welfare families. Efforts are underway to better track and assess timeliness.

## **Data or Information Demonstrating Functioning**

This area of performance was found to be an area needing improvement in the 2018 CFPSR due to the timeliness of periodic reviews. Data currently available shows that of children and youth in care on December 31, 2020, there were 5,392 children that had been in care for at least six months and 4,162 of those children had been in care for at least one year. Of the children in care for at least one year, 74% had hearings that occurred within a year of the child's removal, or within a year of the child's last hearing. Of the children that had been in care for six months, 51% had hearings or reviews within six months of their removal, or within six months of their last hearing or review.

In Wisconsin, over half of the jurisdictions utilized an administrative panel for some or all the six-month reviews. In the other counties, a court commissioner or a judge conducts the six-month review, without distinguishing between the periodic (six-month) review or an annual Permanency Hearing. If it is conducted by a judicial officer on the record, the court record event is a Permanency Hearing regardless of the time interval.

Tracking timeliness has been a focus of DCF and CCIP to continue to improve performance. To accomplish this, DCF has certain reminder functions within the eWISACWIS system to help ensure that the required periodic reviews are completed on time. In addition to automated reminders, child welfare professionals can enter ticklers into the system and set up reminders of upcoming due dates for permanency reviews. The information system can show child welfare professional tasks as a list or in calendar view. The system also color codes information by type of task, as well as reflecting whether the task was completed on time. Supervisors have an option to view their caseworkers' workloads as a tool for ensuring compliance.

CCIP and DCF have worked together to develop and promote the awareness of the following resources and policies to ensure that all case review standards are met.

DCF provides child welfare professionals with the DCF Ongoing Services Standards, which provide extensive information regarding how an agency can conform to this requirement. Specifically, the Standards require caseworkers to participate in training on the permanency statutes under Section 48.38 of the Wisconsin Statutes.

DCF created a Guide for Permanency Plan Administrative Review Panel Members as a resource to the community members who sit on a county agency's administrative permanency panel review. The guide provides information about Permanency Planning, the Permanency Plan document, permanency goals, and a checklist regarding determinations that must be made by panel members. Feedback on the guide was provided by CCIP, judicial committees, and other stakeholders. In FY 22, DCF is updating this guide as part of the 2020 Program Improvement Plan.

DCF added a new data element to the Permanency Plan Detail Report SM08X136 to include timely six-month Permanency Reviews. This report contains information related to the



Permanency Plan, concurrent plan, hearings and reviews, and proportions of concurrent planning determinations for children who are in out-of-home care. The Permanency Plan Detail Report should be used to assist child welfare agencies with tracking the six-month permanency reviews. The report can be accessed through the Child Welfare Dashboard within eWisACWIS on the “Quick Links” tab.

**PERMANENCY HEARINGS (ITEM 22)**

How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that, for each child, a **Permanency Hearing** in a qualified court or administrative body occurs no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter?

**Data or Information Demonstrating Performance**

This area of performance was found to be a strength during Wisconsin’s 2018 CFSR. CCIP has worked to obtain data related to the timeliness of Permanency Reviews and Hearings in Wisconsin. Practice varies around the state as to whether the court or an administrative panel conduct the six-month permanency review, while the court always hears the 12-month review. It is important to note that when the court reviews the Permanency Plan, the court record event reflects that a Permanency Hearing occurred without distinguishing whether it was a six-month review or a 12-month hearing.

Since our last APSR submission DCF created a new monitoring report, that is accessible by our local county agencies, that is more in line with PIP item *3.6: Assess the timeliness of six-month Permanency Reviews and improve the quality of administrative review panels conducting Permanency Reviews* to measure the timeliness of both 6-month and 12-month permanency reviews.

Table: DCF Performance Measures by Thresholds

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Children having timely annual permanency review hearing	46.89%	48.39%	48.12%	48.88%	50.92%	52.69%	54.27%
Children having timely six-month permanency reviews	66.92%	67.19%	67.16%	66.86%	67.86%	67.36%	68.9%

*\*Data reflects all hearings and reviews due for child in out-of-home care within a calendar year.*

## TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS (ITEM 23)

How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that the filing of **termination of parental rights (TPR)** proceedings occurs in accordance with required provisions?

### Data or Information to Demonstrate System Functioning

This area of practice was found to be an area needing improvement in the 2018 CFSR largely due to performance related to required timelines. The primary source of data to track efforts in Wisconsin is the Termination of Parental Rights Timeliness Project. This is a joint, data-driven project with the Children's Court Improvement Program, the University of Wisconsin, Institute for Research on Poverty and DCF that focuses on TPR timeliness. Efforts are focused on improving a specific safety, permanency, or well-being outcome. This project has resulted in CCIP and DCF developing and providing best practice protocols, statutory recommendations, tools, training, and peer support to improve the timeliness to adoption through faster resolution of termination of parental rights (TPR) cases. This effort is also focused on attorneys, caseworkers and judicial officers so they improve their knowledge and skills and improve practice and oversight to ensure that concurrent planning is meaningful, effective, and actively engaged in earlier so that permanency can be achieved more quickly if reunification is not in the child's best interests.

To identify solutions that are evidence-based and not founded solely on anecdotal information, data from the court and child welfare statewide automated case management systems (i.e., CCAP and eWiSACWIS) was analyzed to identify factors that have a correlation with timeliness of TPR and adoption. The notable findings from the first report produced by IRP include:

- Moving from filing a TPR Petition to having a TPR Order ranges from 29 days to 239 days.
- Moving from a TPR Order to a Finalized Adoption ranges from 103 days to 386 days.
- Characteristics associated with time to setting adoption as a permanency goal:
  - Children with longer times tend to have more child welfare professionals, more judicial officers, and more court cases involving the same child. Youth justice involvement is also associated with longer times to adoption.
  - Older children, Black/African American children, and American Indian children that are identified as tribal members have longer times to achieve TPR/adoption.
  - Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment score does not have an impact on timeliness except for those children with highest CANS scores (50+), who show longer times to setting an adoption goal.
  - Previous removals and time in previous out-of-home placements are not strongly associated. If adoption was a permanency goal in the previous removal, time to permanency was shorter in the current removal.
  - ASFA exceptions that are recorded are associated with longer times. Alternative Permanency Plan goals besides adoption and reunification were associated with longer times.

- Characteristics associated with time from adoption goal to final adoption:
  - Longer times for children with more caseworkers, more judicial officers, four or more total court cases, and if the child has a youth justice case.
  - Longest times for children aged 4-6, oldest and youngest children have short times.
  - Black/African American, American Indian, and Hispanic children have longer times to adoption, as well as WICWA cases.
  - Times to adoption lengthen as CANS scores get higher.
  - No notable relationship between previous removals and time to adoption.
  - When ASFA exceptions are recorded, or a child has reunification or other previously listed Permanency Plan goals, it takes longer to move to adoption. Time to adoption is short for cases with adoption listed as the current permanency goal, rather than as a concurrent or proposed goal.

The CCIP then entered into an additional contract with IRP in FY 2019 to assist with the data exploration and analysis for additional time intervals and characteristics including:

- Time between date of removal and date TPR petition is filed;
- Time between date TPR petition is filed and date counsel is appointed for the parents;
- Timeliness of the underlying CHIPS case;
- Whether parents had counsel during the CHIPS case;
- Whether a jury trial was scheduled or held during the TPR case;
- Whether an adoptive resource was identified for the child before the TPR petition was filed;
- Whether the TPR case was appealed;
- The number of voluntary TPRs and involuntary TPRs; and
- Whether the same judge was on both CHIPS and TPR case.

While the additional information collected by IRP did provide DCF and CCIP with further insight into potential areas of delay for TPR cases, this information did not provide sufficient statistical correlation between any specific practice or policy that could be shown to delay nor hasten time to the identified TPR timeliness outcomes. IRP also provided updated data from their initial report, which did not show significant changes amongst those counties with the lengthier times to the TPR measures.

In response to the additional IRP data analysis and updated statewide timeliness information, in 2020 DCF and CCIP developed an online survey regarding TPR practice amongst various county-level child welfare agency, legal, and judicial stakeholders. This survey was distributed to sixteen counties, which were split into two groups: those with the longest times to TPR timeliness measures and those which were higher performing in the same measures. DCF and CCIP also took care to include counties with varying characteristics such as geographic location, population size, number of judges hearing child welfare matters, and which legal office prosecutes TPR cases (e.g., the district attorney, corporation counsel, or other), amongst other

factors. Those counties with the lengthiest times were also provided with data templates containing county-specific data measures in comparison to statewide averages. A total of 352 surveys were completed.

In 2021, DCF & CCIP began conducting file reviews of randomly selected cases for each county for cases. The file reviews were split up into two categories: cases that took more than 120 days from filing to disposition and cases that took less than 120 days from filing to disposition. The file reviews focused on information regarding placement information, Permanency Planning, legal records, birth parent information, case characteristics, and adjournments. A total of 194 file reviews were completed. Currently, the CCIP and DCF TPR Timeliness Implementation Workgroup is reviewing the survey and file review information to assess for themes, best practices, and areas of improvement.

The following data is from a variety of sources, including IRP, CCAP statistical reports, and DCF.

*Table: TPR Timeliness from Most Recent Removal (mean number of days)\**

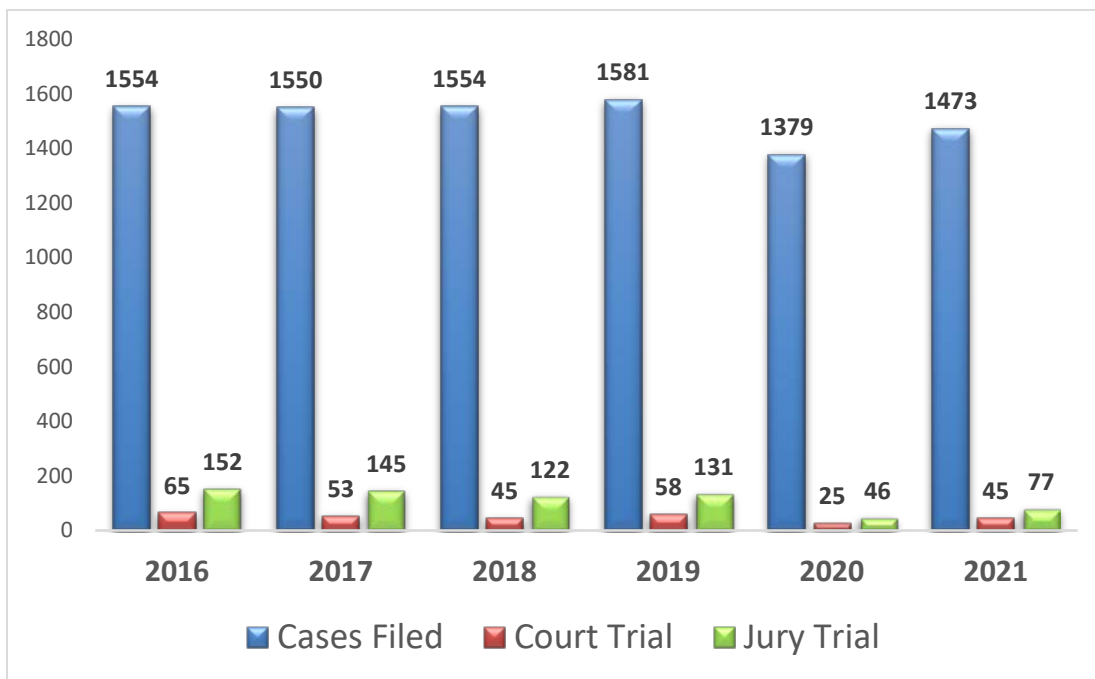
	<b>Time to TPR Petition Filing</b>	<b>Time to TPR Order</b>
2015	654	840
2016	590	799
2017	668	871
2018	682	877
2019	711	899
2020	763	956

\*The data sample includes children who were identified in eWiSACWIS as achieving a permanent placement in each calendar year who had a TPR petition and/or order. Note: The federal standard of 15 months for TPR filing is equivalent to 450 days from removal.

Table: TPR Timeliness from Most Recent Removal by Thresholds

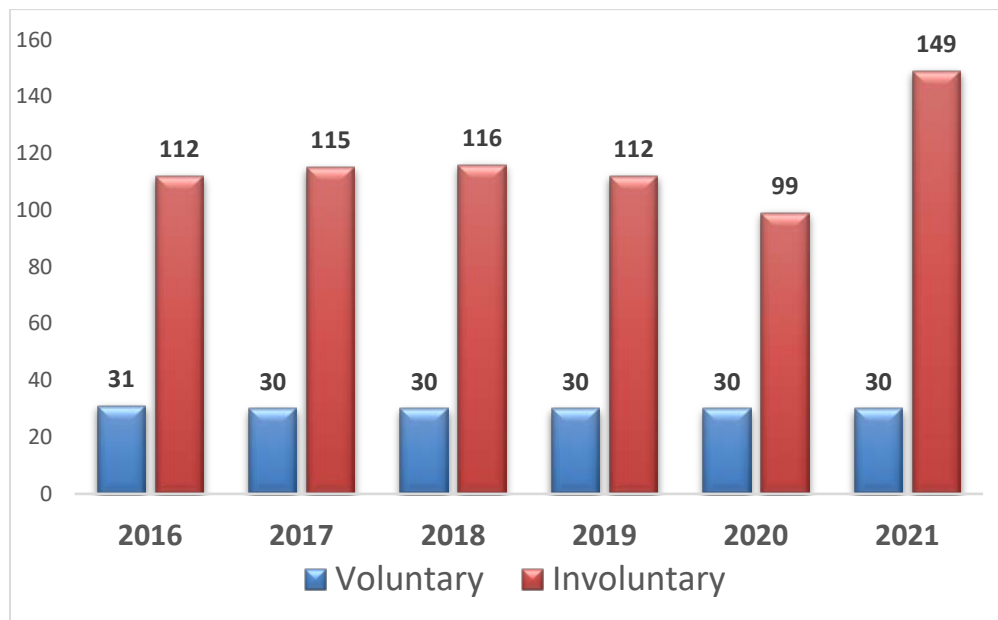
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>1. Time to TPR petition</b>						
Children with TPR petition filed within 15 months of removal	32.5%	35.8%	27.1%	25.8%	23.3%	20.2%
Children with TPR petition filed within 24 months of removal	58.4%	68.2%	59.0%	54.5%	47.3%	45.2%
<b>2. Time to TPR order</b>						
Children with TPR order within 15 months of removal	10.7%	13.2%	8.8%	9.1%	8.7%	8.5%
Children with TPR order within 24 months of removal	29.5%	29.7%	27%	28.8%	24.8%	22.1%

Figure: TPR Caseload Summary Statewide (CCAP Statistical Reports)\*



\*Includes both child welfare and private TPR cases.

*Figure: Median Age at TPR Disposition (CCAP Statistical Reports)\**



\*Includes both child welfare and private TPR cases. Data is measuring the median length of time between TPR and disposition.

*Adoption and Safe Families Act Wisconsin Data*

ASFA exceptions were filed timely 95 percent of the time (3,412 of 3,583 cases) and TPR referrals were filed 91 percent of the time (70 of 77 cases).

*Figure: ASFA Exceptions Summary for Calendar Year 2021*



### *Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA) Data*

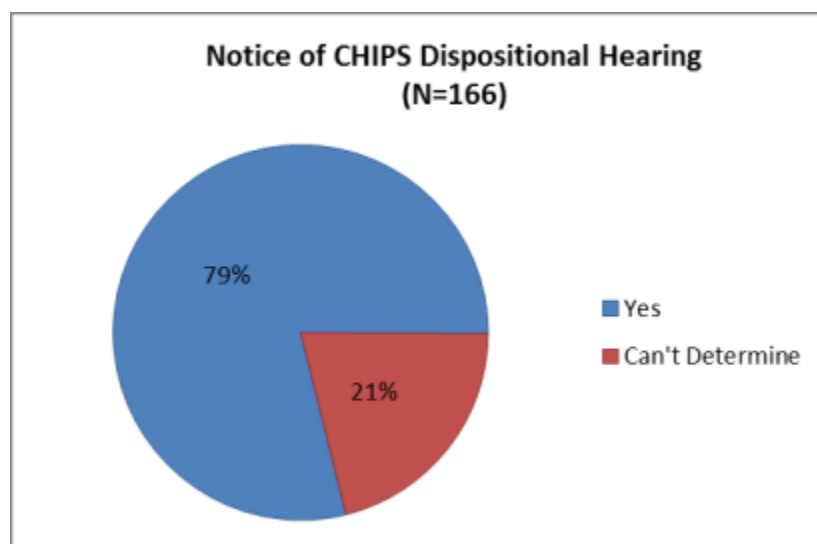
An additional source of data is the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA) Continuous Quality Improvement Project through CCIP. The WICWA Continuous Quality Improvement project measures compliance with key WICWA requirements in CHIPS, JIPS, TPR, Adoption, and Guardianship cases. In 2013-2014, the eight counties with the greatest number of circuit court cases subject to WICWA were reviewed jointly by CCIP and DCF. In 2015-2016, court file reviews were conducted by CCIP in 12 additional counties that had a threshold number of WICWA cases. In 2017-2019, the second round of onsite reviews occurred in Shawano, Milwaukee, Bayfield, Jackson, Brown, Forest, Vilas, and Burnett counties. The result of these reviews was included in Wisconsin's 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan. The planned court file reviews in additional counties with a threshold number of WICWA cases was delayed in 2020 due to the pandemic but were initiated in calendar year 2021 with an expected completion date later in 2022. The counties being reviewed include Barron, Burnett, Douglas, Eau Claire, Kenosha, Langlade, Marathon, Monroe, St. Croix, and Wood. CCIP and DCF will partner again in 2022 to complete WICWA reviews in Sawyer, Shawano, Ashland, and Milwaukee counties. In 2022-2023, CCIP and DCF staff will conduct onsite reviews for the WICWA Continuous Quality Improvement project in the with counties with the highest number of circuit court cases subject to WICWA: Ashland, Brown, Forest, Jackson, Milwaukee, Outagamie, Sawyer, and Shawano.

## NOTICE OF HEARINGS AND REVIEWS TO CAREGIVERS (ITEM 24)

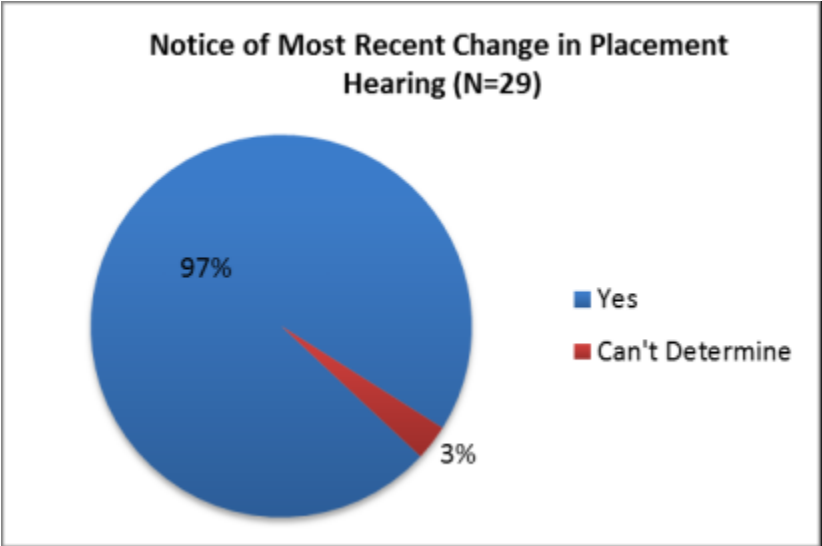
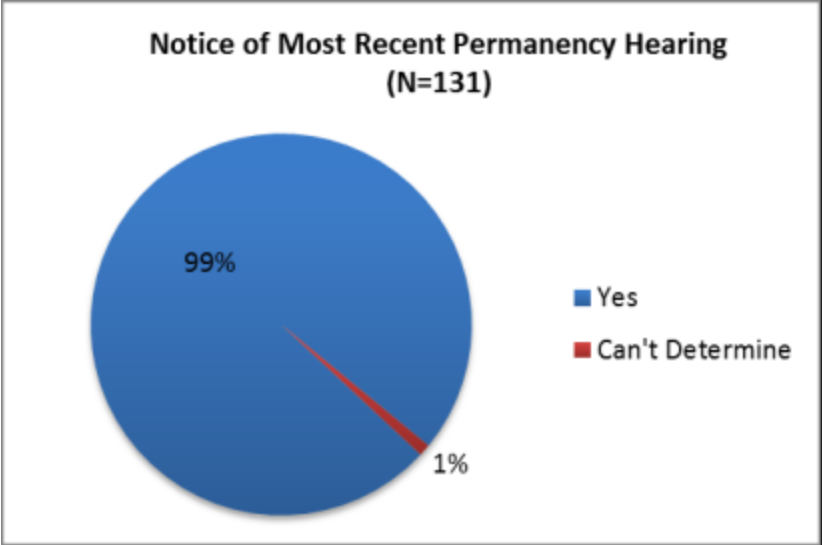
How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care are **notified of, and have a right to be heard** in, any review or hearing with respect to the child?

### Data or Information Demonstrating System Performance

This area of practice was found to be an area needing improvement in the 2018 CFSR. DCF was able to demonstrate that hearing notice was sent to caregivers 100% of the time, however, the review could not confirm consistent participation. DCF tracks data in coordination with CCIP and is focused on joint efforts to address this systemic factor. Notice of hearings to caregivers is documented for individual cases in the Consolidated Court Automation Programs (CCAP) but is not available in the aggregate. The most recent data available for this item is from CCIP. Further, DCF has developed tools and training with CCIP available through their E-Learning Project (<https://www.wiccuptraining.com/>) about the importance of parent engagement in court proceedings. A manual review of 180 circuit court cases was conducted for children placed in foster care or with a relative in Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) cases from six counties: Dodge, Dunn, Manitowoc, Milwaukee, Waukesha, and Wood. The sample counties include representation from all five regions of the state, plus Milwaukee County. There were 30 cases reviewed from each county: 15 cases filed in 2016 and 15 counties filed in 2017. The counties (for each of the five regions) and the cases were selected randomly using an online randomization program. The results from the court file review are provided below. Note that “Can’t Determine” means that it was not possible to determine whether the caregiver received notice from the documentation contained in court file. It is important to note that notice may have been provided in these cases, but not documented in the court file. Collateral sources, such as the child welfare agencies and prosecutor’s case files, were not examined as part of this review.

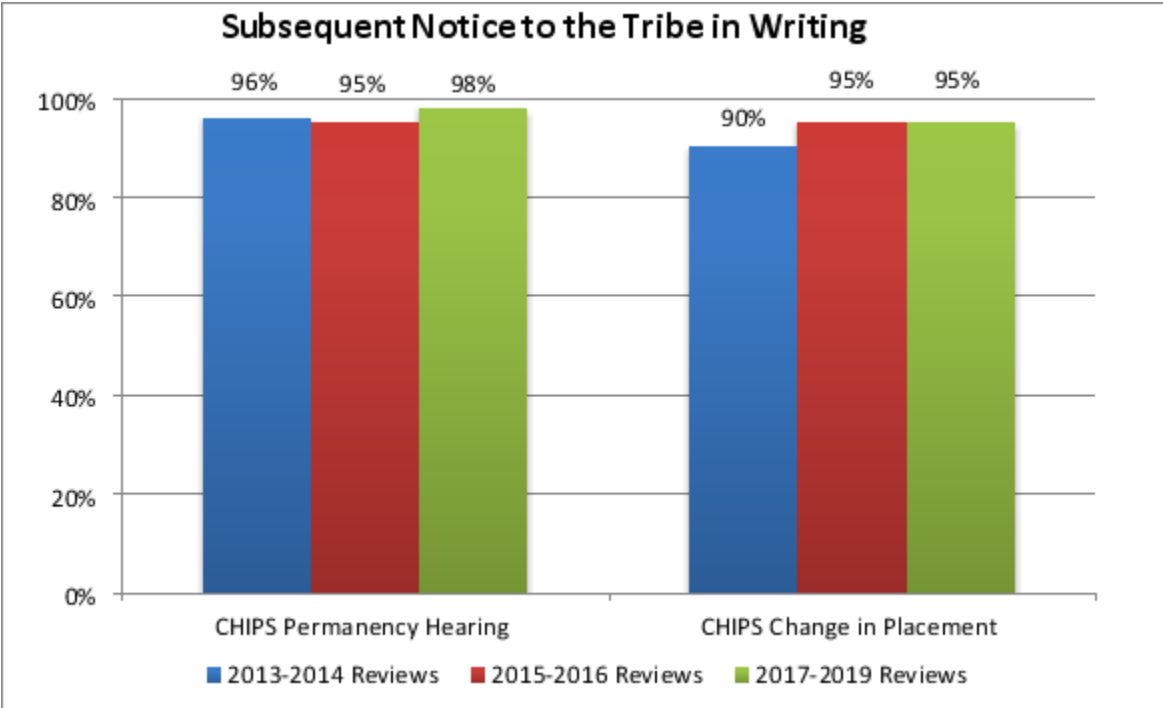






In addition, data related to notice to parents and tribes are available based on file reviews conducted as part of the WICWA CQI project. Under WICWA, notice of subsequent hearings in a case must be provided to the parents and tribe in writing through mail, personal delivery, or fax. As illustrated in the following chart, providing notice of hearing in writing is an area that continues to be a strength for permanency hearings and change in placement hearings.

Figure: Notice of Post-Disposition Hearings for WICWA



In 2021, CCIP staff provided presentations to foster parents and relative caregivers on the court process and their rights in court proceedings (e.g., to notice of hearings, to be heard, to object to changes in placement, etc.) at the Families Like Mine conference (Wisconsin’s annual Relative Caregiver Conference) and the Understanding the Juvenile Court Process: CHIPS, Guardianship, and TPR webinar. In addition, a parent and caregiver panel was added to the annual Child Welfare Law Orientation for judicial officers, where the panel shares their experiences with the court system and provides advice on soliciting input and participation from caregivers at hearings.

**Case Review System (Items 20-24) Brief Assessment on Progress to Date**

DCF has worked extensively with CCIP, judicial and legal stakeholders, and other stakeholders to identify strengths and weaknesses in the case review system. This collaboration continues to focus on collecting data on processes and stakeholder feedback to help identify and improve areas of practice. DCF will continue to use this feedback as it further shapes future initiatives and supports for the case review system identified in Wisconsin’s PIP, the CFSP Plan for Enacting the State Vision and in future DCF Putting Families First efforts.

**Initiatives to Address Case Review Systemic Factors**

There are several initiatives in place to address this area of practice including efforts that foster ongoing collaborative efforts, specific projects, resources, and training.

### *Ongoing Collaborations and Collaborative Leadership Teams/Workgroups*

- DCF and CCIP work together to respond to legislative changes that affect child welfare and local court systems. DCF and CCIP maintain regular contact regarding legislative committees and proposals to determine potential impacts on the child welfare system and to provide information as necessary. In the last year, this included coordination of efforts related to codification and implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act, which Wisconsin implemented on September 29, 2021. DCF and CCIP formed a workgroup to develop legislation regarding the Act's Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) procedures. DCF and CCIP conducted multiple trainings on the Act, including sessions at the biannual Conference on Child Welfare and the Courts for judicial officers, attorneys, agency representatives, and other stakeholders. In addition, online training and resources related to FFPSA/QRTP requirements have been posted on the DCF and the CCIP websites.
- CCIP and DCF collaborated on the "Adoption Call to Action". Initially, CCIP and DCF representatives attended the January 2020 Adoption Call to Action Summit in Washington, D.C. After reviewing the Wisconsin data, CCIP and DCF decided to focus on children who were post-TPR and awaiting adoption since we already have a separate initiative related to TPR timeliness. DCF created a post-TPR consultation with their contracted public adoption agencies that involved a formalized process and a consistent case review process to assist with adoption finalization. The Adoption Call to Action project also involves an educational component of creating an adoption process guide explaining each step of the public adoption process ([www.wicourts.gov/courts/programs/docs/publicadoptguide.pdf](http://www.wicourts.gov/courts/programs/docs/publicadoptguide.pdf)), a post-TPR Permanency Hearing checklist ([www.wicourts.gov/courts/programs/docs/permanency10.pdf](http://www.wicourts.gov/courts/programs/docs/permanency10.pdf)), and providing TPR appeal clarification.
- Since cases are transferred post-TPR to a public adoption agency, sometimes there is a lack of communication regarding the TPR appeal. The Office of Legal Counsel at DCF provided statutory authority as well as an explanation that DCF, as guardian of the child, should be receiving notice of any TPR appeals and may contact the county prosecutor's offices for additional information so the adoption can be finalized. CCIP and DCF representatives also presented information about Wisconsin's Adoption Call to Action project during the October 6, 2020, Capacity Building Center for States Adoption Call to Action presentation on agency and court collaboration. The Adoption Call to Action project concluded in February 2021.
- The long-standing Judicial Engagement Team (JET) program focuses on supporting children to remain safely in their homes, timely exits to permanency, full consideration of well-being, and compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). CCIP provides court-focused resources that support best practice implementation with the goal of safe reduction of the number of children in OHC. The JET initiative began with three pilot counties in 2015, starting as a collaboration with Casey Family Programs. The initiative was expanded to five additional counties in 2018. In 2020, one additional county was

added to the initiative. Each county is led by a mentor judge from the original three counties as well as a CCIP representative to provide resources and technical assistance. Counties have examined their court and child welfare data (including permanency review/hearing timeliness reports), as well as received targeted multi-disciplinary trainings, in an effort to make improvements to child permanency, family engagement, TPR timeliness, legal representation, WICWA compliance, and court preparation.

- The Juvenile Clerks Workgroup managed by CCIP is made up of experienced juvenile clerks throughout the state, CCIP staff, a CCAP representative, and an Office of Court Operations representative. It maintains the Juvenile Model Recordkeeping Procedures, CCAP codes, and circuit court forms as a result of statutory changes, issues brought to CCIP's attention, or requests received from various stakeholders. This workgroup assists in the oversight involved with providing notice to case participants (including foster parents and relative caregivers), distributing court documents (Permanency Plans, orders, motions, etc.), documenting the required title IV-E findings on court orders, managing the court calendars, appointing attorneys and CASA volunteers in the case, and conducting the permanency reviews/hearing timely.

#### *Legal and Child Welfare Projects*

- Joint initiatives with DCF, such as the Tailored Dispositional Orders Project as part of the PIP (see below) and the TPR Timeliness Project described under Item 23, are examples of ways DCF and CCIP are working together to address the case review items. The Tailored Dispositional Orders Project will also address timely permanency and other aspects of the case review system related to timeliness and quality of hearings.
- Wisconsin has a PIP strategy to develop dashboards to better measure and track the timeliness of six-month permanency reviews as well as improve the quality of administrative review panels utilized in Wisconsin are described in Section 3, Objective 3.7.
- CCIP has an ongoing collaboration with DCF about updates to standards such as the Ongoing Standards – CCIP has worked with DCF to identify and articulate comprehensive requirements for the six- and twelve-month court reviews, how requirements are documented in the Permanency Plan, how to comply with timeliness requirements for the Adoption and Safe Families Act, and other areas of legal practice important for child welfare policies.

#### *Resources*

- Two judicial checklists were developed with input from DCF staff and other stakeholders to make Permanency Hearings more meaningful and improve the quality of the discussion. The Permanency Hearing Judicial Checklist (<https://www.wicourts.gov/courts/programs/docs/permanency2.pdf>) was updated in 2021 and is for the court and parties to use for 6-month and 12-month reviews conducted by the court. The Post-TPR Permanency Hearing Judicial Checklist

(<https://www.wicourts.gov/courts/programs/docs/permanency10.pdf>) is used when children are waiting to be adopted after termination of parental rights has occurred; it was created in 2021.

- Development of resources such as Circuit Court Form JD-1700, Notice of Permanency Hearing, to provide notice and advisement. This form is available at [www.wicourts.gov/formdisplay/JD-1700.pdf?formNumber=JD-1700&formType=Form&formatId=2&language=en](http://www.wicourts.gov/formdisplay/JD-1700.pdf?formNumber=JD-1700&formType=Form&formatId=2&language=en). In 2022, a WICWA version will be released for use in cases involving Indian children. DCF has a guide and form available for the child's physical custodian to provide written comments at Permanency Reviews, Permanency Hearings, and other court hearings. This is available at <http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/forms/doc/2474.docx>.

### *Training*

- The CCIP E-Learning Project (<https://wicciptraining.com/>), is a web-based, self-directed training program that addresses Wisconsin Statutes, case law, and best practices, was released in early FFY 2014. The CCIP E-Learning Project is intended to be a tool that judges, court commissioners, attorneys, caseworkers/social workers, and other individuals can access at any time to obtain information on conducting key court hearings in child welfare cases, including statutory requirements, applicable case law, and recommended best practices. The overall goal of the project is to improve the quality of hearings in CHIPS, termination of parental rights, and adoption proceedings. There is a learning activity specifically related to Permanency Hearings. In early 2022, a new QRTP learning activity was released. Between December 1, 2015, and April 5, 2022, there have been 31,360 unique visitors (IP addresses), with 78,175-page views, on the CCIP E-Learning Activity website. In 2021, there were 5,645 visitors with 14,518-page views.
- CCIP continues to provide free webinars to judicial officers, attorneys, child welfare professionals, CASA, and other stakeholders on topics intended to improve child and family outcomes. In 2022, one of the webinars focused on Reasonable Efforts & Family Placement throughout the life of the case from a judicial perspective.
- All circuit court judges are required to attend the Child Welfare Law Orientation during each term. This annual training is designed to assist judges and court commissioners conduct hearings in and improve the daily case management of child welfare proceedings. There are sections related to case timelines and findings, parent and caregiver panel, child safety, TPR, and Permanency Planning/hearings.

## *Quality Assurance System (Item 25)*

How well is **the quality assurance system** functioning statewide to ensure that it is (1) operating in the jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided, (2) has standards to evaluate the quality of services (including standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect their health and safety), (3) identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, (4) provides relevant reports, and (5) evaluates implemented program improvement measures?

### **Data or Information Demonstrating Performance and Initiatives to Address**

This systemic factor was found to be an area needing improvement in the 2018 CFSR. A need to more clearly demonstrate a feedback loop with local counties was identified. Collaboration and ongoing communication with counties are key priorities of DCF. Initiatives supporting this feedback loop are described in this section. In addition, Section 3 describes the feedback loop as it relates to specific DCF objectives.

Wisconsin's approach to CQI is articulated in the following mission statement.

*Wisconsin is committed to a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) system that supports the assessment and improvement of child welfare practice, processes, and outcomes at the state and local level. Wisconsin DCF fulfills this mission by providing resources, tools, and processes to build and sustain CQI at the state and local level.*

### *Current Review Instrument/State Efforts to Conduct Case Reviews*

#### **Case Reviews**

DCF continues to use data from multiple sources to inform the quality improvement process. DCF conducted several rounds of case reviews related to CPS Access, Initial Assessment, and Ongoing Services. These reviews included a statewide representative sample of CPS Reports and Initial Assessment while continuing to conduct Ongoing case reviews outlined in Wisconsin's Program Improvement (PIP) Measurement Plan, which was approved by the CB in April 2019. As of this report, DCF completed the PIP Baseline and submitted seven additional report periods (DCF's PIP Monitoring Plan requires progress reports are submitted quarterly). To date, DCF has achieved the minimum improvement goals in six of the ten items. Each year, DCF reviews a minimum of 65 cases randomly selected from across the state which includes 40 foster care (i.e., out-of-home care) cases and 25 in-home cases.

DCF has a dedicated unit for conducting case reviews and is well-positioned for conducting a state case review. The team consists of a supervisor, three full-time staff, one part-time staff and two additional full-time contracted staff. The team adopted the Onsite Review Instrument (OSRI) in 2015 and is well versed in the review instructions and applicability. To date, the team has conducted over one thousand reviews with the OSRI. The goal is to replicate the case review process used for the PIP-monitored cases and apply it to the Round 4. To prepare, DCF

has reviewed Technical Bulletins 12 and 13, attended the CFSR Round National Call Series and is closely monitoring the CFSR Round 4 Resources. DCF continues to assess impacts of the changes from Round 3 and Round 4 to determine if conducting a state case review is feasible. At this time, the primary issue is obtaining the minimum number of cases per Item (33 applicable cases according to Technical Bulletin 13 when states opt to review 65 cases). DCF will work to determine if a state-led review process is the most appropriate approach closer to the anticipated CFSR 4 review year for Wisconsin. If this is the selected approach, DCF will work with the Children's Bureau in identifying strategies to reach this number (e.g., stratified samples).

In addition to the Ongoing case reviews required as part of the PIP Monitoring Plan, DCF has continued to review a random, stratified sample of CPS Reports (Access) and Initial Assessment that can be viewed at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cqireports>. The Access and Initial Assessment Case Record Review Instruments are based on Wisconsin's Child Welfare Access and Initial Assessment Standards (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/access-ia-standards.pdf>), and Safety Intervention Standards (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/safety-intervention-standards.pdf>) which specify the requirements necessary to perform child protective services in the state of Wisconsin. The Access and Initial Assessment CQI Case Record Review tools can be found in the Appendix D of each respective report:

- <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/bpm/cqi/access-appendices2015.pdf>
- <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/bpm/cqi/ia-appendices2015.pdf>

DCF has a stringent quality management plan that includes strict reviewer prerequisites, training, double-blind and secondary reviews, and regular reviewer check-in meetings. The quality management plans can be found in the appendices of each respective report. In the last year, there has not been any new Certified Peer Reviewers recruited, but DCF continues to apply the quality management plan. At a minimum, quality assurance occurs on twenty percent of all reviews conducted (Access, Initial Assessment, and Ongoing Services). When there are inconsistencies in reviews, updates to instructions and communication with reviewers occurs. DCF developed a supplement to the OSRI Instructions that includes additional information in applying the OSRI to Wisconsin. This includes identifying items such as: where to identify information in eWISACWIS, how to apply policy in Items 1 and 17, and identifying feedback from Secondary Oversight from the Children's Bureau.

DCF has also started work on Targeted Case Reviews (TCR). Targeted Case Reviews are case reviews that are ad-hoc, time-limited, and focus on a specific practice area that is tied to Putting Families First, Wisconsin's child welfare transformation. The first TCR is focusing on understanding how concrete services support keeping families together.

In addition to the use of case reviews as a mechanism to understand and address program and practice improvements over the last five years, DCF has several additional tools to measure, assure, and identify ways to improve the child welfare system.

DCF continues to use the CFSR OSRI tool, which was adopted by the state in 2015. CFSR findings are used to assist in the development of key review outcomes and inform improvement projects such as the Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) Collaborative, which focuses on improving caseworker contacts with children and parents (Items 14 and 15) and is described in Section 3.

### *How CQI Supports Feedback Loops and is Used to Revise Approaches and Measure Progress in Achieving Goals*

DCF's CQI system has initiatives that systemically and comprehensively support a feedback loop with counties and other stakeholders. Efforts described in this section include using performance data to identify trends and consider how to adjust policies, programs, and services.

#### **CQI Advisory Committee**

This committee is comprised of DCF staff and county leaders with the purpose of continual information sharing about all aspects of the child welfare service delivery system and working towards an overarching goal of gathering continual feedback to inform improved practices. This committee is used to formulate CQI guidance related to data analysis and key takeaways. For example, the CQI Advisory Committee provided feedback on the initial assessment case review process and assisted in determining what key outcomes to review. This committee is routinely brought into discussions about areas of DCF practice to ensure a strong feedback loop with counties. In addition, the CQI Advisory Committee provides oversight and support to Applied Learning Committees and the Systems Change Review process described below.

#### **Applied Learning Communities**

In 2019, DCF partnered with the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS) to offer a unique approach to professional development, called Applied Learning Communities (ALC's). More information is available at <https://wcpds.wisc.edu/organizational-development-unit/applied-learning-communities-alcs/>.

ALC learners self-select to participate on agency teams and enroll in a regional learning cohort. The outcomes of ALCs are two-fold. First, for participating agency teams to engage in a facilitated study on how to increase alignment between written policy expectations and implementation in practice. Second, to help policymakers understand what works and what gets in the way for the workforce. The ALCs are conducted in regions throughout the state and meetings occur throughout the year. In 2021, the ALC training topic was Engaging and Interviewing Reporters with a focus of study on Child Protective Services (CPS) Access Standards and in 2022 ALC will focus on Danger Assessment & Decision-Making at Access. A 2021 Annual Agency Stakeholder's Annual Report was generated and details key findings and considerations for continued improvement. DCF received these recommendations at the end of 2021 and is considering practice and policy improvements.



## **Systems Change Review**

An ad hoc workgroup of the CQI Advisory Committee, called the Safety Action Workgroup, was established to focus on assessing aggregate information learned from the Systems Change Review process. This is the process in which DCF conducts practice reviews on serious incidents (more information can be found in Section 5 under Efforts to Track and Prevent Child Maltreatment Deaths). In 2021, the Safety Action Workgroup built upon their previous work analyzing aggregate data by selecting one of the three prioritized themes for learning. The selected theme was the basis of a curriculum for a new virtual learning modality created with a busy workforce in mind. The learning modality was then piloted in select agencies of varying sizes across all five regions of the state and received positive feedback.

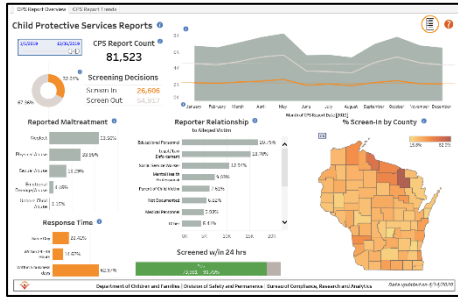
## **Additional Systemic Quality Improvement Initiatives**

In addition to the case review system, DCF uses data on a regular basis to assess, inform, request feedback, and analyze for implications to policy and practice to improve the child welfare system. This is consistent with an overall data-driven decision-making process for child welfare programs and policies. Section 3 includes information on feedback loops as they relate to the specific CFSP and PIP objectives concerning adjusting approaches, soliciting feedback, and measuring progress. Additional mechanisms used to support feedback loops in achieving goals include the following examples.

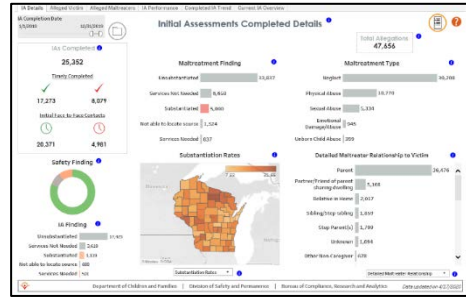
## **Performance Dashboards**

In addition to qualitative, and output/operational reporting data that are available, a wide range of child welfare dashboards provide information as a key component of DCF's child welfare CQI system. They are visual reports showing statewide and local agency child welfare performance summary data. DCF launched several new dashboards in January 2020 and continues to enhance these dashboards based on input from our internal and external stakeholders; these dashboards are updated daily and allow for nimble, real-time reporting. County staff are encouraged to regularly review performance in all areas of child welfare practice. Examples of the breadth of data available in our dashboards are shown on the following page. For links to all dashboards, please visit <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/reports>.

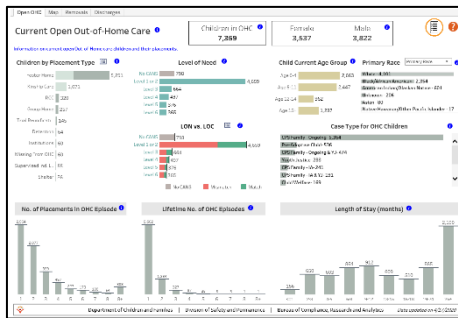
## Child Protective Services Reports



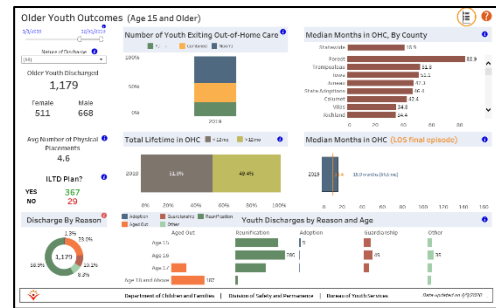
## Initial Assessment



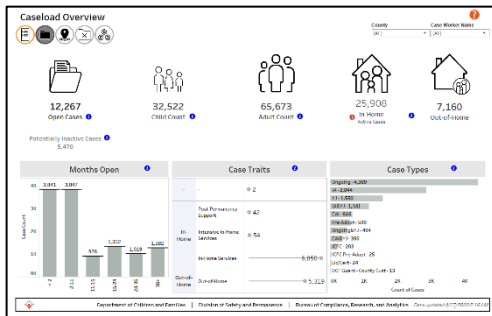
## Out of Home Care



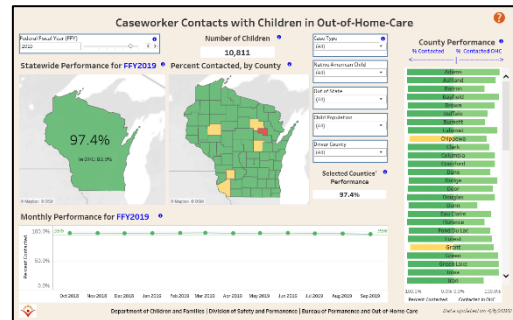
## Older Youth Outcomes



## Worker Dashboard



## Caseworker Contacts



### *Training System (Initial, Ongoing and Foster Parent Training, Items 26-28)*

The following section describes the state’s overall training system and is broken into the state response for initial (Item 26), ongoing (Item 27) and foster and adoptive training (Item 28).

DCF has a robust child welfare training system that provides high quality, uniform training statewide. DCF contracts with the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS), which is housed in the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s School of Social Work, to provide job-specific professional development opportunities for over 11,246 state, county, tribal, and private agency child welfare professionals and over 7,669 foster parents throughout the state of Wisconsin. The contract is primarily funded by DCF with some funding provided by county child and tribal welfare agencies. WCWPDS subcontracts with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee to develop, deliver, and support all required foundational and special topics training for child welfare professionals and supervisors in Milwaukee, and for foster parents statewide. The WCWPDS delivers training in locations throughout the state to ensure training is accessible to child welfare professionals and foster parents.

The WCWPDS provides a continuum of services intended to facilitate and sustain positive change and support improved outcomes within Wisconsin’s child welfare system. Those services include education, training, transfer of learning, technical assistance, coaching, project management, organizational effectiveness and development, research and evaluation, parent voice, and research to practice.

### **Data or Information to Demonstrate Overall System Functioning (Items 26-28)**

This report uses data from the training system’s Learning Management System, WCWPDS Online, with crossover data collected through the State of Wisconsin’s eWiSACWIS database. WCWPDS Online is based in Cornerstone’s proprietary Learning Management System, which tracks certifications and compliance for state of Wisconsin child welfare professionals. The report includes data collected from July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021 (SFY 2021). Additional data is provided with respect to areas of training described under initiatives.

#### *FY 2021 Data:*

<b>Total Trainees</b>	<b>19,616</b>
Case-worker trainees	11,070
Foster-parent trainees	8,546
<b>Total Opportunities Provided</b>	<b>2,234</b>
Total professional development opportunities provided	1,117
Foster-parent professional-development opportunities provided	565
Case-worker professional-development opportunities provided	552

### **Initiatives to Address Overall Training System Functioning**

- DCF contracts with the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System to assure that the state is responsive and provides access to training needs throughout the state.
- Level one training evaluations cover the helpfulness of the training, applicability of the job, how learning will be applied for all trainings offered. Efforts are underway to make this evaluation more comprehensive.
- Over the last year, WCWPDS chaired a workgroup consisting of various county, state and private agency stakeholders to help determine new worker training needs and how to best meet them. Information gathered during this process will be utilized to inform the ongoing development and creation of a WiLearn New Worker Training Program.

Recent enhancements to the training system include:

- Continued work on WiLearn to:
  - Improve the learning experience for our workforce;
  - Better prepare our workforce to meet the challenges of the position and serve families;
  - Improve child welfare professional retention; and,
  - Improve the consistency of the learning experience for new child welfare professionals across the state.

DCF believes this new worker model will provide important benefits and address areas of overall concern related to the 2018 CFSR particularly documentation of compliance.

Additional enhancements to the training system include the following:

- Dedicated staff to organizational development and statewide process improvement projects including evaluation components;
- Quarterly compliance reports being sent to counties and private providers to inform them of staff compliance with DCF foundation and ongoing training requirements;
- Development of compliance reporting for foster parent licensure and provision of those reports to DCF staff to address with providers;
- Initiation of cohorts of Applied Learning Communities to support local implementation of policy and practice;
- Development and roll out of data in supervision training to encourage child welfare supervisors to utilize data as part of their staff development and system enhancement processes;
- Continued enhancement of the statewide calendaring system;
- Development of more flexible learning alternatives including synchronous and asynchronous learning modality platforms;
- Enhanced coordination of Organizational Development activities with CQI processes;
- Supports the professional development of Parent Partners and county coordinators through the Parents Supporting Initiative; and,
- Development of a Plan Do Study Act process as part of the Wisconsin PIP to assist counties with improving the quality of caseworker visits. This effort is being coordinated by the CQI Advisory Committee.

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## INITIAL TRAINING INITIATIVES (ITEM 26)

How well is the staff and provider training system functioning statewide to ensure that **initial training** is provided to all staff who deliver services pursuant to the CFSP that includes the basic skills and knowledge required for their positions?

This area was rated an area needing improvement in the 2018 CFSR. Compliance data did not show that all child welfare professionals were completing initial training requirements in a timely manner. DCF is working on addressing issues related to documentation of required training as part of the state PIP. Wisconsin's initial training has several components to meet the needs of new child welfare professionals including pre-service training, basic intake, and foundation training. These areas of focus are described below and information about compliance is provided for each area.

### *1. Pre-Service Training*

Administrative rules require new child protective services caseworkers and supervisors to complete the caseworker pre-service training as part of their initial development. The web-based pre-service training offered by WCWPDS, combined with the agency-specific orientation plan that may include job shadowing, agency orientation and other related activities, introduces new caseworkers to the basic skills and knowledge they need to carry out their child protective services responsibilities. Because the pre-service training is web-based, all new caseworkers can begin the training immediately upon hire and the system tracks their completion.

To assure that the modules are consistent with state policies, initiatives, and standards, DCF staff review and update the modules as new state policies, initiatives, and standards are released. Additionally, staff review each module on a three-year cycle to include updated research and best practice guidance.

Prior to being assigned as a primary worker in the statewide automated child welfare system, eWisACWIS, caseworkers must complete, or be exempted from, the pre-service training that consists of 14 modules:

- Introduction to Child Protective Services
- Engaging in Child Protective Services
- Safety
- Co-occurring Considerations
- Child Abuse and Neglect
- Access
- Court
- Initial Assessment
- Ongoing Services
- Trauma
- Placement
- Confirming Safe Environments
- Permanence

- Guide to Standards

These modules can be viewed at <https://wcpds.wisc.edu/>.

### *Pre-Service Compliance and Data*

To support supervisors and agencies with onboarding their new Access, Initial Assessment, and Ongoing child welfare professionals and ensure those staff meet their training requirements, WCWPDS reaches out to new caseworkers to share the Welcome Packet and Professional Development Plan and introduce the new caseworker to WCWPDS. The Welcome Packet identifies the pre-service, foundation, and ongoing training requirements and provides information on training policies, procedures, registration, and the Learning Management System (WCWPDS Online). Compliance with the pre-service training requirement for FY2021 is as follows: of the 196 child welfare professionals who started during that time period, 180 workers completed (92%), fourteen workers were in progress of completing (7%), and two workers did not complete the requirement (1%).

### *2. Foundation Training*

Administrative rules require new child protective services caseworkers who have Access, /Initial Assessment, and Ongoing child protectives services responsibilities to complete, unless exempted with county approval, fifteen days (ninety hours) of caseworker foundation training within their initial two years of employment. Dependent upon job function, new caseworkers are required to complete from nine to eleven days of training on topics related to engaging families, safety assessment, ICWA/WICWA, and placement. The additional four to six days of training are chosen from a menu of foundational training courses that are designed to meet job-specific competencies.

The foundation training curricula provides the bedrock of knowledge, awareness, skill development, and values for child welfare staff. The foundation training is evidence-informed and heavily focuses on skill development and application; multiple opportunities for practice are integrated into each skill-focused foundation training session. Foundation training is provided in eight locations around the state throughout the year, with multiple offerings throughout the year in Milwaukee, making the training accessible to caseworkers in all counties across the state.

The required foundation courses include:

- Engaging to Build Trusting Relationships (two days);
- Supporting Change Through Engagement (two days);
- Case Practice with American Indian Tribes (two days);
- Placement (two days);
- Safety in Child Protective Services – Present Danger (one day); and,
- Safety in Child Protective Services – Impending Danger (two days) (not required for Access workers)

The menu-option foundation courses include:

- Trauma Informed Practice (two days);
- In the Best Interest of the Child: Making the Most of Family Interaction (two days);
- Access (one day);
- Initial Assessment (three days);
- Ongoing Case Planning (two days); and,
- Concurrent Permanency Planning (two days).

#### *Foundation Training Compliance and Data*

Like pre-service trainings, DCF staff review and update foundation courses as new state policies, initiatives, and standards are released, thereby ensuring that the courses are consistent with state policies, initiatives, and standards. Additionally, staff review each course on a three-year cycle to include updated research and best practice guidance as well as enhanced skill application.

The training rule is written to require those with the primary job functions of Access, Initial Assessment, and Ongoing child protective services to complete foundation training. Some child welfare professionals have multiple child protective services responsibilities; others have both child protective services and other child welfare, or human services related responsibilities, such as youth justice, children's long-term support, foster care, after hours. Caseworkers with primary foster care, after hours, youth justice, and children's long-term support responsibilities are not required to complete foundation training based upon the requirements within the training rule, even if they have some Access, Initial Assessment, and Ongoing child protective services responsibilities. In practice, many of those child welfare professionals still choose to enroll in some or all of the foundation courses as part of the training rule dependent upon role and local agency requirements.

The most recent cohort for which DCF has complete foundation training data includes those new child welfare professionals who started their employment in FY 2019 and had until FY2021 to complete their two-year training requirements. Of the 142 workers within that cohort, overall compliance with the training rule, including all ninety hours as well as the required course offerings, was 65%. The remaining 35% met some, but not all of the training requirements. For the workers who were able to complete the requirements, it took them an average of thirteen months to complete all 90 training hours.

As part of the 2020 PIP, DCF is working with WCWPDS on processes to better track completion of foundation training for all child welfare professionals with primary job functions of Access, Initial Assessment, and Ongoing child protective services. Part of this effort includes WCWPDS following up on DCF 43 training rule. For example, as of January 2018, WCWPDS sends quarterly reports outlining worker compliance to each county and private agency human services supervisor in Wisconsin. These reports outline the compliance level for each supervisor's direct reports and what courses a child welfare professional still needs to take to comply with the training requirement.

Like pre-service trainings, DCF staff review and update foundation courses as new state policies, initiatives, and standards are released, thereby ensuring that the courses are consistent with state policies, initiatives, and standards. Additionally, staff review each course on a three-year cycle to include updated research and best practice guidance as well as enhanced skill application.

### *3. Basic Intake Training*

DCF and WCWPDS continue to take on a significantly larger role in the youth justice arena; this is the direct result of oversight for the community-based Youth Justice system transferring from the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) to DCF in January 2016. As a result, Basic Intake Training is a responsibility of WCWPDS, and the training system works closely with DCF to continue and refine the development and delivery of this professional development service.

Wisconsin Admin. Code 43 requires that any county staff that provide intake services must successfully complete thirty hours of Basic Intake Training. The format for providing the required thirty hours of training is through an eighteen-hour face-to-face training in which participants learn about relevant statutes, court processes, youth engagement, adolescent brain development, trauma, and family dynamics. The initial eighteen hours are followed up approximately six weeks later with a 12-hour practical application component. Participants involved in this interactive component learn how to best match services to the individuals and families they are dealing with. The new philosophy for this training is to help learners understand not only what they *can* do but also what should they do and how should they do it.

Because county on-call child welfare professionals perform custody intake as part of their intake services, most child welfare professionals in the state are required to complete this training. As part of completing this requirement, the child welfare professions must achieve a score of seventy percent or higher on an exam taken at the end of the thirty hours; after doing so, they receive a certificate of completion. Between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021, 241 individuals completed the Basic Intake Worker Training.



## ONGOING TRAINING (ITEM 27)

How well is the staff and provider training system functioning statewide to ensure that **ongoing training** is provided for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP?

### **Data or Information to Demonstrate Functioning and Initiatives to Address Training Systemic Factor**

This area of practice was found to be an area needing improvement in the 2018 CFPSR due to reporting issues that Wisconsin is addressing through the PIP. The current ongoing training system builds upon the knowledge, awareness, skill development, and values included in foundation training by providing in-depth knowledge, awareness, values, and skill development training around a specific child welfare topic. Different forms of input gathering help shape the suite of special skills and training topics available to child welfare professionals statewide. These include, but are not limited to, direct feedback from training participants by way of course evaluations, the statewide training needs flash survey, DCF defined priorities, and feedback provided at regional supervisor meetings. Trainers with specific expertise in the specialized topic areas facilitate many of the ongoing training courses.

In addition to the ongoing training opportunities provided for Access, Initial Assessment, and Ongoing child protective services staff, courses specifically designed for foster care coordinators are offered regularly. These include DCF 56 Training: New Licensors (DCF 56 outlines the licensing requirements for foster homes), SAFE Structured Analysis Family Evaluation Training, and Foster Parent Foundation Training of Content.

In addition to the training requirements already listed, state licensing rules require licensed social workers to complete four hours of Ethics and Boundaries training during each two-year licensing period. Based upon county-identified priority, the WCWPDS develops and delivers a new Ethics and Boundaries training topic to child welfare professionals and supervisors every two years. WCWPDS provides over sixty sessions of Ethics and Boundaries training to child welfare professionals and supervisors around the state each licensing period.

In order to meet the in-time learning needs of child welfare professionals and decrease workers' time outside of the office, WCWPDS and DCF developed the following web-based learning courses: Understanding Child Sex Trafficking in Wisconsin, Transition to Adulthood, Safety Overview for Non-CPS Staff, Confirming Safe Environments, and CANS Tool Training and Certification. Child welfare professionals can complete these web-based courses via WCWPDS Online; this allows for ease of access and tracking on their training transcripts. The collection of available online trainings continues to grow with new web-based courses developed each year. Descriptions about the web-based courses are available via <https://wcpds.wisc.edu/web-based-courses/>.

In addition to the training provided by the WCWPDS, child welfare professionals and supervisors can attend training offered by other organizations and apply it to their ongoing training

requirements. As part of this process, child welfare professionals and supervisors are then required to enter these sessions into WCWPDS Online as an external training so that their PDS Online transcript captures all their completed training hours. In-service/ongoing training hour requirements cannot be exempted by a county agency, so these outside trainings cannot supersede those training requirements.

#### *Special Skills and Topics/In-Service Training Compliance and Data*

Based upon WCWPDS Online completion reports, all child welfare professionals with the primary job functions of access, investigation/initial assessment, and ongoing child protective services are not in 100 percent compliance with their 30-hours of required in-service/ongoing training. Child welfare professionals with other child welfare primary job functions, such as foster care and after-hours, are not required to complete ongoing training per the training rule (DCF 43) unless they are also licensed by the state as social workers, and not all counties require their child welfare staff to be licensed social workers.

DCF and WCWPDS have taken several steps to improve training completion and documentation. For example, in response to the 2018 CFSR and included in the 2020 PIP, WCWPDS improved the training compliance documentation system for trainings it offers. It is now working to ameliorate the issue of non-WCWPDS trainings being underreported because many are not currently included in the database that WCWPDS uses to complete compliance training reports.

Additionally, as it does for initial training requirements, WCWPDS sends quarterly reports to each county human services supervisor in Wisconsin outlining worker compliance with ongoing training requirements and what courses the worker needs to complete to comply with the requirement. As previously noted, the hope is that this process increases completion and compliance rates. WCWPDS is also working on additional means of improving compliance documentation. The most recent compliance data for the ongoing training component indicates that of the 790 workers who were required to complete the thirty hours of ongoing training, 531 completed (67%) and 259 did not complete (33%). The next two-year timeframe for workers to complete their ongoing requirements ends on February 28, 2023. DCF and WCWPDS will collect and review this data to determine if efforts to improve compliance have been effective.

#### *Tribal Training*

Wisconsin is committed to ensuring that it meets the training needs of Indian Child Welfare (ICW) child welfare professionals in the state's eleven federally-recognized tribes. As sovereign nations, each tribe is responsible for establishing training requirements for its staff. As a result, there are no state training requirements for ICW child welfare professionals unless the child welfare professional is a social worker certified by the state of Wisconsin. However, ICW child welfare professionals have job responsibilities or training needs that can be addressed through WCWPDS. To identify these training needs, the Intertribal Child Welfare Steering Committee made up of all eleven ICW directors, meets with a representative of WCWPDS every other month. Together, the group develops a list of training topics to focus on each year. There are typically three identified training topics offered to tribal staff each year.

### *Supervisor Training*

Administrative rule requires that new child protective services supervisors, unless exempted, complete the child welfare professional pre-service and foundation training as part of their initial training. They must complete the child welfare professional pre-service training before providing direct supervision to a child protective services child welfare professional and must also complete fifteen days of the child welfare professional foundation training within twelve months of hire. In addition, child protective services supervisors, like their staff, are required to complete thirty-hours of in-service (special skills and topics/ongoing) training related to their professional responsibilities during each two-year state licensing period.

In addition to offering child welfare professional pre-service, foundation, and ongoing training, as described in previous sections, WCWPDS offers annual supervisor foundation and supervisor-specific ongoing training topics. The supervisor foundation training focuses on both child welfare specific supervision issues and basic elements of effective supervision. While new supervisors are required to complete the child welfare professional foundation training, they are not required to complete supervisor foundation training.

The supervisor foundation training is continually developed and has been offered statewide on a regular basis since July 2017. The supervisor foundation training series includes:

- Stepping Up to Supervision: Supervisor Orientation (one day) – pre-requisite to attend any of the foundation courses; offered monthly;
- Supervisor Foundation - Administrative Supervision: Supervisor as Manager (two days);
- Supervisor Foundation - Educational Supervision: Supervisor as Coach (two days);
- Supervisor Foundation - Supportive Supervision: Supervisor as Team Leader (two days); and,
- Supervisor Foundation - Clinical Supervision: Supervisor as Critical Thinker (two days).

The following training and partnership efforts are several special initiatives that DCF works with WCWPDS on.

### *Organizational Effectiveness*

#### Description

Organizational Effectiveness (OE) is a systemic and systematic approach to organizational improvement. DCF instituted this process as part of its response to the 2010 CFSR in 2011. DCF, in conjunction with WCWPDS, adopted the American Public Human Services Association's DAPIM™ model for continuous improvement. It is not an initiative or a single event or program; it is a way to provide system support to county human/social service agencies interested in solving a concrete problem or implementing a change related to child welfare.

The seven-day, team-based experience is facilitated by skilled and seasoned professionals from WCWPDS and spans four months. Organizational Effectiveness services are offered on a range of issues organizations involved in public child welfare typically experience. These include:

- Policy alignment;
- Performance management;

- Leadership development;
- Translating mission, vision, values into practice;
- Employee engagement;
- Organizational structure/work process/job design;
- Strategic planning;
- Implementation support;
- Capacity building; and,
- Program improvement.

The OE process looks at areas that need to be improved and makes a conscious effort to stratify task work (structures, polices, procedures, processes and methods) with relational items (culture, values, trust, politics, communication, teamwork and collaboration). Through the development of a Desired Future State (DFS), a team defines what it wants the identified area to look and feel like when the OE process is completed. The team then implements the model by listing strengths and gaps, prioritizing gaps, defining root causes, and developing workable remedies. They also stratify remedies according to quick-wins and mid- and long-term fixes (see DAPIM model).

### Objectives

Organizational Effectiveness seeks to strengthen county organizations by improving performance, performance capacity, and outcomes for the children, youth, and families served by the agency. It builds capacity by taking a systematic (step-by-step approach) with a goal of impacting the entire system systemically (staff, client, and community). This is accomplished by having teams develop the ability to reflect on, process, and learn tools to put into application.

### Data

OE projects have been completed in 32 more counties. Areas addressed include reduction in OHC costs, redesign of crisis on-call, employee retention and recruitment, integration of children's long-term care waiver, redesign of child welfare service delivery system, implementing and integrating trauma-informed care, integrating child welfare and behavioral health, developing more comprehensive youth services, integrating child welfare and juvenile justice services, building agency morale and developing trust-based relationships.

Storyboards were created for some counties that had completed OE in prior years and are available on the WCWPDS website at <https://wcwpds.wisc.edu/organizational-development/organizational-effectiveness/>. The purpose of sharing these storyboards was to share the projects that counties have worked on including DFS, priority gaps, root causes, remedies, and recommendations made by the OE facilitation team.

Annually, the Organizational Effectiveness process is provided to six to eight new counties based on identified need and length of time required for each project. The WCWPDS staff assigned to this project make efforts to develop differing programming levels depending on topics to be addressed and county need. The original seven-day format has worked very well for many counties, but some agencies have been unable to participate due to the significant time commitment required by their staff. DCF and WCWPDS hope that by offering differing levels, it

will be possible to offer this OE process to more county agencies throughout the state. In addition to county-level trainings, it should be noted that WCWPDS staff worked with the Wisconsin County Human Service Association (WCHSA) on an OE project intended to assist WCHSA with developing processes and protocols for decision-making among their diverse membership.

### *Critical Incident Review*

As of 2016, DCF contracts with Collaborative Safety, LLC, to provide training and support in implementing a new review protocol to evaluate and address systemic factors affecting child maltreatment fatalities and near fatalities based on a safety science approach. The *Developing Champions for Change: A Scientific Approach to the Review of Critical Incidents Training Institute* is a four-day training designed to provide a formal skill set to professionals in the area of organizational safety and quality assurance in child welfare.

The *Developing Champions for Change Training Institute* is comprised of four courses:

- *Introduction to Human Factors and Systems Safety (Day One)*  
This course provides a framework of system safety and is designed to engage participants with a comprehensive and holistic introduction to human factors and system safety. Contrasting models and approaches are presented to give participants an increased command of relevant scientific literature.
- *Human Factors Debriefing (Day Two)*  
This course examines the child welfare system and those who interact within it. Participants leave with the ability to independently use Human Factors principles in their workplace. They will understand the human contribution to success and failure as well as how to build systems that promote safe decisions and actions of the people who work within them.
- *Accident Analysis (Day Three)*  
The course is designed to give participants the skillsets to independently analyze critical incidents common in the child welfare system. Participants leave with practical tools to use in their analysis, including skills specific to report writing. Participants will be able to take the results from the accident analysis and generate findings and conclusions that will strategically support systemic change.
- *Implementation and System Change (Day Four)*  
This course focuses on leveraging the skillsets provided in the first three courses for system change. Participants will learn to analyze findings for underlying systemic themes. The course then provides insight on how to develop effective recommendations and provide meaningful feedback to the organization regarding system improvements and valuable learning opportunities.

## *Conferences*

DCF works collaboratively with the WCWPDS and the University of Wisconsin-Madison to plan, deliver, and support several conferences. These include the:

- Public Child Welfare Conference;
- Statewide Conference on Child Welfare and the Courts;
- Youth Services Conference; and,
- Adoption Conference

Applications for Continuing Education and Judicial Education credits are available. Social workers can also receive Continuing Education Hours. The UW-Madison Division of Continuing Studies is an approved continuing education provider through the Association of Social Work Boards.

### Public Child Welfare Conference

The Public Child Welfare Conference targets agency directors, managers, and supervisors and is held every other year. Themes vary for each conference, but have the common thread of supporting statewide initiatives, county needs, and state/national trends. The conference historically reaches 500 Wisconsin child welfare leaders.

### Statewide Conference on Child Welfare and the Courts

The Statewide Conference on Child Welfare and the Courts targets circuit court and tribal court judges, tribal chairpersons, circuit court commissioners that hear juvenile cases, district attorneys, corporate counsels, tribal attorneys, private bar attorneys and public defenders that represent parents and youth, and guardians ad litem. Participant composition is designed to bring together county, state, and tribal leaders from multidisciplinary backgrounds to contribute to a dialogue and developing pragmatic approaches to their work serving youth. Presentations and workshops are subsequently aimed at solutions-based approaches for serving youth in the child welfare and youth justice systems. The conference provides substantive training in a multi-disciplinary setting on topics that impact child welfare, legal and judicial practice to improve safety, permanence, and well-being outcomes for Wisconsin's children and families. Conference capacity is generally 500 participants.

### Youth Services Conference

The Youth Services Conference targets independent living coordinators, child welfare professional working with older youth and youth as they age out of care, Bureau of Youth Services grantees, congregate care providers, youth justice workers, and providers, i.e., service, placement and independent living providers. The conference addresses issues relevant to the wide range of youth currently or formerly served in OHC, with topics focusing on supporting youth while they are in care, as well as in their transition to independence.

### Adoption Services Conference

Wisconsin's Adoption Conference targets social workers from public and private agencies, adoption professionals, public adoption program professionals, and private child placement agencies. The focus of this conference is to improve services and supports for Wisconsin adoption professionals. Capacity for this event is generally 250 participants.

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## FOSTER PARENT TRAINING (ITEM 28)

How well is the staff and provider training system functioning to ensure that **training** is occurring statewide for current or prospective **foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff** of state licensed or approved facilities (that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under title IV-E) that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children?

### **Data or Information to Demonstrate System Functioning and Initiatives to Address**

This area of practice was found to be an Area Needing Improvement in the 2018 CFSR. Efforts continue to address the reporting of compliance noted in this process. Foster parents reported access to a wide range of training options in the CFSR, these training option and Wisconsin's level system are described in this section.

*Required Training by Level of Care Certification*

		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Pre-Placement Curriculum	Foster Care Overview	<b>Pre-Placement:</b> 6 hours	<b>Pre-Placement:</b> 6 hours	<b>Pre-Placement:</b> 36 hours	<b>Pre-Placement:</b> 36 hours
	Expectations of Foster Care				
	Caring for Children in Foster Care				
	Developing and Maintaining Family Connections				
	Foster Family Self-Care				
Foundation Curriculum	Permanency	<b>Initial Licensing:</b> Not Required	<b>Initial Licensing:</b> 30 hours (to be done in first licensing period)		
	Cultural Dynamics				
	Child Abuse and Neglect				
	Effects of Maltreatment on Development				
	Attachment				
	Separation and Placement				
	Importance of Family Connections				
	Guidance and Positive Discipline				
	Access to Resources				
				<b>Plus 4 hours of Child-Specific Training</b>	
Various curriculums	Crisis Management	<b>Not Required</b>	<b>Topics Not Required</b>	<b>Initial Licensing:</b> 24 hours	<b>Initial Licensing:</b> 24 hours
	Sexuality and Sexual Development				
	Sexual Abuse				
	Effects of Maltreatment and Trauma on Child Development				
	Building Life Skills				
	Building Birth Family Connections				
	Other Topics Required by Licensing Agency				
	<b>Ongoing:</b> Not Required	<b>Ongoing:</b> 10 hours each year of licensure beyond the initial licensing period	<b>Ongoing:</b> 18 hours each year of licensure beyond the initial licensing period	<b>Ongoing:</b> 24 hours each year of licensure beyond the initial licensing period	



### *Pre-Placement Training*

DCF contracts with WCWPDS for the curriculum development and maintenance for the Pre-Placement training and the foundation curriculum and for the development of various ongoing trainings. Additionally, WCWPDS conducts Train the Trainer sessions of the foundation curriculum for foster care coordinators from county and private child placing agencies. Private child placing agencies generally license foster homes with a Level of Care of 3 or 4 and conduct their own training of the required curriculum for their licensed foster homes. Private child placing agencies receive financial support to implement training as an included item in their administrative rates for foster care placements.

In addition to the trainings conducted through WCWPDS, DCF has other resources to support foster parent training. Per its contract with DCF, the Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center is required to provide up to six webinar trainings a year for foster parents. These webinar trainings have an interactive capacity to give foster parents an opportunity to ask questions and provide input during the training. County agencies also provide foster parent training that is financially supported using title IV-E pass through funding. Forty-eight counties utilized pass-through funding in CY2021 to support additional foster parent training. County agencies can access this funding for mileage reimbursement, childcare, materials costs, and other allowable costs related to the provision of foster parent training. This can be used for pre-placement, if provided face-to-face, and foundation training to support attendance at the training and ongoing trainings. DCF also provides financial support to the Wisconsin Foster and Adoptive Parent Association for a spring and a fall conference for foster and adoptive parents.

As previously mentioned, the WCWPDS subcontracts with UW-Milwaukee Child Welfare Training Partnership (MCWTP) to oversee and deliver training to county, tribal and DMCPD-licensed foster families licensed at Levels 1 and 2. Increasingly, private Child Placing Agencies (CPAs) licensing families at Levels 3 and 4 have the option to send families to MCWTP sponsored trainings as well.

The foster care licensing agency reviews foster care providers' training compliance during the licensing period and at time of renewal. If a foster parent is not in compliance with the licensing regulations, they may request an exception. The DCF Exceptions Panel must approve any request for an exception or waiver to pre-placement or initial licensing training for all Levels of Care. However, the licensing agency may grant an exception or a waiver for ongoing training at any level. The table below lists the exceptions the DCF Exceptions Panel and licensing agencies granted for foster parent training since 2011, when the training requirements went into effect. Exceptions are time-limited and may include additional conditions. It is important to note that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to shift many trainings from in-person to virtual, there was an increase in exceptions and waivers approved in 2020 and 2021.

### ***Waiver Exception Information***

WAIVER/EXCEPTION DESCRIPTION	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
56.13(4)(a) 2. LEVEL 2 Initial Licensing	0	1	21	32	21	52	54	79	71	135	129
56.13(4)(a) 3. LEVEL 2 Ongoing	1	4	10	7	21	15	25	22	37	43	33
56.13(4)(b) LEVEL 2 Child-Specific Pre-Placement	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	2	3
56.13(5)(b) 1. LEVEL 3 Pre-Placement	0	0	6	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
56.13(5)(b) 2. LEVEL 3 Initial Licensing	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0
56.13(5)(b) 3. LEVEL 3 Ongoing	6	0	7	8	17	6	3	5	6	7	6
56.13(6)(b) 3. LEVEL 4 Ongoing	0	0	5	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	3

#### **Pre-Placement**

Foster parents can complete all pre-placement requirement for Levels 1 and 2 and six hours of the pre-placement training requirement for Levels 3 and 4 by completing the online course at <https://care.wcpds.wisc.edu/foster-parent-pre-placement/>. Some efforts to make this training more accessible include in-person sessions and a combination of online and in-person options. An in-person pre-placement series, specifically adapted to relative caregivers, is offered in Milwaukee, and the pre-placement transcript is available in Spanish.

#### ***Foster Parent Foundation Training***

##### Number of participants at Foster Parent Foundation Trainings

The report pulls the number of seats taken between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021. This pertains to instructor-led trainings. Training attendance increased significantly during this reporting period, from the year prior. The increase is likely correlated to the pandemic, when in-person sessions were cancelled from March to April of 2020. Training opportunities in a virtual format started in May 2020, with all classes offered virtually by fall 2020.

<b>Foster Parent Foundation Training</b>	<b>Total Participants in SFY 21</b>
Foster Parent Foundation Module 1: Partners in Permanency	877
Foster Parent Foundation Module 2: Cultural Dynamics in Placement	851
Foster Parent Foundation Module 3: Maintaining Family Connectedness	1018
Foster Parent Foundation Module 4a: Dynamics of Abuse and Neglect Part 1	853
Foster Parent Foundation Module 4b: Dynamics of Abuse and Neglect Part 2	812
Foster Parent Foundation Module 5: Impact of Maltreatment on Child Development	957
Foster Parent Foundation Module 6: Attachment	776
Foster Parent Foundation Module 7: Separation and Placement	800
Foster Parent Foundation Module 8: Guidance and Positive Discipline	997
Foster Parent Foundation Module 9: Effects of Fostering on the Family	802

### Foster parents who completed TIP

The report captures foster parents who registered for and attended the Trauma Informed Parenting trainings offered between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021. In March 2020, the decision was made to discontinue the Trauma Informed Parenting (T.I.P) training. This was due to a decreased demand for the training due many agencies starting to train this curriculum themselves. One last session was offered- Parenting Through Trauma, which had thirteen participants. MCWTP also shifted focus and prioritized converting the required Foster Parent Foundation trainings to a virtual format due to the pandemic.

<b>Trauma Informed Parenting (T.I.P)</b>	<b>Total Participants</b>
Trauma Informed Parenting (T.I.P)	0
Parenting Through Trauma	13

MCWTP, in close collaboration with DCF, also develops and delivers “Training of Content” (TOC) sessions to prepare trainers offering the Initial Licensing/Foundation modules through county, CPAs, or tribes. TOC sessions are offered at least annually and more often after curriculum revisions.

### **Initial Licensing**

Foster parents licensed at Level 2 and above must complete initial licensing training. Administrative Rule (DCF 56) specifies the topics that must be covered, all of which are covered by the “Wisconsin Foundation Training for Foster Parents” curriculum that MCWTP offers throughout the state. The

foundation curriculum has also been translated into Spanish and Spanish-speaking trainers provide the training when the need arises.

### **Initial Licensing Levels 2-4 Compliance**

This data set consists of foster parents with an initial licensure date between 2020 and 2021 and their fulfillment of Initial Licensing requirements prior to 2022.

#### *Ongoing Foster Parent Training Requirements*

Foster parents are required to complete ongoing training in each licensing period that follows the initial period. The training completed should be based on a plan created for each family that reflects its needs and the needs of children in its care. Ongoing training requirements vary by Level of Care certification and can be satisfied in several ways through WCWPDS - Madison and MCWTP, community agencies, educational institutions, and web-based sources. Options for ongoing training include face-to-face consultation with professionals with expertise about specific topics; video, audio, and web-based presentations and resources; support groups; adult education courses; books and periodicals; television and radio presentations; mentor family consultations; and conferences, workshops, seminars, and webinars. Books, periodicals, web-based and broadcast materials can only account for a maximum of twenty percent of the total required hours.

More detailed descriptions of all foster parent trainings can be found at <https://wcwpds.wisc.edu/>.

#### *Ongoing Foster Parent Training Compliance Level 2-4*

This data set below consists of foster parents with an initial licensure prior to 2019 and their ongoing training requirements they registered for or completed prior to 2022. It consists of data for foster parents with an initial licensure date before June 20, 2018, and the Ongoing training they registered for or completed between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021.

#### Level 2 Foster Parents

	Foster parents who completed 10 hours of training	Foster parents who did not complete 10 hours of training
<b>Balance of State (BOS) (806)</b>	<b>389 / 48.3%</b>	<b>417 / 51.7%</b>
<b>Milwaukee (231)</b>	<b>93 / 40.3%</b>	<b>138 / 59.7%</b>
<b>Total (1,037)</b>	<b>482 / 46.5%</b>	<b>555 / 53.5%</b>

#### Level 3 Foster Parents

	Foster parents who completed 18 hours of training	Foster parents who did not complete 18 hours of training
<b>BOS (178)</b>	<b>84 / 47.3%</b>	<b>94 / 52.8%</b>
<b>Milwaukee (139)</b>	<b>55 / 39.6%</b>	<b>84 / 60.4%</b>
<b>Total (317)</b>	<b>139 / 43.8%</b>	<b>178 / 56.2%</b>

#### Level 4 Foster Parents

	Foster parents who completed 24 hours of training	Foster parents who did not complete 24 hours of training
<b>BOS (104)</b>	<b>37 / 35.6%</b>	<b>67 / 64.4%</b>
<b>Milwaukee (19)</b>	<b>7 / 36.8%</b>	<b>12 / 63.2%</b>
<b>Total (123)</b>	<b>44 / 35.8%</b>	<b>79 / 64.2%</b>

#### *Assessing Foster Parent Training Needs*

In 2017, University of Wisconsin-Madison Survey Center collaborated with DCF to develop a survey about the training system. The purpose was to identify the training needs, strengths, and challenges Wisconsin foster parents and use that information to inform departmental strategic planning experience. The survey was sent via email to 5,031 licensed foster parents in Wisconsin on September 22, 2017. About 1,400 foster parents submitted a response, which is a 28 percent response rate. Collectively, responses informed decisions about new ongoing training curriculum development and which topics from the current offerings to provide in 2018 and beyond.

Like efforts to better document and track child welfare agencies' training completion and compliance, DCF is working with WCWPDS-Madison to determine more effective ways of tracking foster parents' training completion.

#### **Brief Assessment of Progress Toward Outcomes for Items 26-28**

Stakeholder comments during the 2018 CFSR for initial and ongoing training note that though available trainings are robust and comprehensive, more options would be helpful – particularly in rural areas of the state. As noted, DCF is working with the WCWPDS to address issues related to compliance with training requirements and tracking. In addition, the new worker training model and other areas of focus for the training system described in this section will help improve training options and recording in the future.

### *Service Array Systemic Factor (Items 29-30)*

How well is the service array and resource development system functioning to ensure that a comprehensive array of services is **accessible** in all jurisdictions throughout the state (Item 29) and that services are **individualized** to meet the unique needs of children and families (Item 30)?

#### **Overview**

Wisconsin has a state-supervised, county-administered service delivery system; the exception is Milwaukee County, which is state-administered through DCF's Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services. The state-supervised, county-administered structure offers many benefits, including the ability for local jurisdictions to develop and deliver services tailored to meet the needs of children and families. This includes, but is not limited to, tailoring culturally specific services and supports for non-English speaking populations, tribal populations, and different races and ethnicities represented in the state.

A key goal of Wisconsin's service model is to keep children and youth safely in their own home, family, tribe, and community whenever possible. As such, services and supports are designed to work with children, youth, and families to expand healthy connections to supports and individuals in their communities and tribes and bolster resiliency in families to help them thrive. Wisconsin strengthened and reissued its Child Welfare Model for Practice in 2016. This was possible through a collaborative partnership with tribes, counties, and other stakeholders and by abiding by the guiding principle that services be based on trust, engagement, accountability, trauma-informed, culturally responsive, workforce support, and family-centered practices. The Wisconsin Child Welfare Model for Practice is the compass which guides the state's child welfare work and decision-making. Especially over the past year, DCF has increased its emphasis on developing a continuum of services for families serving children in their home, children in out-of-home care placements, supports for children who will be served in the QRTP settings, and supports needed when children transition out of a QRTP setting. These collective efforts will help strengthen the statewide service array.

Wisconsin conformity with service array standards both frames and is reinforced by required state policies and practices, DCF-delivered programs and supports, DCF collaborations with stakeholders to meet service array needs, and referrals to other providers' key statewide efforts.

#### **Data or Information to Address System Functioning**

The 2018 CFSR found this area of practice to be an area needing improvement. Waiting lists for services, particularly related to mental health and AODA were noted. Wisconsin's PIP is focused on developing a better overall assessment for children and families to address this area of practice and continues to work with the Department of Health Services (DHS) to address how to better connect families to key resources. Related to individualizing services, a finding was that more flexible funding was needed to support families. DCF offers Targeted Safety Support Funding as a critical resource to provide flexible funding to families that help them meet their child welfare goals.

All county agencies and the eleven federally recognized tribes are eligible to apply for this funding. This is part of Wisconsin's Program Improvement Plan.

Additional data on this area of performance can also be found in the case review and administrative data related to well-being outcomes can be found in the Assessment of Progress Toward Outcomes section related to Permanency outcome 2 and Well-Being outcome 1. Key assessment data are available related by way of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS). In Wisconsin, children in OHC receive a CANS evaluation and the tool requires that goals be developed any identified need(s). Progress on and/or completion of these goals must be tracked as part of the case planning and service provision processes. A child welfare professional must complete the CANS within thirty days of an out-of-home placement and every six months thereafter while the child is in OHC; re-assessment must occur sooner if the child's placement changes. In these ways, the CANS is a valuable tool to customize services for all families in OHC.

The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment process and tool is used to:

- Identify the needs and strengths of the child
- Determine the ability of the provider to meet the child's needs
- Evaluate the stability of the placement
- Individualize the needs of services for children in OHC (Item 30)

### **How DCF Supports Plan Development to Ensure Access to the Service Array**

DCF provides training, technical assistance, and support to help supervisors and caseworkers follow DCF standards; these are described below.

The Ongoing Services Standards, available via <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/ongoing-services-standards.pdf>, detail requirements related to assessing service needs, when services should be provided, and how they may address issues regarding a child's safety, permanence, and well-being.

The Ongoing Services Standards also include requirements that relate to service array; specifically, that the child welfare caseworker gather and document information pertaining to child and caregiver needs and strengths, develop a case plan to identify goals and corresponding services needs that support safe case closure, and routinely monitor goal achievement to ensure adequate service provision and desired change. This must be done within six months after development of the initial case plan and every six months thereafter.

The CPS Safety Intervention Standards, available via <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy>, detail policy and provide additional guidance to child welfare professionals on how to assess the safety of children who are living in their familial homes or have been placed in OHC, as well show to provide services. The standards address situations where a child welfare caseworker must determine whether a child can safely remain in his or her familial home or must be removed from the home for safety reasons. They further provide guidance with respect to measures that may allow a child to remain in his or her familial home, such as developing a protective plan or in-home

safety plan that identifies services that will control for or manage threats to safety. Additional guidance includes how services may be used to manage impending danger threats as part of an in-home safety plan.

Required expectations spelled out in standards related to meeting the service needs of families include the following:

- Evaluating the existing safety plan developed during initial assessment/investigation.
- Ensuring child safety through continuous assessment, oversight, and adjustment of safety plans.
- Engaging families in the case planning process that identifies underlying needs and directs services to address threats to child safety.
- Measuring progress related to establishing parent/caregiver protective capacities and eliminating safety related issues.
- Achieving stability for all in-home child protective services cases.
- Promoting well-being of children in in-home and OHC cases.

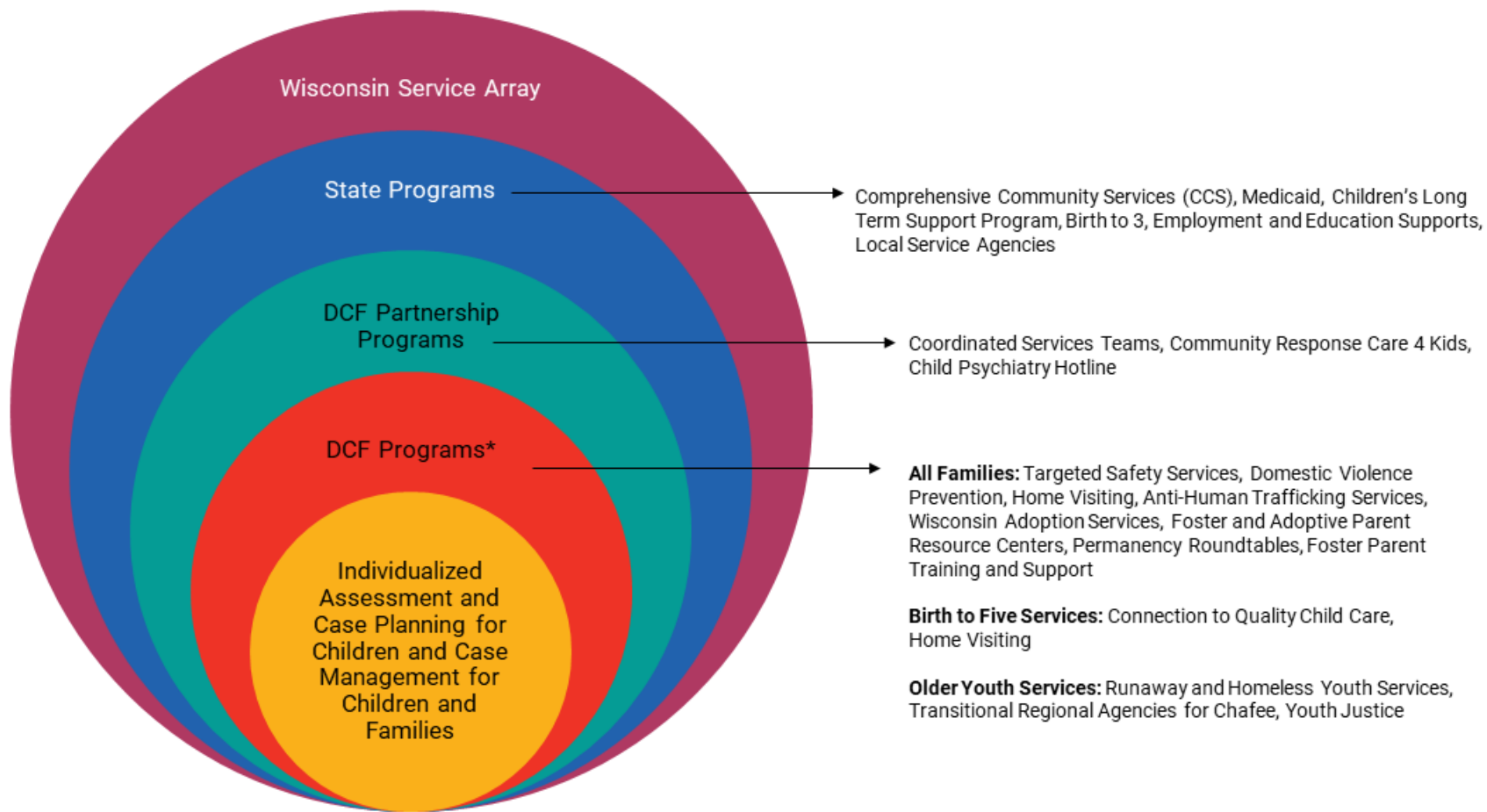
Individualized planning and services are used to determine service needs and supports. DCF meets the service array needs of child welfare families through:

- Individualized case planning and case management and direct service provision through DCF administered programs.
- DCF collaborations with other state agencies to meet needs; and,
- Referral and follow up with other state agency and local programs that meet identified family needs.

In addition, DCF staff developed a Foster Parent Handbook, available via <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/fostercare/handbook>, to provide critical information to foster parents and children in care about training services and supports.

The diagram on the following page depicts the different DCF efforts in coordination with counties to provide a statewide service array, DCF partnership efforts, and other agency services that make up Wisconsin's Child Welfare Services Array.





### Service Array and Tribes in Wisconsin

There are eleven federally recognized tribes in Wisconsin. Wisconsin passed the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act Law (WICWA) and has developed specific guidance for how child welfare agencies must comply with WICWA as well as guidance around “active efforts.” These documents are critical resources for counties and tribes in assuring culturally competent service delivery to Wisconsin’s tribal populations. Key resources include:

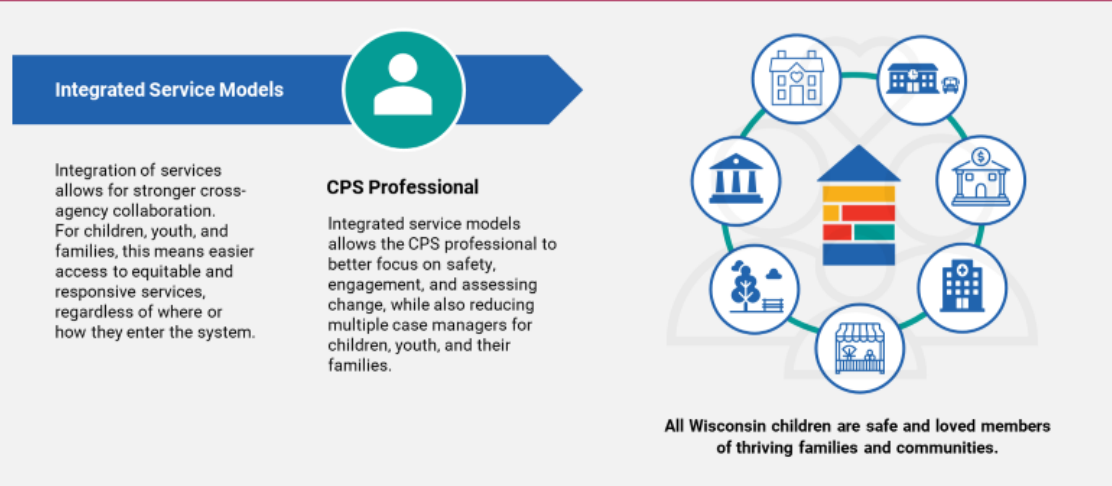
- WICWA Desk Aid - <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/2536.pdf>
- Active Effort guide - <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/464.pdf>
- WICWA eWiSACWIS Desk Aid - <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/423.pdf>
- WICWA Online Resource for Case Workers - [https://media.wcpds.wisc.edu/foundation/WICWA\\_Online\\_Resource/index.html](https://media.wcpds.wisc.edu/foundation/WICWA_Online_Resource/index.html)

### Service Array and Wisconsin Prevention Plan

This model highlights the service array for all families in the child welfare system. As part of more detailed planning for implementation of the Family First Prevention and Services Act, DCF has further articulated an in-home services model for implementation through the Five-Year Prevention Services Plan. This model will build on the current service array including a broader foundation of supports available to families including high quality, early care and education, housing, employment, health care, community resources and supports. The model is in the process of identifying integrated services models that are evidence-based.

## In-Home Service Model

Wisconsin’s holistic in-home service model aims to keep children safely at home with their families in a manner that promotes equity and reduces disproportionality.



**All families** are unique and may include parents, children, extended family or like-kin family members.



**Supportive Infrastructure**, represented by the blue icons surrounding *all families*, includes, but is not limited to:

- Early Care and Education
- Health, Behavioral Health, and Substance Abuse Service
- Housing and Economic Support
- Caregiver Services and Parent Coaching
- Legal Services
- Relatives, Like-Kin, and Caregiver Support.

DCF continually works to better understand and assess the needs of children, youth, and families; this is a cornerstone of its strategic planning efforts related to the in-home continuum of services. This is also a Program Improvement Plan initiative to further individualize services for children and families being served in their homes. DCF is in the process of defining a more comprehensive and systematic process for assessing and meeting the needs of families that are served in-home. Additional programs focused on the service array are the Care4Kids program that provides comprehensive, coordinated care for children and youth in foster care and is tailored to each child's individualized needs. Other programs to meet the service array include automation of Foster Care State Medicaid certification for children in out-of-home care; the Children's Behavioral Health Project, which encourages appropriate utilization of psychotropic medications for Medicaid children and youth; and the use of Coordinated Service Teams to coordinate care for children and youth in multiple systems of care.

The Birth to Five section of this plan also provides information on child abuse prevention grants, the Birth to 3 Program, and efforts to ensure family connections to quality child care and home visiting services.

### **Summary of Progress Toward Outcomes for Items 29 and 30**

Items 29 and 30 were also found to be an "Area Needing Improvement" during the 2018 CFSR. DCF has worked to gather feedback over the last several years to determine what is working well and what gaps exist in the state's service array. Counties and other stakeholders noted that home Targeted Safety Services Funding and Family Foundations Home Visiting Services are helpful initiatives that meet the needs of families. However, it was identified both through CFSR and other stakeholder interviews that access to mental health services, dental care, alcohol and drug treatment, and other supports for families is an ongoing challenge. In addition, stakeholders identify the need for more preventive services, so that fewer children enter the child welfare system. As previously described, DCF's strategic vision uses the FFPSA as a tool and includes including workgroups tasked with defining a more responsive service continuum. These efforts are more fully described in the collaboration section (section 1) and updates to Wisconsin's approach in section 3.

### *Agency Responsiveness (Items 31-32)*

How well is the agency responsiveness to the community system functioning statewide to ensure that in implementing the provisions of the CFSP and developing related APSRs, the state engages in ongoing consultation with tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals, objectives, and annual updates of the CFSP?

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### **ITEM 31- STATE ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS**

The 2018 CFSR concluded that Items 31 and 32 were a strength. This is due to extensive collaboration that is a hallmark of DCF policymaking and program development. Wisconsin's Putting Families First approach also contributes to a strong performance with agency

responsiveness. Data or information regarding performance and initiatives that address Item 31 are described in detail in the Collaboration section of this plan beginning on page 10.

## ITEM 32 - COORDINATION OF CFSP SERVICES WITH OTHER FEDERAL PROGRAMS

### **Data or Information to Demonstrate Performance and Initiatives to Address**

In addition to child welfare, DCF administers key federal programs that serve children and families. These include Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy, the Wisconsin Works (W-2) Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program, and child support. Co-location of these programs in the department promotes collaboration and alignment. In addition, DCF works closely with other state programs to ensure eligible individuals' access to key benefits such as Medicaid. To support collaborative efforts, DCF has spearheaded and launched data exchanges designed to improve information available about, and services provided to, families in the child welfare system and other state systems. The individualized planning for child welfare families and the use of the CANS for children in OHC (described in Item 29) are the primary way that families are identified as eligible for, and subsequently connected to, appropriate programs and services.

The Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy program provides child care subsidies to low-income families. The Wisconsin Shares program is connected to the YoungStar quality rating and improvement system. To further support the use of high-quality programs, DCF established a policy that requires foster parents to use child care rated as three stars or higher, as determined by a scale of 1-5, with 3-5 stars being established as high-quality. Exceptions to this policy include extenuating circumstances such as lack of availability or emergency child care needs that make such a choice impossible.

#### *Access to Work Support Benefits*

The Wisconsin Works (W-2) Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program provides support to working families. Information on programs that a family may be eligible for are provided to families that receive in-home services. In addition, when a child is temporarily absent from the home due to being in an OHC placement, Wisconsin policy is that the family can secure a W-2 benefit for up to six months under the Temporary Absence Policy. For both in-home and OHC cases, DCF works with agencies administering services to ensure information is provided to families that are eligible.

#### *Access to Medicaid*

DCF works closely with DHS to assure children and families in the child welfare system have access to physical, behavior, and dental health care through Medicaid. This includes the Care4Kids program. Both planning with families that receive in-home services and use of the CANS tool with children in OHC help child welfare professionals and families identify healthcare needs. To support these efforts, DCF and DHS collaborated to link the eWiSACWIS and Wisconsin Medicaid enrollment system and facilitate immediate enrollment in Medicaid when a child enters OHC. This policy is described in a memo available at

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/memos/2015-21i.pdf>.

### *Access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program*

As part of a family's individualized case plan, it is determined if the family is eligible for SNAP or the WIC program, both programs are administered at the state level by the Department of Human Services (DHS).

### *Access to Birth to 3*

As required by federal law, all children substantiated for child maltreatment who are age birth to three are referred to Wisconsin's program for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C. This program is called the Birth to 3 Program in Wisconsin. Local counties and tribes work with their local county-based Birth to 3 system to assure that children who are eligible for Birth to 3 have access to programs and services to meet their needs.

### *Improving Access to Education*

DCF works with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to implement key elements of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). DCF and DPI leadership issued joint guidance to promote best practices around school stability. This guidance named core factors that should be considered, such as student and parent preferences, student safety and educational needs, in addition to supplemental considerations such as how many schools the student has attended, meaningful relationships with staff and peers at a school, transportation time to school, and what schools a child's sibling(s) attends.

### *Access to Employment Services and Supports*

DCF also works regularly with the Department of Workforce Development (DWD), the state's administrative home for workforce initiatives and workforce development boards, on efforts related to youth employment initiatives. DCF collaborates with DWD by serving on inter-departmental workgroups focused on promoting employment. DCF also redesigned the Independent Living Program to better connect youth in the Independent Living Program to regional employment services. As a result, three of the state's current regional contracts for Independent Living are coordinated by regional Workforce Development Boards that are strengthening connections to critical employment and skill building opportunities for youth and young adults.

### *Technological Connections to Promote Service Access*

In addition to the education portal described earlier in the collaboration section, DCF has also spearheaded several data exchanges to better identify information about child welfare families in other state systems and to improve services and coordination with other state systems. DCF has established data sharing agreements with the Department of Health Services (DHS) to share data on immunizations and Medicaid certification and develop a joint data warehouse.

A significant investment of DCF technological resources allowed DCF to bring together data previously housed in "separate silos" in a DCF enterprise data warehouse called "LIFT," which stands for Longitudinal Information of Family Touchpoints.

Funding for this effort came from the Wisconsin Race to The Top Early Learning Challenge (RTTT-ELC), a federal grant that ended in December 2016. One of the major RTTT-ELC projects was to

create an Early Childhood Integrated Data System, or ECIDS, to connect data from three participating state agencies. For DCF to participate in the ECIDS, it was critical to integrate DCF data.

LIFT is working on several program views, a Distinct Count Dashboard, and the capability for overview reports. The Distinct Count Dashboard will allow viewers to look at participation information by one or more combinations of programs. For example, a researcher could look at how many children under the age of five are participating in two or more DCF programs. The programs included in LIFT are child welfare Initial Assessment, child welfare OHC, Wisconsin's TANF program - Wisconsin Works (W2), and Wisconsin's CCDBG child care program- Wisconsin Shares. Having access to de-identified information about children receiving services from multiple DCF program areas allows DCF program managers to make data-driven policy decisions. An automated link between child welfare and the Birth to 3 program providing information between the two programs is another example of using technology to improve performance.

### **Brief Assessment of Progress Toward Outcomes**

Stakeholders note that DCF's strong partnerships contribute to an inclusive and collaborative child welfare infrastructure that listens and incorporates the feedback of multiple stakeholders through multiple avenues. DCF's strong partnerships with other state agencies facilitates coordination around families' access to benefits and services.

### *Foster and Adoptive Recruitment Systemic Factor (Items 33-36)*

For this systemic factor, items 33, 34, and 36 are described. Item 35 is considered Wisconsin's foster and adoptive parent recruitment program and separately attached.

#### **STANDARDS APPLIED EQUALLY (ITEM 33)**

How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning statewide to ensure that state standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-B or IV-E funds?

#### **Evidence or Information to Demonstrate Performance and Initiatives to Address Foster and Adoptive Recruitment Systemic Factor**

This area of practice was found to be a strength in Wisconsin's 2018 CFSR. Under Wisconsin Statutes, DCF is responsible for the development of administrative rules related to licensure of OHC placements for children. DCF currently licenses child placing agencies (DCF 54), group foster homes (DCF 57), shelter care (DCF 59), and residential care centers (DCF 52). DCF staff evaluate these agencies at least twice a year to ensure compliance with licensing rules. Licensing staff also investigate all complaints of rule violations and take appropriate action as necessary. Additional visits are conducted based on complaints/other concerns, or technical assistance.

Foster homes are licensed and monitored by a county, tribe, or private child placing agency according to Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter DCF 56. Individuals must pass background checks, physical checks of the home, and complete an assessment process with the licensing agency in order to become a licensed foster home. DCF OHC staff are responsible for training licensing staff across the state, providing technical assistance, and reviewing licensing situations as requested.

DCF developed Ch. DCF 56 using national standards, the Child Welfare League of America standards, federal laws, state law, including Chapter 48 (regarding Child Protective Services case), stakeholder feedback, and legislative input. These administrative codes are minimum standards that each licensed facility must follow. DCF always encourages providers to operate above the minimum standards.

OHC facilities may only be licensed under rules promulgated by DCF. Complete foster home licensing requirements are listed in Ch. DCF 56. Foster home licensing standards apply equally to all potential foster homes, regardless of the provider's relationship to the child. Foster home licenses are issued with an expiration date of no later than two years from date of issuance. Probationary licenses are not issued.

Exceptions may be made to requirements in Ch. DCF 56 if there is a plan in place to meet the intent of the requirement or a plan to come into compliance with the code is made with the foster home. As an alternative to compliance, an agency may require the licensee to meet certain conditions within a specified time period; this must include the requirement for which an exception has been granted. No agency, including DCF, can grant an exception to a requirement in the rule that is also a

statutory requirement (e.g., building code regulations). All exceptions, whether granted by the licensing agency or DCF, need to be documented on the license of the foster home. The exception shall remain in effect only if the conditions under which the exception was granted remain, but no longer than two years from the date on which the exception was granted. DCF has incorporated non-safety related waivers into Ch. DCF 56 for the relative of a child, without an alternative provision to meet the intent of the requirement. Non-safety related waivers, whether granted by the licensing agency or DCF, need to be documented on the license of the foster home.

Regarding foster care, a county, tribe, private child placing agency, or the DCF Exceptions Panel may grant exceptions or waivers to certain aspects of the licensing rules if the exception is not contrary to the health, safety, and welfare of a child. DCF has issued an annotated version of the licensing rule that describes situations in which an exception or waiver may be appropriate. This results in uniform application of the licensing standards.

Under Wisconsin Stat. Ch. 48 and Wisconsin Admin. Code s. DCF 56.10, a foster parent may appeal the decision of a licensing agency to deny or revoke the foster home license to the State Division of Hearings and Appeals (a state agency external to DCF). This appeal process provides added accountability to assure that a licensing agency appropriately applies licensing standards.

Once the base licensing standards are applied to all applicants for foster care, all foster parents are designated a Level of Care Certification 1-5 during the foster care licensing process. This Certification is based on meeting the following:

- Qualifications
- Training
- Foster parent references
- Foster parent experience

Each of the five Level of Care Certifications has a specified number of training hours, personal references, knowledge, and experience requirements. Foster parents must comply with the training requirements in accordance with their Level of Care certification. Training requirements fall into three categories: pre-placement, initial licensing, and ongoing. The training requirements are explained in depth in Item 28 of this document. The five Levels of Care are:



<b>Level of Care</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Level 1: Child-Specific Foster home</b>	Issued to a relative of a child or an individual who has a previous existing relationship with the child or the child's family: minimal training required.
<b>Level 2: Basic Foster Home</b>	Referred to as general foster care. Requires additional training and positive references.
<b>Level 3: Moderate Treatment Foster Home</b>	Treatment level foster care that can provide additional supervision and care to children with higher needs than those in basic foster care. Must meet additional training and experience requirements.
<b>Level 4: Specialized Treatment Foster Home</b>	Treatment level foster care to meet the higher needs of children and often addresses specific population needs. Must meet additional training and experience requirements.
<b>Level 5: Exceptional Treatment Foster Home</b>	Provides 24/7 skilled staffing in the foster home in addition to foster parents for children with significant needs (i.e. medically fragile or those who will continue into long-term adult services). Foster parent and staff must meet additional training and experience requirements.

The Level of Care certification does not necessarily need to match the Level of Need of a child placed in the home. The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool will help determine the type of service provision needed to support a placement at a lower assessed level for a child.

To ensure that all licensors receive adequate training and support on licensing requirements, DCF holds quarterly trainings pursuant to Ch. DCF 56, the administrative rule for foster homes. Attendance at the training is mandated for licensors in the State of Wisconsin. All training participants are provided a copy of Ch. DCF 56, as well as all the resources and forms required to license a home. The two-day training covers all aspects of rule, policy, and guidance, which ensures consistent application across counties and private child placing agencies. In addition to the Ch. DCF 56 training, the department has created, in partnership with WCWPDS, an online Foster Care Coordinator Pre-Service training. This training is a required pre-requisite to the Ch. DCF 56 training and foster care coordinators complete this training prior to licensing a foster home.

Since October 1, 2016, DCF requires the use of the Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE) home study as the standard assessment tool for all foster care licenses and adoption approvals. Use of the SAFE home study assessment requires that anyone who will administer, approve, and supervise the SAFE home study attend mandatory training. The required SAFE trainings include two-day Initial SAFE Training and SAFE Supervisors Training. Additionally, supervisors and caseworkers may attend an optional SAFE Booster Training. There are also quarterly SAFE Technical Assistance (TA) conference calls, which supervisors and caseworkers may participate in if additional TA is needed. DCF has supported all costs of this training for all foster care and

adoption staff statewide and will continue to do so as funds are available. Trainings are held quarterly to support the need.

To monitor licensing agencies' processes and practices throughout the state, DCF holds regular meetings for foster care coordinators so the latter can receive updates, clarifications, and technical assistance from state policy staff. DCF also holds monthly teleconferences to keep child welfare professionals up to date on policies or guidance that impact the licensing process. Coordinators are also given time to seek assistance on licensing scenarios or barriers that they are facing. Regional and statewide meetings take place so that coordinators can have face-to-face learning opportunities that provide a consistent message on rules, policies, and guidance.

DCF also has several reports that monitor compliance with licensing. These reports are used by DCF and can be used at the local level by agency staff. The reports, and some notable statistics are included below:

- PM04A100 - Level of Care Monitoring: Provides information to better manage the timely provision of conversions of court-ordered Kinship Care (COKC) providers to licensed foster parents.
- PM04A103 - Licensing Timeliness Report: Provides information related to licensing decisions and the timeliness of those decisions. Contains information regarding all decisions for initial and renewal license applications that are due within the reporting period. The report also contains information regarding licenses that are revoked, closed, or expired within the reporting period.
  - In calendar year 2021 there were 2977 licensing decisions made.
    - 62% of the 1835 licensing decisions were made timely.
    - 39 licensing decisions were over 30 days overdue; all other overdue licensing decisions were completed within 30 days of the date they were due.
    - Of the 2977 license applications, 2600 licenses were issued, 19 denied, 356 applications withdrawn, and 7 revoked.
- ADHOC501 Federal Waiver – Non-Safety Licensing Standards: Provides a list of the number of exceptions or waivers granted by Ch. DCF 56 code citations for the reporting period.
  - In calendar year 2021 there were 2,429 exceptions or waivers granted for foster care licensure.
    - Of those granted exceptions the most common exception is to Ch. DCF 56.09(2)(b) Supervision of children which allows both foster parents to work outside of the foster home. This was granted 1,470 times.

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## REQUIREMENTS FOR CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS (ITEM 34)

How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning statewide to ensure that the state complies with federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements, and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children?

### **Data or Information Demonstrating Performance and Initiatives to Address Background Check Systemic Factor**

This area of practice was found to be a strength in Wisconsin's 2018 CFSR. Wisconsin complies with federal requirements for criminal background clearances that relate to licensing or approving foster and adoptive placements. Licensing agencies must conduct background checks before licensing foster and adoptive parents. The background checks have different expiration dates. The background checks must run for foster parents, any residents of the home who are 10 or older and are non-client residents, and any employees who will have regular, direct contact with a foster child. For a child under 18 years old, the licensing agency is not required to obtain further information if the child's background information disclosure does not indicate an offense that would be a bar. Comparable convictions from other states or U.S. jurisdictions are treated the same as if they were in Wisconsin. Foster home licensing agencies conduct background checks at initial and re-licensure. There are six required types of background checks:

- Adam Walsh (FBI)
- Adam Walsh Child Protective Services (CPS)
- Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ)
- Caregiver or Integrated Background Information System (IBIS) Check
- Reverse Address Sex Offender registry check
- Local Law Enforcement Checks

Following is a resource developed for foster care coordinators regarding each type of background check:

Type of Check	Timeframe	What is checked?	How do you do it?	Expiration	Resources
<b>Adam Walsh:</b>  <b>FBI</b>  <b>(Federal Bureau of Investigation)</b>	Initial Licensure:  Required for prospective foster and adoptive parents who are caring for children from the public child welfare system. It does not apply to adoptive families seeking domestic or international adoptions unless the child qualifies for Adoption Assistance.	Check of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) records; not all arrests or convictions are reported to the FBI.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agency must have an account with the WI Dept. of Justice (DOJ).</li> <li>DOJ will provide fingerprint cards once agency has an approved policy on record with DOJ regarding consent and records management. Or the agency may have the applicant complete an electronic capture of their fingerprints for submission.</li> <li>Agency must obtain a signed consent, previously approved by DOJ, from each applicant and submit with the completed fingerprint card.</li> <li>Results will be sent through the agencies on-line account.</li> <li>Results must be scanned into eWISACWIS.</li> </ul>	This check is valid as long as the foster or adoptive parent is continually licensed. If there is a break in licensure, the applicant must be re-fingerprinted and the checks completed before a license can be renewed.	<a href="#">DCF Memo Series 2007-16:</a> Adam Walsh Requirements  <a href="#">State Child Abuse and Neglect Registry</a>  <a href="#">Info Memo 2008-03i:</a> Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act Questions and Answers
<b>Adam Walsh:</b>  <b>Child Protective Services (CPS) Checks</b>	Initial Licensure:  Required for prospective foster and adoptive parents.	Check of Child Protective Service records in each county or state the person has lived in for the last 5 years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agency requests records from each county/state the applicant has lived in for the last five years.</li> <li>It is not enough to just check eWISACWIS records, as those records only go back to when each county agency or DMCP (Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services) began using eWISACWIS - typically only back through 2001.</li> <li>DMCP and county agencies are required to comply with requests for CPS records for the purposes of foster care licensing. To complete checks outside of WI there is a resource created with each state's process – the <a href="#">State Child Abuse and Neglect Registry</a>.</li> <li>Results must be scanned into eWISACWIS</li> </ul>	4 years, although many licensing agencies complete this at each re-licensing period.	

Type of Check	Timeframe	What is checked?	How do you do it?	Expiration	Resources
<b>WI Dept. of Justice (DOJ) and Caregiver</b>	Initial Licensure:  Required for prospective foster and adoptive parents.	Check of arrests and convictions submitted to WI DOJ, not all local arrests and convictions are submitted to DOJ. This is a name-based check.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant completes the Background Information Disclosure form or BID.</li> <li>• The agency completes the Single or Multiple Name based check form for each applicant.</li> <li>• Agency submits request to DOJ.</li> <li>• DOJ results will be sent through the agencies online account.</li> <li>• Results must be scanned into eWISACWIS.</li> </ul>	4 years, although many licensing agencies complete this at each re-licensing period.	Forms: Background Information Disclosure form <a href="#">DCF-F-2978</a>  WI Criminal History Single Name Record Request form <a href="#">DJ-LE-250</a>  WI Criminal History Single Name Record Request form <a href="#">DJ-LE-250A</a>
<b>IBIS or Caregiver</b>	Initial Licensure:  Required for prospective foster and adoptive parents.	Check of entity records for persons who have been denied, revoked, or otherwise prohibited from working with children or vulnerable populations.  <i>Note: this does not check child abuse and neglect records in WI.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant completes the Background Information Disclosure form or BID.</li> <li>• The agency completes the Single or Multiple Name based check form for each applicant.</li> <li>• Agency submits request to DOJ.</li> <li>• DOJ will automatically send the request to review the Children’s Licensing Denial System.</li> <li>• The agency will receive notification from the Department of Health Services whether or not the name submitted is included in the system. This is known as the IBIS letter.</li> <li>• Results must be scanned into eWISACWIS.</li> </ul>	4 years, although many licensing agencies complete this at each re-licensing period.	Forms: Background Information Disclosure form <a href="#">DCF-F-2978</a>  WI Criminal History Single Name Record Request form <a href="#">DJ-LE-250</a>  WI Criminal History Single Name Record Request form <a href="#">DJ-LE-250A</a>

Type of Check	Timeframe	What is checked?	How do you do it?	Expiration	Resources
<b>Reverse Address Sex Offender Registry Check</b>	Initial Licensure and Relicensure:  Required for prospective foster and adoptive parents.	The database checks nationwide sex offenders. This check indicates where registered sex offenders have reported to authorities they are living. This is an address check, not a name-based check.  Sometimes people are not forthright about who lives in their home.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Sexual Offender Registry Check shall be done on the Wisconsin DOC website: <a href="http://offender.doc.state.wi.us/public/">http://offender.doc.state.wi.us/public/</a></li> <li>Agencies shall use the “Geographical Search” function and check all address within a 1 mile radius. Agencies shall use the “List” view when checking the results and ensure that no address on the list matches the provider’s address.</li> <li>Agencies shall print and save the entire list in the provider file, and scan the entire list into eWISACWIS.</li> </ul>	2 years or the end of the licensing period, whichever occurs first. Must be completed at each licensing renewal.	<a href="#">DSP Numbered Memo Series 2015-01</a> : Reverse Sex Offender Checks
<b>Local Law Enforcement Checks</b>	Initial Licensure:  Required for prospective foster and adoptive parents.	Due to the fact that not all local contact with law enforcement is reported to DOJ, agencies must run local checks to determine the complete understanding of the background. This is done through CCAP (Consolidated Court Automation Programs) and checks with local law enforcement agencies where the applicant has lived for at least the last five years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CCAP checks are run through this website: <a href="http://wcca.wicourts.gov/index.xsl">http://wcca.wicourts.gov/index.xsl</a>, which contains most records handled through Wisconsin Circuit Courts.</li> <li>Local law enforcement agency checks are completed by contacting each law enforcement agency in the city where the person has lived. Some law enforcement agencies have specific processes for requesting such information.</li> </ul>	4 years, although many licensing agencies complete this at each re-licensing period.	

Section 48.685 of the Wisconsin Statutes and section DCF 56.055 and chapter DCF 12 of Wisconsin Administrative Code set forth criminal history and child abuse record search requirements, including barred crimes and other offenses that prohibit licensing a person as a foster parent, allowing a person to live in a foster home, or employing a person as a caregiver. Some offenses are a permanent bar, some are a bar for five years with rehabilitation approval, and some are a bar unless the person obtains rehabilitation approval. The procedures for obtaining rehabilitation approval are in chapter DCF 12 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code.

To receive a rehabilitation review, the applicant must submit a Rehabilitation Review Application Packet. The applicant may submit the application packet to the foster home licensing agency if they are seeking regulatory approval for foster care only. If the applicant is seeking regulatory approval for foster care and adoption through the Public Adoption program, or the applicant is seeking foster home licensure from the DMCP, DCF must complete the Rehabilitation Review.

The agency will appoint a rehabilitation review panel once the application and all requested documents are received. The application will be denied if all requested documents are not provided within 90 days of the receipt of the rehabilitation review application. The panel may also request information from other agencies or people who are familiar with the applicant.

A rehabilitation review meeting will be scheduled after the panel receives all requested information. The applicant will receive notice of the date, time, and location of the meeting by mail. The applicant is not required to appear at the rehabilitation review meeting, but it is recommended that the applicant appears in person or via phone. At this meeting, the applicant will have the opportunity to answer questions from the panel. The applicant must provide convincing evidence that the applicant has been rehabilitated.

The panel will decide whether the applicant is present at the meeting or not. If the panel decides it does not have enough information to make a decision, it may defer a final decision for up to six months. The applicant will receive the panel's decision in the mail. The panel's decision may be a rehabilitation approval, denial, or deferral.

In addition to the crimes and offenses listed in the statute, section 48.685 (5m) of the Wisconsin statutes provides that the licensing agency must review the circumstances of convictions of any offense that is not barred by the statute to determine if the crime is substantially related to the care of a foster child. Section DCF 12.06 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code provides factors for the licensing agency to consider in determining whether a crime is substantially related. Rehabilitation approval is not available for crimes that are substantially related.

A licensing agency must make a reasonable effort to contact the potential licensee to obtain further information if any of the following apply:

- The statute specifically requires a determination on whether the circumstances of certain convictions are substantially related to the care of a foster child. If a person was convicted of any of the following crimes less than five years before the background

check, the licensing agency must obtain a copy of the criminal complaint and judgement of conviction and make the substantially related determination:

940.19(1)	Misdemeanor battery
940.195	Battery to an unborn child
940.20	Battery, special circumstances
941.30	Reckless endangerment
942.08	Invasion of privacy
947.01(1)	Disorderly conduct
947.013	Harassment

- If the DOJ criminal history indicates a charge of a crime that would be a bar, but does not clearly indicate whether there was a conviction, the person was found not guilty, or the charge was dropped or dismissed, the licensing agency must make reasonable efforts to determine the final disposition of the charge.
- If the person's background information disclosure indicates a charge or conviction of a barred crime but the DOJ criminal history does not include the charge or conviction, the licensing agency must make every reasonable effort to contact the clerk of courts to obtain a copy of the complaint and the final disposition.
- A military discharge was other than "honorable."

All background checks must be scanned into the eWiSACWIS system, and all results of the background checks must be documented in the home study report the agency completes. Any conviction or finding must be mitigated in the home study if the person is licensed.

Wisconsin contracts for Title IV-E determination services which reviews all placements and associated necessary licensing requirements, including background checks, for foster care and treatment foster care. This third-party check allows for ongoing quality assurance of licensing determinations as related to background checks. In addition, eWiSACWIS functionality was enhanced to include electronic records of background check results. DSP staff meet monthly with the contractor to review any compliance issues. If a problem is noted, the contractor works with the foster care licensing agency to obtain the necessary information. In the rare circumstances that issues arise that are not resolved with the local agency and the contractor, DSP OHC staff will engage in corrective action planning with the agency to ensure they comply with the background check rules and regulations. Additionally, DSP runs a monthly check of all OHC providers with the Sex Offender Registry in Wisconsin and if there are any matches found, DSP OHC staff work with the local agency to identify a resolution.

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#### ITEM 35 – FOSTER AND ADOPTION RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PLAN

Please see separately attached recruitment plan.

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#### ITEM 36 - INTERSTATE COMPACT FOR THE PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN (ICPC)

How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning to ensure that the process for ensuring the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children is occurring statewide?



This area of practice was found to be an area needing improvement in the 2018 CFPSR. This was due to reporting issues related to the completion of timely home studies that DCF continues to work on described below. DSP is responsible for processing requests for the placement of children across state lines under the Interstate Compact of the Placement of Children (ICPC) and Wisconsin law. The proposed ICPC section, Wis. Stat. s. 48.99, has been codified into Wisconsin Statute, but will not be effective until 35 states codify it into their statutes, which hasn't happened yet. Accordingly, there are two references in statute - Wis. Stat. s. 48.988 is the current ICPC section and Wis. Stat. s. 48.99 is the new, but not active, section. The Wisconsin ICPC specialists work with other states as well as Wisconsin's local agencies to process incoming and outgoing requests.

### **Data or Information to Demonstrate Performance and Initiatives to Address ICPC Systemic Factor**

The Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) is responsible for processing requests for the placement of children across state lines under the Interstate Compact of the Placement of Children (ICPC) and Wisconsin law pursuant to Wis. Stat. s. 48.988. A new ICPC statute was passed pursuant to Wis. Stat. s. 48.99. This updated statute was codified in state statute in 2020 as part of overall federal ICPC requirements. It will not go into effect until 35 states codify the new provisions in their state statutes. The Wisconsin ICPC specialists work with other states as well as Wisconsin's local agencies to process incoming and outgoing requests.

Wisconsin was one of the six original states to pilot the National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise (NEICE) beginning in November 2013 and continued beyond the pilot with NEICE in 2015. Wisconsin has since used the NEICE Web-based Case Management System. The NEICE system is now used by 38 states, allowing quicker transmission to those states. NEICE 2.0 was released in 2021 and has additional reports built into the system providing both national and state specific data. Wisconsin ICPC has worked diligently with NEICE to complete data clean up in an effort improve the quality of the data pulled from the system.

From 2015 to 2019, eWiSACWIS enhancements completely changed Wisconsin's process for requesting placements under the ICPC. Under the new process, local agencies are required to submit any outgoing ICPC requests through eWiSACWIS (except for private adoption agencies that do not have access to eWiSACWIS). The local agency is only able to electronically submit the request if all necessary information and required documentation is included. The system now requires information regarding the participants in the request, helps the child welfare professional determine the ICPC regulation type, gathers information regarding the proposed placement resource, and requires all documentation specific to the type of request. Requiring this information prior to submitting the request to the Wisconsin ICPC office has helped local agencies understand what they need for a request and reduced the time ICPC specialists spend explaining ICPC requirements to professionals. The ICPC specialists use the same functionality to upload incoming ICPC requests into eWiSACWIS for assignment and review by Wisconsin local agencies. The system now allows for all ICPC information to be in one place, which improves communication between the local agencies and the Wisconsin ICPC specialists.

In order to support local agencies in preparing outgoing ICPC requests and responding to incoming ICPC requests, policy and procedures for ICPC were documented more thoroughly in [Wisconsin's Ongoing Services Standards](#) in June 2017. Online training and other supporting materials were developed in 2018. These resources will allow local child welfare professionals to quickly access the information they need about the ICPC to facilitate timely placement of children in and out of Wisconsin.

### **Brief Assessment of Progress Toward Outcomes for Systemic Factor (Items 33-36)**

Items 33 and 34 were found to be a strength during the 2018 CFSR; this is due to comprehensive standards being in place and followed to assure compliance.

Item 35 was found to be an "Area Needing Improvement" during the 2018 CFSR. However, DCF data over time shows that DCF foster parents' races and ethnicities are increasingly matching the race and ethnicity of children in the OHC system as shown in the foster and adoptive parent recruitment plan separately attached to this document. In addition, recent efforts to recruit tribal foster parents have been very successful - more than doubling the number of tribal foster parents, which is also noted in the separately attached plan. DCF will continue to build on overall efforts to recruit and support foster parents as described in the attached plan.

Item 36 was found to be an "Area Needing Improvement" because DCF's ability to track the timeliness home studies was found to be insufficient. In 2019, an eWiSACWIS enhancement included fields that could capture data relating to home study requirements, such as the date the home study request was sent, and the due date required to meet the Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Foster Children Act. While the data was being collected in eWiSACWIS, DCF didn't have a mechanism to properly track cases without going into each case to review timeliness. To address this, DCF created the ICPC Referral and Tracking Report that allows ICPC staff to monitor timeliness and follow up on overdue home studies with local agencies. Additionally, in early, 2022 DCF created the Safe and Timely Preliminary Home Study Report form to assist local agencies in meeting the Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Foster Children Act requirements.

In addition, DCF's role as a leader in the NIECE system has been recognized nationally and by stakeholders. Please refer to specific item descriptions for initiatives to address each of the items.

### **3. Update to the Plan for Enacting the State's Vision**

DCF's plan for enacting the state's vision is encompassed in the Putting Families First approach described in the collaboration section.

Wisconsin has not adjusted the goals and strategies identified in the FY 2022 APSR. These goals continue to reflect work toward Wisconsin's Putting Families First approach and work toward meeting FFPSA requirements. Goals and objectives are responsive to the 2018 CFSR, encompass current PIP objectives, and are based on the data and information provided on child welfare outcomes and systemic factors described in Section 2 of this APSR.

The 2023 APSR provides an update on five overall goals:

1. To improve the quality, effectiveness, and availability of safety services.
2. To improve the quality and effectiveness of permanency services for children and families.
3. To engage children and families in more effective and meaningful ways.
4. To improve access to services and supports for youth and families by building community capacity.
5. To assure a healthy, stable, inclusive, and strong child welfare system and infrastructure that improves the safety, well-being, and permanency of families.

For each goal, strategies are articulated that are designed to move DCF toward meeting the overall goal. For each of the strategies, DCF notes the corresponding CFSR performance outcome and systemic factors being addressed as well as the rationale for selecting the objective. Information is also provided about activities that will be undertaken, staff training and technical assistance, and implementation supports needed to pursue strategies as well as feedback loops. Please note that for PIP specific strategies, more specific updates will be incorporated in Wisconsin's PIP reporting process. The state does not anticipate the need for any Children's Bureau assistance in the FY 2023 APSR.

## **Goal 1: Improve the quality, effectiveness, and availability of safety services for children and families.**

*Objective 1.1 To improve safety supports for children being served in the home (Name has changed from Safety Services to Targeted Safety Services) (Addresses Items 2, 3 and 12, 29 and 30). (2020 PIP)*

Rationale: Children and families identified as unsafe in the child welfare system have specific needs that must be met in order to avoid further engagement in the child welfare system. These needs include identification of specific needs that must be addressed to assure child and family safety and well-being and access to services to meet those needs.

Activities in the last year and continuing activities include:

- DCF issued an RFP for new and returning counties for the Targeted Safety Services (TSS) program. There are currently 64 counties and 5 tribal child welfare agencies participating in this program in CY 2022.
- All counties and tribes that applied for funding received support.
- Counties receive regular peer support opportunities and technical assistance based on identified needs.
- Counties report that the assistance with concrete and support for addressing needs for their families has been of invaluable assistance in helping achieve child welfare goals.
- DCF is exploring ways to expand TSSF to reach more agencies and serve more children and families in Wisconsin.

Staff Training and Technical Assistance:

- Training and technical assistance will be provided as articulated in the PIP. DCF will work with the Professional Development System to provide appropriate training at the county level to support implementation and ongoing efforts.
- Assistance includes formal training as well as TA calls and small group and individual consultations.
- A focus on safety planning uniformity and alignment of the process with its intended use outlined in standards.

Measures of Progress:

- DCF continues to monitor agency fidelity of TSSF using eWiSACWIS data, annual programmatic reporting and use of TA. Analysis of data for service utilization finds that each agency has a different approach and unique needs that are addressed through this funding. Agencies reported that through using TSSF and the provided TA, they were able to strengthen internal processes to better support use of Safety and Protective Planning and have seen an increase in staff confidence regarding safety.
- Review of agency spending has shown an increase in agencies' ability to spend the TSSF funds allocated. These findings confirm that the current approach for funding is the appropriate one to continue.
- Outcomes in CY 2021 include services to 3,348 children and 1,663 families.

### Implementation Supports:

- Possible IT upgrades and assistance to new counties that may need help developing and implementing policies.
- DCF will reissue the RFP in the summer of 2022. It will be open to all counties and tribes to continue to participate as well as to new counties or tribes. DCF does not anticipate any challenges to continued successful implementation of this initiative.

### Feedback Loops:

- DCF will continue provide regular updates about evolving issues, data and trends, as well as request feedback from several advisory committees including the Wisconsin County Human Services Association Policy Advisory Council (WCHSA PAC), the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Advisory Council, and DCF's Bureau of Regional Operations.

*Objective 1.2: Enhance use of technology to promote timely initiation of safety investigations.  
(2020 PIP)*

Rationale: The timeliness of initial investigations is critically important. Technology is available to track timeliness and share data with counties and their staff to ensure they meet federal and state required timelines.

### Activities in the last year and continuing activities include:

- DCF continues to use its initial assessment timeliness dashboard to track performance monthly on this indicator.
- Counties with performance below standards are identified and assisted to improve performance.
- Quarterly calls are held with participating counties for technical assistance around identified issues.

### Staff Training and Technical Assistance:

- Existing staff and supervisors are trained on use of the dashboard. As new child welfare staff are hired, they will be provided support in how to use these tools.
- A best practice tip sheet was developed based on high performing counties that was published by DCF and shared with all counties:  
<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/5536.pdf>

### Measures of Progress:

- The Initial Assessment dashboard (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/kstat/cw/ia>) is monitored by the Bureau of Regional Operations and program staff.
- When TA is offered to counties, there is typically an increase in successful Initial Face to Face contacts. State-wide trends have not moved significantly in any direction; however, individual counties quickly improve in this metric once the issue arises. This shows they are quickly responding to TA but also noticing the issue on their own and addressing it.
- Reports will be included in PIP status reports.

### Implementation Supports

- DCF will provide continued technical support for the platform that supports DCF dashboards.
- DCF does not anticipate any challenges with continuing to focus on this PIP item.

### Feedback Loops:

- DCF's Bureau of Regional Operations works with counties that are performing below expectations by providing information about performance and technical assistance on how to improve performance.
- DCF's Bureau of Compliance, Research and Analytics (BCRA) displays dashboards for public viewing and monitors statewide performance and trends.

## Goal 2: To improve the quality and effectiveness of permanency services for children and families.

*Objective 2.1 To develop a tailored dispositional orders and conditions for return project for timely permanence. (Items 2, 3, 5, 6, 12, 21 and 23). 2020 PIP*

Rationale: DCF worked with the Children’s Court Improvement Project (CCIP) to develop a strategy that addresses concerns with the current court report and dispositional order, which contain the conditions for return and rules of supervision. It has been found that these may not be tailored to each parent and are not based on the specific circumstances and behaviors that must occur for the child to be returned home safely. This project will address how to improve this report and processes and supports relevant to it.

### Activities in the last year and continuing activities include:

- The tailored court orders project implementation team continues to meet regularly to oversee implementation, evaluation and connecting with project sites as needed. In the last reporting period, the implementation and evaluation workgroups have been combined into one workgroup that continues to meet monthly to oversee the implementation efforts of the three pilot counties (Barron, Manitowoc and Waukesha), the mid-implementation and overall ending evaluation.
- The tailored dispositional orders project was featured as a workshop session at the 2021 Conference on Child Welfare and the Courts with a focus on lived experience.
- In August 2021, DCF and CCIP convened the three pilot sites for an All Sites Meeting for counties to share their progress, obtain ideas from one another, and discuss plans moving forward.
- All three pilot counties have implemented new Conditions for Return and using them on newly filed CHIPS cases.

### Staff Training and Technical Assistance:

- See training and resources described above.
- Pilot counties were asked about the training and resources during both the mid-implementation and final surveys and through focus groups. The feedback was utilized to condense the pilot trainings into one training with the most useful components to be provided to additional counties and tribes during the statewide rollout.
- DCF and CCIP are communicating with sites on a regular basis to identify additional technical assistance or support needs.

### Measures of Progress:

- Mid-implementation evaluation discussions were held with each of the three pilot counties in September and October 2021. A compiled summary report that was provided to each pilot county.
- DCF and CCIP continue to seek input regarding this project from judges, attorneys, and child welfare professionals. This project was discussed at the Wisconsin Commission on Children, Families, and the Courts, DCF Judicial Workgroup, Wisconsin Judicial

Committee on Child Welfare, DCF Out of Home Care Committee, DCF Continuous Quality Improvement Advisory Committee, Conference on Child Welfare and the Courts and DCF's Parent Leaders in Child Welfare Group. Stakeholder feedback has been utilized to create trainings, resources, and design of the project. DCF and CCIP will continue to provide these groups with updates as well as statewide rollout implementation plans.

- DCF and CCIP conducted final surveys and focus groups with the leadership team from each pilot county as well as conducted post-implementation file reviews utilizing eWiSACWIS and CCAP court data. The University of Wisconsin Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP) examined all of the evaluation data and conducted a process study to evaluate the project.

#### Implementation Supports:

- Possible eWiSACWIS changes and changes to the Circuit Court Access Program (CCAP), the state's electronic courts record program, may be needed.
- Other technical changes may be deemed necessary for DCF and/or court forms and processes.
- DCF does not anticipate any challenges with continuing to focus on this PIP item.

#### Feedback Loops:

- DCF will continue to request feedback and provide updates about the progress on this initiative with the Wisconsin County Human Services Association, Policy Advisory Council (WCHSA PAC), the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Advisory Council, the Judicial Workgroup (that initially focused on effective court orders for youth but now has an expanded scope), and the Judicial Committee on Child Welfare. These cross-sector bodies work directly with county, legal and judicial stakeholders across the state and have provided important feedback about how to support each county in their efforts.

*Objective 2.3: To implement claiming procedures for legal fees using IV-E Funding (Items 5,6, 22, 23, 24)*

Rationale: Research shows that quality legal representation leads to better outcomes for families. Greater availability of legal counsel and support for child welfare families will lead to improved outcomes for families. Some counties in Wisconsin already use this benefit.

#### Activities in the last year and continuing activities:

- There were no substantial programs changes for 2022.
- An updated application and program instruction were published.
- For 2022, all 32 counties that applied for the program were approved.

#### Measures of Progress:

- In FFY 22 IV-E Reimbursement has served around 2,000 children per quarter.
- Continue to expand program implementation across the state.
- Over time, DCF will examine how to document improvements in child and family outcomes.



#### Staff Training and Technical Assistance:

- The application process details what processes and costs are allowable. DCF staff are available for follow up questions.
- DCF worked directly with first time applicant counties and their corresponding local courts system to address specific questions.

#### Implementation Supports:

- Technical assistance will be provided to counties around eligible costs for reimbursement.
- DCF's current technology supports the use of the benefit.

#### Feedback Loops:

- Information and updates about the use of this benefit are discussed at WCHSA PAC, Wisconsin County Human Services Financial Managers Association (WHSFMA) and through DCF's Bureau of Regional Operations (BRO) Financial Managers Regional meetings.
- DCF will continue to inform these advisory groups about the use of this benefit and related issues.

## Goal 3: Engaging children and families in more effective and meaningful ways.

*Objective 3.1: To expand Family Find and Engagement (FFE) statewide. (Items 7, 9, 10, 11) 2020 PIP*

Rationale: Due to lack of knowledge and consistent application of family engagement techniques by caseworkers, family members and important adults are not always informed about or provided the opportunities to remain connected with, be considered placements for, or reviewed as permanent homes for children living in out-of-home care. Family Find and Engagement is a research-based approach to finding and engaging more relatives.

### Activities in the last year and continuing activities include:

- DCF issued a memo addressing the process and requirements for expansion of FFE. It is available at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/memos/2019-08i.pdf>.
- Statewide expansion of Family Find and Engagement took place from 2018 to 2020. This included developing resources and training for counties.
- Counties report that this FFE approach has been a valuable resource for identifying family members. Wisconsin continues to have a high rate of placement with relatives.

### Staff Training and Technical Assistance:

- The remaining area of focus is a revamped training for statewide availability as part of Wisconsin's PIP.
- Ongoing support and training will be provided as identified.

### Measures of Progress:

- The state continues to review the Onsite Review Instrument (OSRI) data to determine if family placement and engagement is improving.
- In just over half of the cases reviewed, the target child's current or most recent placement was with a relative and these placements were stable.
- When a target child is not placed with a relative, concerted efforts are made to locate maternal relatives slightly more than paternal relatives (approximately 63% for maternal and 53% for paternal relatives).
- There do not appear to be differences between identifying, locating, informing, or evaluating maternal and paternal relatives.
- It appears that positive results increase when comparing the three time periods.
  - Twenty-nine cases (74%) from the PIP Baseline are rated a Strength.
  - Thirty-eight cases (79%) from Year 1 are rated as a Strength.
  - Twenty-one cases (86%) from Year 2 (through RP7) are rated as a Strength.

### Implementation Supports:

- eWISACWIS upgrades will be needed related to identifying relative connections including a genogram.

### Feedback Loops:

- DCF sought regular feedback and worked closely with the WCHSA PAC and the Foster Parent Advisory Council to develop and roll out this program statewide.

*Objective 3.2 To improve the quality of caseworker engagement with families through use of improvement science and rapid-cycle change (e.g., Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) cycles) (Addresses 2, 3, 4, 5, 12, 13, 14 and 15 and service array). 2020 PIP*

Rationale: The quality of caseworker visits was identified as an area of concern in the state CFSR process in 2018. DCF learned from extensive stakeholder outreach that there is a lack of training and inconsistencies in knowledge and standards around what constitutes a quality contact and how to document such a contact exist. Thus, caseworkers are not always aware of the characteristics and goals to achieve when attempting a quality contact. This more systematic, data-informed approach will address quality as well as better engagement in caseworker engagement with children and families.

### Activities in the last year and continuing activities include:

- A Quality Engagement Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) toolbox was created for agency staff to select tools and resources to improve the quality of caseworker engagement. This has been posted online for agency staff to utilize.
- The final report for the PDSAs for quality caseworker visits was provided to the CQI advisory committee.
- DCF and counties identified and are beginning to implement improvements learned through innovation zones and CQI analysis.

### Staff Training and Technical Assistance:

- An online training and tool kit was created.
- Lessons learned from Round 1 were shared with the ten Round 2 counties with a focus on quality caseworker visits.
- An initial learning session was provided in October 2021.
- Technical Assistance will continue to be provided by the WCWPDS and DCF.

### Measures of Progress:

- The final report for the PDSAs for quality caseworker visits has been shared with the CQI advisory committee. Lessons learned will be shared with counties participating in Round 2 of the quality caseworker visits PDSA project. Round 2 includes ten counties that will focus on quality caseworker visits was launched in September 2021, with an initial learning session scheduled for October 2021.
- An executive summary provided an overview of common themes learned from both rounds of the PDSA Quality Contacts Collaborative that took place over the course of 2 years.
  - This information was shared and discussed with the CQI Advisory Committee on June 9, 2022. The committee provided feedback based on this information to

inform a possible direction of future system-level improvements. These considerations are currently under advisement.

#### Implementation Supports:

- Development of training and technical assistance to support practice.
- DCF provided shared learning -including what is working well and challenges -in the first round of quality caseworker PDSAs in the fall of 2021.
- Ten Round 2 counties were identified.

#### Feedback Loops:

- DCF will continue to work with the CQI Advisory Committee to provide updates and secure feedback from local county members about lessons learned, practice changes, challenges, and successes.
- Information and successes and challenges will be shared by PDS with all counties for both round 1 and round 2 of this collaborative.

*Objective 3.4: To establish a parent voice model through parent mentoring and leadership development called Parents Supporting Parents Model. (Items 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 29 and 30 and Service Array) – 2020 PIP*

Rationale: The CFSR findings showed that Wisconsin needs to more systematically and effectively engage families, particularly fathers. Feedback from the Wisconsin birthparent stakeholder group held during the Wisconsin CFSR reflected inconsistency in the level of involvement of parents. They also described being distrustful of or intimidated by the child welfare system as well as not being well-informed about how the process works. Wisconsin's parent voice model is based on an evidence-based parent partner model from Iowa shown to more effectively engage parents in the child welfare system.

#### Activities in the last year and continuing activities include:

- Local advisory groups continue to meet.
- As of June 2022, program focus has been on program implementation, and priorities have focused on ensuring support of the pilot projects during the implementation phase; a more concerted effort will be placed on broadening to a more cross-sector advisory council in 2022 that continues to meet every two months.

#### Measures of Progress:

- Parent Partners in Wisconsin have served 25 parents. DCF has coordinated with the Implementation Committee to finalize and share training resources amongst agencies through a SharePoint site in addition to through the Wisconsin Professional Development System.
- Parents Supporting Parents (PSP) has been received warmly by those being served directly by the program. Parents working with a Parent Partner report a sense of satisfaction, hope and gratitude for the peer mentorship. Initially, agencies report strong engagement with parents served. Agencies also report the CPS Professionals

are engaged in making referrals to PSP.

- DCF is working on expansion efforts to other agencies for 2023. As a part of these efforts, creating a comprehensive readiness assessment has been highlighted as critical for successful implementation. In addition to the DCF State Team, Parent Partners and Parent Supporting Parents Coordinators will be engaged in the expansion process.

#### Staff Training and Technical Assistance:

- DCF and PDS will continue to identify and provide training and technical assistance needed to implement program.
- Training and peer support of mentors, training of child welfare staff about the purpose of the program and direct services with families has been initiated.
- DCF consults as needed with Iowa and an evaluation partner on model adaptation and implementation to fidelity.

#### Implementation Supports:

- DCF has an implementation workgroup that is supporting initial implementation efforts with a focus on solidifying lived experience/parent peer support pillars/expectations within our child welfare system.
- DCF does not anticipate any challenges with year 2 implementation efforts.

#### Feedback Loops:

- Implementation teams will be an ongoing source of feedback for this effort as well as sharing updates with the WCHSA PAC and other DCF partners.
- Lead staff is sharing lessons learned with DCF to assist in our Putting Families First approach.
- The cross-sector advisory group, formed in 2021, will provide additional opportunity for requesting feedback and incorporating lessons learned into program design.
- The DCF lived experience position continues to connect with this program and help share lessons learned with other DCF programs and stakeholders.
- Initial feedback from a pilot county is that the parent peer supporters have been excellent and helpful resource during court proceedings.

*Objective 3.5: Increase support and engagement for relative caregivers. Addresses 4, 5, 6, (8?) 9, 10 and 11 (P 1, WB 1) 2020 PIP*

Rationale: Wisconsin's CFSR found that the state performs well in identifying and using relative caregivers for placing children. DCF is committed to strengthening performance in this area of practice including providing more support and training for relative caregivers to help them become better prepared to support children in their care and improve permanency outcomes.

In the last year, DCF continued the following activities and considers the objective as being met:

- Support for a relative caregiver workgroup launched in 2019 to advise the department on specific needs, challenges, and what additional supports will help relatives care for their children.
- Two web-based curricula were developed.
- Tip sheets for relative caregivers focused on access to health care, educational advocacy, and parenting children with severe behaviors were developed.
- A web-based portal was developed that assists with accessing services such as Medicaid, child care, educational assistance, and other services.
- Due to the success of this effort, DCF applied for refunding of the kinship navigator program and will continue involvement in the following activities.
- See annual report in Attachment 1 for more details.

Staff Training and Technical Assistance:

- Activities noted above include web-based curricula, tip sheets and other support materials were created through collaboration with WCWPDS and relative stakeholders.
- Relative caregiver support groups have been an active and supportive peer support resource for this effort.

Measures of Progress:

- DCF has successfully completed this objective as part of the PIP.
- The Kinship Navigator in Attachment 1 provides data collected on this initiative.

Implementation Supports:

- This will include technical support required to develop web-based portal and other online resources described above.

Feedback Loops:

- DCF has a very engaged relative caregiver workgroup that helped shape resources described under activities.
- This workgroup will also be tapped to identify a more comprehensive and effective continuum of services to better serve more children in their homes as DCF further articulates the details of the child welfare system strategic plan.

*Objective 3.6 To further strengthen and build youth voice and engagement through state and local Youth Advisory Councils and Youth Leadership Teams.*

Rationale: DCF has established a strong youth voice infrastructure. Strengthening the support of current youth voice initiatives and expanding opportunity to others at-risk of entering formal systems is critical to ensuring sustained and meaningful input from those the child welfare or youth justice system may touch.

Activities in the last year and continuing activities include:

- See the collaboration section for a wide range of activities this year and planned activities for next year related to strengthening youth voice and engagement.
- Support youth involvement and their adult supporters through training and technical assistance.

- Develop and provide resources that help to more fully engage youth in these advisory groups.
- Find new ways to solicit youth feedback as DCF develops its strategic plan through identification of key issues to address and effective strategies.

#### Staff Training and Technical Assistance:

- DCF staff will continue to work with the different youth advisory groups to support the development of advocacy efforts they are interested in and assist with their own personal leadership development.
- DCF will identify and provide training and technical assistance, including the development of additional resources, to support the regional Youth Advisory Councils, the Youth Leadership Teams, and child welfare/youth justice professionals.

#### Measures of Progress:

- Participation in engagement efforts includes the statewide Youth Advisory Council, composed of a board (president, vice-president, secretary, etc.) and a maximum of two youth from each of the seven Independent Living Regions across the state. The statewide Youth Advisory Council meets approximately every other month via Zoom since the pandemic with a plan to resume in-person meetings in 2022, while regional Youth Advisory Councils have already resumed in-person monthly meetings.
- Documentation of youth advisory/advocacy opportunities that shape legislation or DCF policy, e.g., testifying at legislative meetings, contributing to policy drafts, reviewing grant applications, participating in program design sessions, providing “change presentations” to targeted stakeholders, consulting on resource development, and speaking on panels.
- DCF will continue to use youth evaluations to document what is working, areas of improvement, and future items of interest.

#### Implementation Supports:

- To be determined based on emerging needs and priorities identified by the group.

#### Feedback Loops:

- Generating feedback and engaging youth is a critical component of this objective. Those activities are described with respect to the project work under “activities.”
- The Youth Advisory Council and Youth Leadership Teams will also be tapped for feedback relating to the details of shaping a more effective youth service delivery system as DCF further articulates the details of the child welfare system strategic plan.

*Objective 3.7: Assess the timeliness of six-month Permanency Reviews and improve the quality of administrative review panels conducting permanency reviews. (Items 4, 5, 21) 2020 PIP*

Rationale: A finding in the 2018 CFPSR was that six-month permanency reviews were not conducted in a timely way. Another identified need was to improve the quality and consistency

of Wisconsin's administrative review panels as an option for counties to conduct six-month reviews.

Activities in the last year and continuing activities include:

- An internal facing report was developed for counties to access and view local timeliness measures.
- DCF issued a memo to counties on the importance of timeliness and how to access the data and track performance.

Training:

- DCF finalized training and resources to support a more consistent role for administrative review panel members.
- DCF staff walked child welfare agency supervisors through the new report and corresponding memo at regional supervisor meetings.
- Technical materials such as a desk guide were developed for the support of improving administrative review panel practices.

Measures:

- The internal facing report is being used as a more consistent way to measure timeliness of these reviews.
- As part of the PIP process, more specific measures will be developed around gauging the quality and consistency of administrative review panels.
- DCF continues to remind counties about tracking performance and providing assistance when benchmarks are not being met. To date no issues or concerns have been received about the newly issued report and CCIP will be incorporating the performance data into juvenile clerk and judicial trainings.

Implementation Supports:

- Technology updates will be identified to support this new level of reporting that will include updates to the eWiSACWIS system.
- A quarterly review process will be established by DCF that will deploy Bureau of Regional Operations staff to provide ongoing technical assistance around performance issues once the dashboard is completed.
- Training described above will be important for implementation.
- DCF does not see any challenges in implementing these activities as planned in the second year of the PIP.

Feedback Loops:

- DCF published an internal facing report.
- Report information and processes created was shared with DCF stakeholders such as the WCHSA PAC and the Bureau of Regional Operations.



## Goal 4: Improve access to services and supports for youth and families by building community capacity.

*Objective 4.1. Better understand the landscape for prevention services through assessing the current array of prevention services for children and families in the child welfare system. (Items 1, 12, 17, 18, 29 and 30)*

Rationale: This strategy will provide DCF with the data necessary to strengthen prevention services throughout the state. There are a wide range of partners and projects or initiatives in Wisconsin aimed at the prevention of child abuse and neglect. This has led to considerable variance across counties in what services are available. Because Wisconsin is primarily a locally administered service system, our state lacks a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the full spectrum of prevention and early intervention activities across the state. The results of the prevention and early intervention scan will help DCF and key prevention partners and providers identify opportunities for collaboration and other strategies to create a robust continuum of programs and services to prevent child abuse and neglect and, for some families, entry into the child welfare system.

In the last year, DCF continued the following activities **and considers the objective as being met:**

- Ongoing activities are continuing as part of Objective 4.3 as part of improving access to services and supports for youth and families.

Staff Training and Technical Assistance:

- These needs may emerge as findings are considered.

Measures of Progress:

- DCF has successfully completed this objective as part of the PIP.
- A prevention scan report was completed and shared with stakeholders in the summer of 2021.
- The report included data on the availability of prevention services across the state, the accessibility of available services, as well as an analysis of needs and opportunities for strengthening the prevention continuum for future program and policy decisions.

Implementation Supports:

- Findings may lead to upgrades to information systems and possibly other implementation supports.

Feedback Loops:

- Efforts to engage and inform stakeholders are described under the project activities.

*Objective 4.3. Better understand needs and services of youth and families in child welfare system (Item 12, 13 and Service Array) 2020 PIP*

Rationale: It is critical to understand comprehensive needs of child welfare population to better address needs of the child welfare population.

Activities in the last year and continuing activities include:

As part of 4.1.3 DCF formed a targeted, time-limited workgroup, called the **Case Management Strategy Group** made up of DCF staff and Wisconsin's Professional Development System to identify and assess the feasibility of different approaches to strengthening assessment, service planning, and safety planning practices during ongoing services within the existing SAFE framework.

Based on stakeholder feedback and internal prioritization effort, a targeted workgroup called the **Safety Planning Workgroup** was formed to address several key recommendations that were identified.

Objectives of the Safety Planning Workgroup:

- Refine the safety assessment process and danger threat language to be culturally responsive as well as, equitable and just.
- Refine and improve the safety assessment and planning framework that facilitates upfront safety decisions that are informed by engagement with families to guide the case process and keep more children and youth safely in their homes.

Scope of the Safety Planning Workgroup:

- Enhancements to the current safety model (existing SAFE framework), to better facilitate a process to create comprehensive safety plans with and informed by families that better identify and document danger threats and protective capacities.

Deliverables:

The **Safety Planning Workgroup** met on a monthly basis to:

- Propose revisions to the safety analysis and plan, and protective plan language that is culturally responsive and racially equitable.
- Revise danger threats to be culturally responsive and racially just.
- Develop a revised process for documenting safety decision making that is informed by the family, clear, and iterative.
- Develop changes to the eWiSACWIS safety planning process and documentation.

### Staff Training and Technical Assistance:

- To support staff training, an online webinar will be released on DCF's website in summer of 2022. <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/family-first/safety-process-improvements>
- DCF has also released background on the updates, frequently asked questions, and other relevant materials.
- In addition, DCF will provide updates at regularly scheduled stakeholder meetings.
- Technical assistance will be provided on an as needed basis.

### Implementation Supports:

- DCF developed an implementation plan that would effectively revise danger threats to be culturally responsive and racially just. In planning this approach, it is clear that eWiSACWIS changes are needed to most effectively implement this approach. These eWiSACWIS changes will be implemented in June of 2022.
- DCF is not anticipating any challenges to implementing these changes.

### Measures of Progress:

- Using robust stakeholder feedback, DCF has identified changes to the Safety Assessment Process; these changes will be rolled out in June of 2022.
- While the eWiSACWIS changes will roll out in June, DCF has already begun monitoring stakeholder feedback received across a variety of forums about the pending changes. DCF gave 20 presentations to various stakeholders across the state. Questions received from stakeholders in these forums and others, have been compiled into a Frequently Asked Question guide on the DCF website. Feedback has been received from child welfare agencies, court system partners, and tribal child welfare agencies.
- DCF intends to continue monitoring the use of danger threats, following the changes to understand any new emerging trends, following the revisions. DCF also continues to monitor frequency of materials accessed via the new safety revisions website landing page (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/family-first/safety-process-improvements>)

### Feedback Loops:

- A county stakeholder group formed to assist DCF with ongoing feedback as part of the putting families first initiative has provided ongoing feedback and assistance to DCF in working toward this objective. This feedback is an identified strength of the project that has led to a collaborative approach to this initiative. Feedback was also gathered from the Intertribal Child Welfare Committee and the Parent Leaders Advisory Group.

## **Goal 5: The safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families is improved assuring a healthy, stable, inclusive, and strong child welfare system.**

Objective 5.1: *To establish an overall vision and strategies to transform the child welfare system to support a more robust in-home infrastructure, and infrastructure and workforce through a comprehensive strategic planning process (Items 29-30/Service Array; 31-32 – Agency Responsiveness, 25-Quality Assurance)*

### Rationale and Activities:

DCF has continued to shape the Putting Families First vision over the last year. Please see the beginning of the collaboration section for a wide range of activities this year and planned activities for next year related to Putting Families First efforts. This description encompasses the rationale, activities, implementation supports, measures of progress, and feedback loops.

*Objective 5.2 To assess workload and caseload for the state child welfare system through collaboration with counties and tribes to complete a workload study to better understand system needs and direct future planning efforts. (Items 1, 2, 4, 5, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30)*

Rationale: Because of Wisconsin's sharp rise in caseload size, workload responsibilities on child welfare professionals has increased significantly. Based on the feedback from stakeholders prior to, during, and after the CFSR, this increased workload and caseloads on child welfare professionals is a major root cause of weaknesses in case practice items. DCF's current approach is to obtain information about caseworkers, supervisors, case aides, and other child welfare staff's existing workload and caseloads. This information-gathering will help inform decision-making and planning at both county and state levels.

### Activities in the last year and continuing activities include:

- DCF and its county oversight committee reviewed and finalized the findings from ICF Incorporated, LLC.
- DCF created a suggested caseload standard utilizing the results of the Workload Time Study.
- A staffing tool was created for local agencies to utilize the suggested caseload standards.
- Presentation materials were created to explain the results of the Workload Study, including the suggested caseload standards and staffing tool.
- The results of the Workload Study were incorporated into an Executive Summary and Final Report.
- A Communication plan was developed to share the project deliverables.

### Measures of Progress:

- A staffing tool was provided to assist local agencies in assessing their child welfare workload and staffing patterns.

- The results of the Workload Study were officially released on March 16, 2022, through an informational memo that highlighted the new DCF webpage housing the following information:
  - An overview of the project and the results
  - An infographic
  - An executive summary of the results
  - A final report written by contracting agency ICF containing the study methodology and results
  - The staffing tool for use by local child welfare agencies
  - Link: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/workload-study>
- DCF hosted five webinars on the results of the workload study, including an explanation of the methodology of the study, findings, the suggested caseload standards, and optimal caseloads. Additionally, there was a discussion on the process and operational efficiencies identified during this study by participating child welfare professionals and steps being taken by DCF to address these efficiencies.

#### Technical Assistance:

- Local agencies can reference the DCF website for support and more information.
- Local agencies can request technical assistance from DCF, as needed.

#### Implementation Supports

- DCF created webinars, a staffing tool tutorial video, and instructions within the staffing tool to support local agencies' use of these resources.

#### Feedback Loop:

- DCF worked extensively with counties and tribes to shape the purpose, parameters, and design of the study.
- DCF offered opportunities for stakeholder feedback during webinar presentation. A mailbox has been provided in order for stakeholders to continue to provide feedback and to answer questions.
- DCF continues to work with WCHSA and the Workload Study Oversight Committee to identify next steps to analyze findings and determine the best approach to effectively respond to findings.

*Objective 5: Assure child welfare staff are prepared through an improved training monitoring system. Added for alignment with the 2020 PIP (Training and Management Information System Systemic Factors)*

Rationale: In the 2018 CFSR, state tracking of training requirements was found to be an Area Needing Improvement (ANI)

#### Activities in the last year and continuing activities include:

- Successes include modifications to the information system have been made to better track data on child welfare professional training to assure that professionals complete required training.

- Analysis includes reviewing county performance reports to determine where performance is on track, improving or needing attention and providing assistance to counties about how to meet requirements.
- Improved the information collection system to capture complete and more current worker demographic and professional assignment data.
- DCF began sending quarterly training compliance reports to counties.
- Beginning in January 2023, foundational training requirements will be fundamentally modified to reflect WiLearn: the new intensive initial in-service training program.

Training:

- WCWPDS and DCF use compliance information analyzed in county reports to provide technical assistance to counties to reinforce understanding about compliance with training requirements.
- Prior to the launch of WiLearn, PDS and DCF will attend regional leadership meetings and will be holding an institute at the Public Child Welfare Conference to discuss initial foundational requirement and the transition to the WiLearn new child welfare professional model.

Measures:

- DCF continues to track and share compliance reports.
- New activities have resulted in an increase in training requirement compliance from 45% to 65%.

Implementation Supports:

- Enhancements were made to the eWISACWIS and WCWPDS system for nightly transfer of data to support this activity.
- DCF is on track to successfully implement PIP objectives in year 2 of the PIP.

Feedback Loops:

- See “activities” for description of sharing feedback at PDS quarterly Steering Committee and “training” for ongoing information sharing about performance and requirements with counties.

## 4. Quality Assurance System

See Quality Assurance Systemic Factor beginning on page 67.

## 5. Update on the Service Description

The following section describes how DCF uses specific federal funding streams to support the state child welfare system in alignment with federal rules and policies and DCF's strategic plan.

### Stephanie Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services Program

#### *IV-B, Subpart 1 - Homeless and Runaway Youth Funding*

The goal of the Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Program is to prevent and reduce the number of youth experiencing homelessness in Wisconsin by ensuring that youth and their families have the services and supports that they need. The target population of the RHY Program is youth and young adults ages 12-21 that have run away, are at-risk of running away, who are homeless, or who are at imminent risk of becoming homeless. DCF recognizes the needs of RHY program participants are varied, and as such has identified outcomes that respond to the unique needs of different subsets of the RHY population. All programs effectively demonstrate the capacity to implement a holistic RHY Program that targets the following RHY Program Outcomes.

#### *Population Estimates and Service Data*

- Positive connections, Academic support, Training and employment, Housing, and Social-emotional supports (PATHS):
  - Forty youth with twelve minor children
- Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY):
  - Projected to serve over six hundred youth this year through RHY regional programs (examples of service provision include: 24/7 RHY hotline calls, referrals to community resources, family mediation and licensed/clinical counseling, etc.)
  - Projected to serve roughly two hundred youth utilizing temporary shelter (licensed host homes and formal shelter)

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#### PROMOTE SAFE AND STABLE HOUSING

Youth are supported and stabilized so that whenever possible, youth stay connected with their families. Youth can live in safe, stable, and affordable housing and have access to a range of housing options as they transition to adulthood.

Programs must provide these services to the following:

- *Runaway youth*

Youth in crisis are stabilized and remain with family or are stabilized to reunify with family as soon as possible. Whenever possible, youth must be stabilized through formal options such as shelter or host homes. When not possible, the program will work with the youth to identify stable and potentially sustainable housing options.

- *Homeless youth with families*  
Coordinate with local Continuum of Care as well as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and other service providers who can meet presenting needs.
- *Unaccompanied homeless youth*  
Youth in crisis are stabilized through formal options when consent can be obtained. When consent cannot be obtained or youth are not willing to utilize formal options, the program will work with the youth to identify stable and potentially sustainable housing options.

If a program provides housing, it must demonstrate knowledge of and commitment to a Housing First approach along with an understanding of the developmental, social, and legal needs of young people.

In 2019-2020, DCF developed a detailed plan for additional funding provided to support ending youth homelessness through the state budget. DCF staff engaged in a comprehensive analysis of effective services for youth identified as homeless or runaway, with an emphasis on effective rural programming. This analysis included a review of the literature pertaining to RHY service delivery (including aftercare), consent, and use of informal supports (including respite); a review of service delivery methods in other states; and listening sessions throughout the state with youth, family, like kin, and other informal supports. As a result of this analysis, DCF determined that there was enough demand and evidence of efficacy to expand Positive connections, Academic support, Training and employment, Housing, and Social-emotional supports (PATHS) efforts, ensuring service provision in both northern and southern Wisconsin. PATHS is a comprehensive housing-first program model serving youth transitioning from foster care who are at imminent risk of homelessness or currently homeless. Priority is given to the highest need, most vulnerable young adults with the most risk factors and fewest protective factors. Enrollees are provided comprehensive, targeted wraparound services that include a youth-driven assessment, an individualized plan and intensive and holistic case management.

A Request for Proposals (RFP) for the PATHS contracts was issued at the end of 2020 and two grants were successfully awarded beginning in 2021. The provider in the northern part of the state is serving youth through a scattered site housing model in nine rural counties, with the provider in the southern part of the state serving youth through a scattered site housing model in Milwaukee County. DCF continues to provide support and technical assistance as grant activities progress. A Request for Proposals (RFP) for RHY programming was released and grants were successfully awarded in all seven youth services regions beginning in 2022. These contracts also include dedicated state funding to address the unique needs of RHY who experienced commercial sexual exploitation as minors. In November of 2021, Governor Evers announced 2 million of Wisconsin's American Rescue Plan Act funding would be dedicated to



mitigating the impact of COVID-19 specifically for DCF-administered homeless programs. Funding is being administered through existing RHY contracts and will increase staff capacity, provide start-up funding for drop-in centers in rural communities, and ensure providers are able to adequately address the needs of youth experiencing additional mental health struggles and other vulnerabilities as a result of COVID-19. In 2022, the Wisconsin Balance of State Continuum of Care (CoC) and the Dane County CoC were awarded federal Housing and Urban Development Youth Housing Demonstration Program grants for roughly 7.5 million and 2.5 million respectively. DCF has worked closely with the Balance of State CoC in their development of local Youth Action Boards and the Coordinated Community Plan. DCF staff have also actively participated in community listening sessions for the Dane County YHDP geared towards development of their Coordinated Community Plan.

### **Services for Children Adopted from Other Countries**

DSP has a limited role in international adoptions. Parents adopting children internationally can access services through their county department of human services, through their private insurance, and through the Wisconsin Adoption and Permanency Support (WiAPS) programs. WiAPS offers resources, training, education, and information about how to access needed services for adoptive families. These are supported through IV-B, subpart 2 funds in Wisconsin. More information is available at <https://wisapsp.org/>.

### **Services for Children under the age of 5**

Wisconsin continues to follow Wisconsin's Act 181, "Best Outcomes for Children" legislation, which went into effect in 2012 and provides for better case planning to reduce the length of time that children under the age of five in foster care are without a permanent family. The Act establishes procedures regarding concurrent planning and requires that the child welfare agency determine whether concurrent planning should be used in a particular case. In addition, in certain cases, the agency must engage in concurrent planning unless the court orders the agency to do otherwise.

DCF will continue its birth to five efforts to provide focus on the continuum of services for that age group. The agency recognizes the critical window of opportunity during children's early years for healthy brain development and how investment in those years supports the state's goal to reduce children in OHC and ensure more children are served in their family home. These efforts therefore align with the Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act that requires states to expand information relating to health care coordination and oversight for children in foster care. This section describes Wisconsin's planned efforts over the next year to reduce the length of time children under the age of five are in foster care without a permanent family and how DCF's work helps meet the developmental needs of children under the age of five who receive services under the title IV-B or IV-E programs. The chart below reflects recent data for this population. This population will continue to be a focus in the future.

Table: Demographics of Children under age 5 in OHC on December 31<sup>st</sup> of each Year.

<b>Child Sex</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Female	1,338	1,432	1,524	1,651	1,629	1,522	1,496	1,241
Male	1,428	1,465	1,539	1,739	1,719	1,627	1,576	1,389
<b>Child Primary Race</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Black/African American	1,012	991	983	1,092	1,038	990	941	794
White	1,476	1,607	1,773	1,942	1,903	1,742	1,737	1,483
American Indian/Alaskan Native	195	228	227	267	291	262	231	207
Asian, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	32	27	35	40	47	46	40	33
Other	52	44	45	49	69	109	123	114
<b>Child Hispanic</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Yes	294	275	298	307	313	319	322	236
No	2,408	2,569	2,711	3,030	2,971	2,728	2,632	2,278
Unknown	65	53	54	53	64	102	118	117
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,767</b>	<b>2,897</b>	<b>3,063</b>	<b>3,390</b>	<b>3,348</b>	<b>3,149</b>	<b>3,072</b>	<b>2630</b>

### Activities Targeted to Addressing the Developmental Needs of Young Children in Out-of-Home Care or Adoptive Families

To address the developmental needs of children under the age of five, who receive services under the title IV-B or IV-E programs, Initial Assessment and Ongoing staff receive two days of training on the effect maltreatment has on child development. Participants actively explore the developmental needs of infants, children, and toddlers and the consequences of child abuse

and neglect in children from birth to adolescence. They then use that information to establish a framework to recognize potential developmental problems early, thereby enhancing their ability to develop appropriate family service plans.

Wisconsin's Foster Parent training also addresses the developmental needs of children.

The foster parent pre-placement training includes:

- An Overview of Foster Parenting
- Expectations of Foster Parents
- Caring for Children in Foster Care (including the developmental needs of infants, children and adolescents)
- Developing and Maintaining Family Connections
- Foster Family Self Care

The foster parent Foundation training includes:

- Attachment
- Cultural Dynamics in Placement
- Dynamics of Abuse and Neglect: Contributing Factors
- Dynamics of Abuse and Neglect: Signs and Indicators
- Effects of Fostering on the Family
- Guidance and Positive Discipline
- Impact of Trauma on Child Development
- Maintaining Family Connectedness
- Overview of Children's Court System
- Partners in Permanence
- Separation and Placement

### **Adoptive Parent Training**

DCF continues to follow Wis. Admin. Code s. DCF 51.05, implemented in 2018, which requires that adoptive parents receive at least 25 hours of training. These training topics are relevant to the needs of young children and help the child transition to the adoptive home. Some of the content covered includes:

- Grief and loss;
- Previous abuse and neglect;
- Impact of trauma;
- Understanding the child's culture;
- How trauma affects the normal stages of development for young children; and,
- Additional adoption competencies outlined in Administrative Rule.

## **Improving Support for Foster and Adoptive Parents**

The department will continue to support efforts that strengthen critical linkages between the success of children served within the child welfare system and the supports provided to those who care for them to ensure that the children's developmental needs are met. DCF has worked throughout the past year to better support foster families and improve the foster care system to better meet all children's developmental needs in several ways. These include increased foster care reimbursement, continued work with and by the Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center, revisions to training for foster families, and changes to licensing code. Additionally, DCF uses the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths tool (CANS) to identify cases where a foster parent has a Level of Care Certification lower than the child's assessed level of need. In those instances, a plan of support and/or services is put in place to support the placement of that specific child with that provider. Per policy, the CANS assessment must be done upon change of placement and every six months by the case manager and entered in to eWiSACWIS.

Additionally, in April 2018, the governor signed Wisconsin Act 260 into law as part of the Speaker's Task Force on Foster Care legislative package. This act provided \$400,000 in funding to DCF in SFY 2020, SFY 2021 and SFY 2022 to finance grants to county agencies, non-profit organizations, and tribal agencies that support foster parents and normalcy activities for children in out-of-home care. Qualifying expenses under the grant may include incentives for the support and retention of foster parents. This grant opportunity will continue in SFY 2023. More about this grant can be found in DSP Info Memo Series 2020-22i, available at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/memos/2020-22i.pdf>.

## **Collaboration with Early Care and Education and Other Family Support programs to connect to Quality Early Learning, Family Support and Prevention Services**

### *Early Care and Education*

There is ample and growing evidence that quality early learning improves the social, emotional, physical, and academic outcomes of children - particularly for those affected by trauma and poverty. DCF has focused on ensuring that coordination and collaboration is supported through working closely with the Division of Early Care and Education (DECE) within DCF. For example, Putting Families First planning efforts are focused on building a stronger partnership to best serve families with young children. Examples of coordination in the last year described in this report that will continue in FY 2022 include coordination with broader early childhood system planning, tracking of children outcomes in OHC through the child care quality rating system, YoungStar, and connections to Wisconsin's Head Start program.

### *Early Childhood System Building Grants*

DSP staff continued to work with the Division of Early Care and Education (DECE) on the Preschool Development Grant Birth to 5, which the department received in 2019. This seeks to further develop and implement a successful model for birth to five children and focuses on improving quality child care availability and an array of supports for children and families,

including those connected to the child welfare system. As part of a collaboration between child welfare programs and early childhood programs at DCF, information was shared between programs on the process and data derived from the recently completed statewide home visiting needs assessment for the DCF's federal Maternal Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting grant called Family Foundations Home Visiting (FFHV).

Overall collaborative efforts also include ongoing participation in the Early Childhood Advisory Council, referenced in the collaboration section.

#### *Coordination with YoungStar*

DCF also continues to make a concerted effort to connect children in OHC with quality early learning experiences. Key efforts were launched in Milwaukee and statewide to strengthen the connections between the child welfare and child care divisions in the department and the services that support children and families.

In the next year, DCF will continue its efforts to maintain a high proportion of children in out-of-home care being matched with high quality options using Wisconsin's Child Care Quality Rating System. YoungStar uses a 5-star rating system with the level 5 as the highest level of quality; overall, 3-5 stars are considered elevated quality and a desirable goal for placement of children. Wisconsin instituted a policy with child welfare agencies that children in OHC should only be placed in higher quality setting programs, namely those that are rated 3-5 stars. In addition, DCF created capacity through the Geographic Placement Resources (GPRS) to map high quality centers around where parents live. As a result of its efforts, Wisconsin has maintained a high level of children in OHC programs in higher quality programs. For children in OHC also in Wisconsin Shares, the percentage of children attending 3-5 Star rated providers increased from 56.8 percent to 79.3 percent over the last six years.

#### *Coordination with Head Start*

DCF will also continue its collaborative work with the Head Start Collaboration Office (HSCO) to coordinate and identify more specific opportunities to increase the enrollment of children in OHC in Head Start programs. Recent research underscores that this program provides important benefits to children in the child welfare system, which can be seen at <https://www.childtrends.org/news-release/new-research-shows-early-head-start-plays-a-key-role-in-reducing-child-maltreatment>. DCF staff from DSP and the Division of Early Care and Education jointly presented at the Wisconsin Head Start Association conference in 2020 to discuss efforts to improve early care and education with a focus on children served through the child welfare system.

The HSCO transitioned from the Department of Public Instruction to DCF in 2021. With the HSCO now housed in the same state agency as DSP, there will be further opportunity for deeper collaboration. The HSCO director is currently researching examples of MOUs between state child welfare systems and HSCOs.

### *Coordination with Home Visiting – Family Foundations Home Visiting Program*

In addition to connecting with early childhood work described above, home visiting has been connected more comprehensively to DCF's Putting Families First work. This includes discussion and planning about how to better connect families in our child welfare system to the home visiting program as part of a more robust array of home-like services.

DCF contracts with city and county health and human services departments, tribal organizations, and non-profit agencies to provide evidence-based home visiting services; in Wisconsin, this is called Family Foundations Home Visiting (FFHV). These contracts specify the number of families to be served and other service-related requirements. DCF supports and monitors the contracted agencies to ensure high-quality services are available for families. Starting in January 2022, three new contracts were started to enroll families, in Vernon and Jefferson Counties as well as Red Cliff Tribe. Services are targeted toward families facing multiple life stressors such as poverty, substance use, domestic violence, history of child maltreatment, and low education levels. The program prioritizes prenatal enrollment, with a goal of 75 percent of enrolled families to be prenatal enrollment.

Contracted agencies select evidence-based home visiting models that they feel best meet their communities' needs. Currently, agencies use one or more of the following: Early Head Start (EHS), Healthy Families America (HFA), Parents as Teachers (PAT), and Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP). Each model has guidelines that programs follow to ensure that they implement the models with fidelity. Additionally, all models include some type of individualized goal plan that the home visitor and the client develop together to guide the work with the client.

Wisconsin requested approval of three evidence-based home-visiting services in its Five-Year Prevention Plan: Nurse-Family Partnership, Healthy Families America, & Parents as Teachers. All three programs are implemented in compliance with the Health Resource and Services Administrations (HRSA) guidelines and follow the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting requirements. These programs, referred to as the state's Family Foundations Home Visiting (FFHV) Program, are also supported by the same DCF organizational unit that responsible for the state's Title IV-E Prevention Plan.

The state provides funding to support contracted program staff training and technical assistance. Specifically, Wisconsin has been developing in-state model expertise to deliver technical assistance resources for contracted agencies using the HFA and PAT models. These in-state resources (such as in-state trainers) help to reduce training costs and travel burden on the contracted agencies and allow for more timely trainings. The state also continues to improve its training offerings to home visiting program supervisors and staff members.

Home visiting programs serve many of Wisconsin's most vulnerable families. Contracted agency managers and staff members report it can be hard to support and work with families facing multiple challenges such as housing instability, substance abuse, mental health issues, and domestic violence. The professional development system, Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health, and external evaluators with University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee work with DCF

on several initiatives to support contracted agencies' work with families. Contracted agencies regularly participate in quality improvement projects to improve their processes and outcomes with families.

#### *Collaboration with Birth to 3 Program*

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) and Department of Health Services' (DHS) have coordinated and talked to Child Welfare agencies around the state to learn what the barriers are that prevent families involved with CPS from engaging with Birth to 3. DCF and DHS also collaborated to automate CAPTA referrals from Child Protective Services to the Birth to 3 Program. This change was made in recognition of the heightened vulnerability of children with disabilities face and the potential benefits that children with substantiated cases of abuse and neglect can receive from participating in Birth to 3 Programs. The automated CAPTA referrals to the Birth to 3 Program went live on October 31, 2019. A memo describing the automation can be viewed at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/memos/2019-33i.pdf>. DCF is also coordinating with the Birth to 3 Program to review data, referrals, consent for services, screening, and enrollment in Birth to 3. This will help determine patterns and if potential next steps to improve screening and referral practices to best serve families.

#### *Connection to Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Consultation to Support Families*

The work of developing a system of IECMH Consultation in Wisconsin was initially supported by a technical assistance grant from the Center of Excellence at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. This grant has since ended but the work is continuing under the facilitation and sponsorship of the Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health Collective Impact Infant Toddler Policy group. The Infant Toddler Policy group is a collaborative group representing multiple state agencies, systems, and organizations. Between 2017 and 2020, this group established a universal model framework for a system of IECMH Consultation informed by existing evidence-based models in other states; adopted a set of national competencies for IECMH Consultants; developed a set of core communication documents to communicate what consultation is to key stakeholders; and began outreach to pre-service and in-service partners to build career pathways and support in Wisconsin to build and sustain an IECMH Consultation workforce. In early 2020, the Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council voted to adopt IECMH Consultation as a recommendation to put forth to the governor for consideration in the next biennium. At that time, the recommendation was not picked up. Most recently, in 2022, the Division of Early Care and Education received legislative approval to use ARPA funds to invest in building a statewide system of consultation. This work is in progress and set to being in the summer of 2022 and is being guided by national technical assistance and consultation.

#### *Connection to Primary Prevention Programs*

DCF provides prevention programs and services specifically focused on families with children prenatal to five years of age. Through new Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Grants that

began in January 2019 (one in each of the six DCF regions of the state) and on-going Connections Count grants in two counties, families with young children can access services such as, but not limited to New Baby Visits, Newborn Behavioral Observations, parent skill building and parent groups, basic needs and employment support services, family stabilization support, and home visiting services specifically targeting families with heightened risk of child abuse and neglect.

### **Coordination with the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board (CANPB) on Primary Prevention**

The Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board (CANPB) is the lead entity implementing the Period of PURPLE Crying® via four grantees. The Prevention Board has made funds available for DCF to integrate the Period of PURPLE Crying into the MIECHV funded home visiting programs (a statutory requirement for home visiting programs). For the past seven years, the Prevention Board has funded evidence-informed parent education programs through a competitive grant-making process. One of the programs funded is Triple P (Positive Parenting Program). The Prevention Board supports Levels 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the program, including Stepping Stones and Teen, which are primary prevention focused. DCF was able to expand its evidence-informed parent education efforts, including Triple P Level 5, using new DCF TANF funding dedicated to prevention programs and services specifically focused on families with children pre-natal to five years of age.

The Prevention Board also coordinates building parent voice into community-based prevention programming and training. The Prevention Board partners with DCF to share lessons learned as DCF develops programs, such as the Parents Supporting Parents family voice initiative; this is described in the Plan for Enacting the State's Vision. This ongoing partnership will assure that efforts are connected to existing programming.



## Efforts to Track and Prevent Child Maltreatment Deaths

### *Wisconsin Act 78 and Systems Change Review*

CAPTA funds continue to support Wisconsin's efforts to track and prevent child maltreatment deaths. The 2009 Wisconsin Act 78 became effective on February 1, 2010, requiring the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to share information with the public in instances of child death, serious injury, and egregious incidents due to suspected or confirmed child maltreatment, as well as cases in which a child in out-of-home care placement is suspected to have died by suicide. Additionally, in 2016, Wisconsin developed a Systems Change Review (SCR) process to align with the Child Welfare Model for Practice.

Within Wisconsin's county-administered, state-supervised service model, Act 78 directs the local child welfare agency to notify DCF when there is suspicion that one of the following incidents have occurred. Key references from the Act are included below:

*Child death or serious injury is defined as "an incident in which a child has died or been placed in serious or critical condition, as determined by a physician, as a result of any suspected abuse or neglect that has been reported under this section or in which a child who has been placed outside the home by a court order under this chapter or Ch. 938 is suspected to have committed suicide."*

*Egregious incident is defined as "an incident of suspected abuse or neglect...involving significant violence, torture, multiple victims, the use of inappropriate or cruel restraints, exposure of a child to a dangerous situation, or other similar, aggravated circumstances."*

Once the local child welfare agency determines an incident likely meets the above threshold(s), Act 78 requires the local child welfare agency to submit specific case information to DCF within two working days. The specific information required is outlined in Wis. Stat. ss. 48.987 (7) (cr) (a), (b), (c), (d), and (e), (f). The information the local child welfare agency submits to DCF is transmitted via eWiSACWIS.

DCF's Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) has the primary responsibility to review and analyze these submissions. Specifically, DSP is responsible for the qualification and public notification of incidents, as well as determination and facilitation of review. In Wisconsin, there are two levels of review that can be assigned to an incident. One is a "Summary" review; the second is a "Practice Review."

### **Summary Review**

All cases that qualify for public notification receive a Summary Review, which consists of reviewing the electronic case record. DCF communicates results of this review to the public through a "90 Day Summary."

### **Practice Review**

Incidents that involve significant or current CPS intervention receive a higher level of review, in addition to the Summary Review, and are referred to as a Practice Review. DCF communicates

further actions and recommendations for changes in a document called the “6 Month Summary.”

In 2016, DCF adopted a new, safe systems approach to analyzing cases qualifying for a Practice Review. This method is formally referred to as the Systems Change Review process and is a methodical approach to analyzing cases assigned to a Practice Review. The steps of a Systems Change Review include:

- Review of the case record and development of key observations
- Interview of relevant professionals (i.e., *Debriefing*)
- Discussion and analysis of system influences on key learning opportunities (i.e., *Mapping*)
- Documentation of contextual information and analysis to inform and understand key observations (i.e., *Second Story*)
- Scoring of documentation and conversion to data points (i.e., *Scoring*)
- Sharing of relevant learnings with local agency management
- Recommend program and practice improvements for the Wisconsin child welfare system

DCF implemented the Systems Change Review on November 1, 2016, in the balance of the state and on June 1, 2018, in the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS). As part of this, DCF provides additional and detailed information and training to local child protective service agencies. Key findings and next steps in advancing the learnings from the Systems Change Review process are available on the DCF website at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/access-ia/act78>.

Additional information related to understanding and responding to child maltreatment, including recommendations for legislation and other actions, can be found in the state’s annual Child Abuse and Neglect Report, which can be found at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/reports/pdf/can.pdf>.

#### *Statewide Plan to Prevent Maltreatment Fatalities*

DCF is a participant on the Wisconsin Child Death Review State Advisory Council, which works to develop and implement activities to prevent child fatalities. The Council reviews information learned through the statewide Child Death Review Teams, case reviews, and additional data sources to identify themes and consider opportunities to prevent child deaths, including child deaths resulting from maltreatment.

DCF is a partner in the National Partnership for Child Safety (NPCS), a professional learning collaborative supported by Casey Family Programs that focuses on applying safety science in child welfare. To date, NPCS includes 29 other jurisdictions nationwide that serve more than 800,000 children who are subjects of an investigation by child protection services annually. The shared goals of NPCS are to strengthen families, promote innovations in safety culture, and reduce and prevent child maltreatment and fatalities through a public health approach. One

important element of the NPCCS work is sharing data, which allows for the analysis of trends and patterns that help to identify areas for improvement. This partnership is a proactive approach, grounded in safety science that will assist DCF in improving child safety and prevent future deaths.

DCF's Systems Change Review process for critical incidents, results in learning about systems factors that impact practice. What is learned from this process results in considerations that are shared with our Continuous Quality Improvement Advisory Committee. The advisory committee uses this information, along with other data inputs such as administrative data and other case review data, in order to identify and determine opportunities for state-level prevention, practice improvement, and system change.

### **Supplemental Appropriation for Disaster Relief**

DCF awarded disaster relief funding to seven eligible counties in 2020. The activities undertaken included repair to human service buildings damaged by the disasters, assistance to families whose property were affected by the disasters, training to child welfare staff to better prepare for future disasters, and counseling and other supports needed as a result of disasters throughout the state. Support was also used to help support a critical fix to the state Geographic Placement Resources System (GPRS) that was impacted through the disaster in 2020. There were no additional expenditures in 2021.

## Supplemental funding to prevent, prepare for, and respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019-COVID 19 (CARES Act)-IV B, Part 1

### *CARES Act Funding*

Title IV-B, Part 1 funding (\$782,295) was distributed to counties to support activities related to COVID-19 prevention, preparation, and response. Examples of supported activities include supporting remote communications tools; training and technology; internal and interagency meetings regarding COVID-19 response; adapting required child welfare activities (home visits, assessments, case planning, etc.) during the pandemic; personal protective equipment use and procedures training; COVID-19-related data collection and organization, including contact tracing; and staffing coverage due to COVID-19 related staff shortages.

### **MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program**

Wisconsin's Promoting Safe and Stable Families program (PSSF) is administered by the Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) and has four components - family preservation, family support, time limited-reunification services, and adoption promotion and support. Each of these components receives at least twenty percent of funds for service delivery. CARES Act funding support was added to the state's overall allocation for funding and supports the work described in this section.

#### *Specific percentage of Title IV-B, Subpart 2 funds spent on Service Delivery*

Title IV-B, Subpart 2 funds are allocated to counties for the operation of local PSSF programs. Of the total PSSF funds, approximately 20 percent is used by DCF for state-level adoption promotion and support services activities. Approximately ten percent is used by DCF for state operations, including training and technical assistance to counties and tribes. The remaining 70 percent of PSSF funds are allocated to counties and tribes to fund family support, preservation, and reunification programs. Local agencies are required to apply federal funding requirements for family support, preservation, and reunification services to meet PSSF spending requirements for those service areas.

Planning and service coordination amounts are described in the CFS 101 documents attached to this plan. Family preservation, family support, and time limited reunification services are primarily delivered by 71 county agencies. The Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services does not receive an annual PSSF allocation because DCF operates the child welfare system. Adoption promotion and support services to the counties are provided at the state level through the Public Adoption Program. A portion of the federal award is also used to fund regional or statewide family preservation, family support, and time-limited activities, including funding programs for the eleven federally recognized tribes headquartered in Wisconsin and DMCPs.

#### *Service Decision-Making Process for Family Support Services*

For the adoption promotion and support services portion of PSSF, funds are directed toward promoting and supporting adoption as a permanency outcome for children. The PSSF funds for adoption services are used in two ways. One way is to support part of the public adoption

program to finalize adoptions of children in OHC. The second is to support the Wisconsin Adoption & Permanency Support Program that provide resources and supports to adoptive families. The funds to the public adoption program are used to finance adoption caseworker staff salaries and recruitment activities for adoptive families.

For PSSF funds allocated to counties, county agencies determine how funds are used and collect information to help track relevant outcomes for the use of these funds, which are reported back to DCF. This county-led use of PSSF funds ensures that family support services, as well as preservation and reunification services, are community-based and best able to meet the needs of children and families within Wisconsin's child welfare system. Under state policy for the PSSF program, local agencies are required to spend at least the minimum amount required for preservation, support, and reunification.

As DCF develops and implements new child welfare policies, standards, and procedures statewide (with the goal of improving safety, permanence, and the well-being of children and families), PSSF counties are expected to coordinate services and target populations in ways that improve child welfare program outcomes. Counties are also encouraged to align PSSF program outcomes with other county or state initiatives to improve coordination of efforts. For example, counties use PSSF funds to better support local home visitation, child abuse prevention efforts, coordinated service teams, family resource centers, community response programs, or reunification services. Finally, counties are encouraged to align their PSSF funds with evidence-based programming or other promising approaches in the areas of home visiting, trauma-informed care, and youth development in an effort to create a better coordinated system of care for children and families who are most at-risk and in need of services. This coordination and collaboration will continue to guide the use of PSSF over the next year.

Examples of local PSSF programs in the last year include the following:

- In Kenosha County, PSSF funds are used to provide a voluntary, in-home program that provides parental education, skill development, and life skills including budgeting, stress management, and problem solving. 100% of participants in this program reported feeling more self-sufficient and also did not have a substantiated referral while in the program.
- Marathon County used PSSF funding for Parent Aide Services using a Parent Aide to provide parent education and intensive in-home services. They served both families with children in and out of home. Overall, they were able to serve 51 children, with 43% of them achieving reunification within nine months of out of home placement
- Iowa County used PSSF funds to support in home treatment services and intensive parenting services through contracts with local organizations. These services provide in home services to maintain children in their homes. They served 11 families, with 100% not having a child enter out of home care or have any substantiated reports of abuse or neglect during the duration of services provided.
- Lafayette County was able to assist 36 families in maintaining children in the home through a variety of ways including: assistance with transportation to attend necessary appointments, respite, and daycare assistance for working parents, purchasing of

supplies such as a bed and infant necessities housing assistance helping with rent and security deposits.

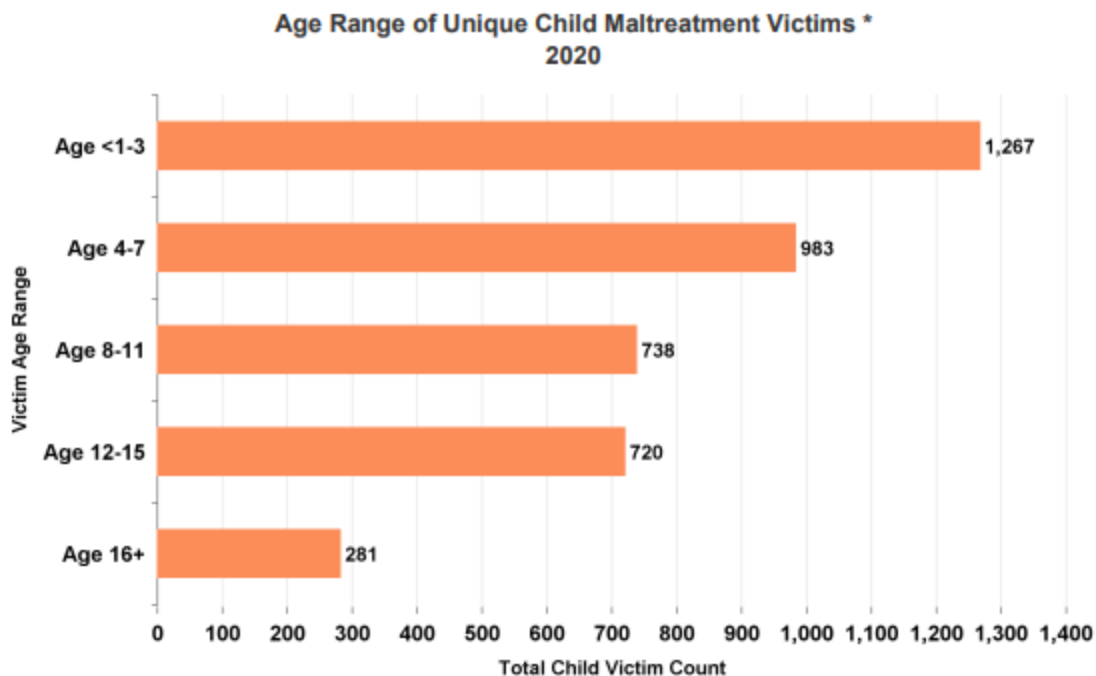
- Vilas County used PSSF funds for a parenting program specifically for fathers. Of the program participants, 93% indicated an increased understanding of their child's needs and growth, 100% indicated an increase in confidence as a parent and 93% indicated an increase in knowledge of community resources.
- Walworth County used PSSF funds to provide respite. Utilizing respite for selected families, 76% of children remained in the parental home in 2021. Respite was particularly helpful in supporting an in-home safety case to assist the management of a parent's family responsibilities while the child(ren) remained in home. Walworth Initial Assessment workers developing in home safety plans were able to maintain nine children in home utilizing this service.

## **Division X Supplemental Funding from the Supporting Foster Youth and Families Through the Pandemic Act**

As part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act (PI 21-04), one-time supplement PSSF funding was allocated to local child welfare agencies as an amendment to the CY 2021 State-County Child Welfare Contracts. This supplemental funding was allocated as a proportional increase to each agency's existing CY 2021 annual PSSF award. Local agencies were instructed to use these funds for the same purposes as the regular annual PSSF grant and encouraged to reach out to families and community-based agencies to identify the unmet needs for services or supports that families are experiencing during the pandemic. Since the supplemental funds were awarded separately from the regular CY 2021 PSSF grant, separate tracking related to use of this funding to ensure compliance with federal requirements and allowances occurred. These funds were used to supplement county services provided with PSSF funding. More details on these activities can be found in the PSSF section of the report on page 149.

## **Population at Greatest Risk of Maltreatment**

Under section 48.981(9) of the Wisconsin Statutes, DCF provides an annual report to the governor and the legislature on child abuse and neglect; this is called the Wisconsin Child Abuse and Neglect Report. The report includes information about which populations are at the greatest risk of maltreatment, as identified by substantiated maltreatment claims. Each section of the report also includes information concerning identification and services to at-risk populations. The report can be found at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/reports/pdf/can.pdf>. In 2020, children under age four accounted for 31.8 percent of victims and children under age eight accounted for 56.4 percent, as shown on the following graph.



\* The total number of children included in this chart is slightly larger than the number of unique victims in Table 9 as some children were maltreated multiple times throughout the year, and belong in two age groups.

Section 5, services for Birth to Five beginning on page 138, describes how DCF and its partners identify, provide, and coordinate services to meet the needs of vulnerable children under the age of five, including both children in foster care and those served in-home or in a community-based setting. The increase in parental drug addiction and use is a growing concern and continues to frame many of these efforts. More information about DCF’s efforts focused on drug affected children is included in the CAPTA section of this report that begins on page 183. In addition, DCF continues to work with DHS on the Care4Kids program to identify and address the healthcare needs of children in out-of-home care. This collaboration includes providing and tracking services to young children including, but not limited to, information about childhood immunizations, health check periodicity timelines and utilization, developmental assessments, and comprehensive health assessments for children in OHC.

### **Kinship Navigator Funding**

DCF was awarded \$322,408 from the Children’s Bureau to continue developing, enhancing, and evaluating the state’s IV-B Kinship Navigator Program for FY 2021. Attachment 1 of this report describes how DCF used the Kinship Navigator funding, and how relative caregivers are made aware of the resources available to them through this program. DCF submitted an application to continue services under the current IV-B Kin Navigator program for FY 2022.

### **Monthly Caseworker Visits**

DCF continues to follow the standards established in the 2006 Child and Family Services Improvement Act to report on monthly caseworker visits. DCF will report the updated number in December 2020 per plan instructions. In FFY2021, caseworker contact requirements remained

consistent and were met for 97.31 percent of the children subject to this measure, which is a slight increase from FFY2020, and which exceeds the federal regulation requirement of 95 percent. Of these contacts, 86.40 percent were made with the child in the placement location. DCF continues to monitor performance on this practice requirement and to provide statewide, regional, and local training and technical assistance to ensure compliance with this performance expectation.

The WCWPDS system includes training on standards and frequency of caseworker visits. A specific PIP initiative described in the approach section is on improving the timeliness and quality of caseworker visits through the quality caseworker PDSAs (described in Section 3). This approach uses the DCF CQI system to identify, support and disseminate best practices to improve the quality of caseworker visits and is currently focused on nine counties. Lessons learned through this process will be identified and shared with counties to improve caseworker practice. During COVID-19, DCF developed guidance around acceptable standards during the pandemic, these can be found at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/guidance>.

In the last FFY, monthly caseworker grant funds were used to support a caseload study described on pages 133-134. The workload study was undertaken with the increasing recognition at the local, state and national levels that a more manageable and data driven caseload size will result in more time spent with families. This increased time with families would then allow for more meaningful engagement and planning with families, which supports the quality of decision making and better outcomes for children and families. The workload study (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/workload-study>) was completed in late 2021 and included the development of a staffing tool that can be used by county agencies to better understand workforce needs at the local levels. The study also provides some initial suggested caseload sizes based on the six main practice areas of child welfare - CPS Access, Initial Assessment and Case Management, Youth Justice Intake and Case Management, and Out-of-Home Care Recruitment, Provider Licensing and Management. The study also identified considerations for operational efficiencies, including organizational and process improvement, and practice improvements.

## **Child Welfare Waiver Demonstration Activities**

DCF no longer conducts a waiver demonstration program.

## **Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive Payments**

DCF intends to continue providing services that were provided last year in the coming FFY. Specifically, DCF plans to continue using these resources for the following activities:

Annual membership dues and conference participation, including:

- American Association for the Interstate Compact for the Protection of Children (AAICPC);
- National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise (NEICE) project; and
- Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA).



Participation of DCF staff in leadership meetings and conferences, including:

- Deputy compact administrator attending the annual ICAMA conference and board meeting;
- Deputy compact administrators attending the annual ICPC conference and board meeting; and,
- Adoption and interstate services section manager and supervisor attended the North American Council on Adoptable Children Conference.

Supporting program functions including:

- Support for the statewide Wisconsin Adoption and Permanency Support Program (WiAPPS) to support post-adoption and guardianship placements.
- Funding LTE positions in DCF's adoption section to assist staff with the daily adoption and ICPC program operations.
- Funding LTE positions to conduct quality assurance reviews of foster care and adoption cases.
- Funding internet searches for the Family Find and Engagement programs.
- Funding portions of the Kinship Navigator Program
- Funding county human service agencies to contract for services to complete foster care licensing for relatives.

Supporting DCF conferences and training

- DCF has an annual "Changing the Face of Adoption" conference for professionals that work in the area of adoption. Approximately 185 professionals attend the conference each year.
- Funded SAFE trainings for licensors and supervisors.
- Funded the ongoing statewide rollout of the Family Find and Engagement training.
- Funded the development of the new Pre-Adoptive Parent training.

### *Adoption Training Program*

The Public Adoption Program recognizes that there are several options for families to receive adoption training and, when possible, gives credit when a family completes training through another avenue. This limits the number of required extra hours of training hours that a family must complete while also allowing the Program to advise them on what training topics must still be covered.

### **Adoption Savings**

In the next year, Wisconsin expects to continue the use of adoption savings funds to support the Wisconsin Adoption and Permanency Support contract (previously known as the Post Adoption Resource Center) as well as the public adoptions service contracts. The Wisconsin Adoption and Permanency Support program services support Wisconsin adoptive and guardianship families. The service needs of the families following adoption finalization or guardianship can vary, thus providing a continuum of post adoption and guardianship services such as support and networking groups, access to mental health providers and therapists, and access to training opportunities is important. The public adoption services contracts with Lutheran Social Services and Children's Service Society support DCF in achieving objectives of Wisconsin's public adoption services to support permanency for children and youth under the guardianship of the State of Wisconsin and pre-adoptive families to include information meetings, supporting training requirements, completing screening, home studies, and licensing, providing case management, and completing adoption assistance and amendments.

### *Challenges in Accessing/Spending Previous and Future Funds*

The department is requesting additional state funding authority in the upcoming 2023-25 biennial budget in order to meet the federal Adoption Savings requirements. The Wisconsin State Legislature must approve the requested budget increases. This decision may impact the feasibility of funding increases for contracts and DCF's ability to spending adoption savings. In FFY 2022, DCF does not have unspent funds to use from previous years.

### **Family First Prevention Services Act Grants**

In the last year, DCF has made significant progress on the plan for Putting Families First. Family First Transition Act funding has been a critical resource to build a culture for change, information gathering for implementation, and support of leadership and planning to move forward. Priorities for FFPSA were focused on transforming the child welfare system to more of an emphasis on serving children in the home, identifying needed workforce and training improvements, and determining how to develop the Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP).

Efforts to more fully flesh out Wisconsin's strategic plan to focus on these priorities as well as support change management in county leadership were areas of focus. Wisconsin's spending plan on Putting Families First guiding principles and stakeholder feedback focused in the following areas:

- Prevention/In-Home Service Support: Projects focused on building the tools, infrastructure, and support for evidence-based programs to keep families safely in their homes.
- Workforce Support: Projects focused on giving the child welfare workforce the training, tools, and infrastructure to support their work.
- Lived Experience: Building the child welfare system's capacity to incorporate lived experience into our child welfare system policies and programs and addressing the racial inequities and disproportionality in our system.
- Implementation Support: Activities focused on ensuring the successful execution of FFPSA and our Putting Families First initiative.

### *Prevention/In-Home and Workforce Support*

In September of 2020, DCF issued a survey on Supporting Families In-Home, which aimed to increase understanding of key strategies used by counties and tribes to support in-home case management and service provision for families. In partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Institute for Research on Poverty and School of Social Work, the survey was developed and disseminated to child welfare caseworkers, supervisors, and administrators in 11 counties and one tribe known to use in-home planning and services, with corresponding decreases in out-of-home placement. Responses were analyzed by the UW-Madison School of Social Work.

This survey was one of several efforts to collect a variety of information related to the division's planning for the Putting Families First efforts. Specifically, the input gathered from this survey has helped DCF focus key resources around development of recommendations and strategies related to both service provision and case management.

As part of Wisconsin's efforts to serve families in-home, DCF also created a training specifically for in-home safety service providers. Additional training for providers was identified by a selection of counties as an unmet need. Additional provider training will ensure shared language and understanding around controlling danger threats on a protective or safety plan. These trainings were rolled out in 2021.

In addition, this funding has supported a survey of child welfare and youth justice workers to identify priorities for investment in training, practice, and process improvements as well as technology needs to maximize time workers spend with families. DCF is using the survey results in coordination with other forms of information to identify child welfare training processes and ways to improve casework ratios so workers can spend more time with families.

### *Elevation of Lived Experience*

DCF is currently reviewing all efforts around lived experience to develop a framework aligned with collaboration and consistency within the department. As described in the collaboration section, DCF hired a lived experience coordinator to more consistently and systematically elevate and leverage the voice of lived experience in all child welfare work. This position has enabled DCF to launch the Child Welfare Parent Leaders Stakeholders Group, in conjunction

with the Office of Children’s Mental Health. In addition to the Youth Advisory Council and Relative Caregiver Stakeholder group, this group of leaders with child welfare experience, meets frequently and informs a variety of system-wide change efforts.

### *Qualified Residential Treatment Quality Consultant*

Aligned with implementation of the Family First Prevention and Services Act and move toward Qualified Residential Treatment Programs, Wisconsin recognized the need to improve the quality of congregate care in our state. Following a competitive application process, the Praed Foundation was awarded the contract to partner with DCF in this endeavor. The Praed Foundation began work with Wisconsin in January 2021, garnering knowledge of our child welfare placing system and provider landscape, analyzing placement data, and assessing psychological safety within facilities and within relationship to child welfare licensing. Providers were engaged via feedback sessions and provider surveys. Leveraging the totality of information garnered in this assessment phase, DCF is now embarking on the design and implementation process with the Praed Foundation, by undertaking initiatives aimed at advancing practice within congregate care to be more trauma informed as well as family and child-centric, while simultaneously seeking to identify and address systemic influences and barriers.

### *Implementation Support*

FFPSA transition funds were used to fund project management resources to assist with developing the Putting Families First approach and strategies detailed in the collaboration section of this report (starting on page 10). Teams have focused on supporting in-home service needs, the workforce and infrastructure supports needed, and worked on meeting the requirements of the Qualified Residential Treatment Program. These funds were used to gather information on a comprehensive change management initiative that was co-sponsored by Casey Family Programs. DCF contracted with Root Learning to provide a comprehensive change management approach that supported DCF, together with counties, to shift their focus towards policies, programs, and services focused on serving more children in their homes. This change management process included a unique interactive, facilitative learning experience, utilizing a “learning map” which reflect both current and future state. These facilitated Helping Children and Families Thrive virtual *Learning Map*<sup>®</sup> discussions were rolled out in 2021. Learning maps focus on county child welfare professionals having engaged discussions about the transformation and local successes, challenges and changes. Across Wisconsin, 65 county child welfare agencies participated, with over 1,700 participants. A copy of the Helping Children and Families Thrive virtual *Learning Map*<sup>®</sup> can be found on DCF’s Family First website at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/family-first/toolbox>. DCF also contracted with Root Learning to engage county agencies around local community stakeholder engagement. The effort aimed to assess effective collaboration and communication to local community stakeholders based on their unique motivators, mindsets and communication preferences.

In addition to ongoing project management support, in 2021, DCF hired a communications position to bolster the work of DCF as it heightens regular communication about planning for

FFPSA. This position will help continue to support key outreach efforts across the state consistent with the DCF change management approach. DCF recently hosted several town hall meetings to provide an update on Putting Families First efforts. The Town Halls can be viewed and downloaded by clicking the Town Hall Meeting link on <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/family-first/toolbox>.

The town halls had more than 1,000 participants representing child welfare professionals, supervisors, and important child welfare partners. These events resulted in a thirty percent increase in traffic on DCF's website.

## **Family First Transition Certainty Grants – Not applicable**

Wisconsin did not use funding to continue activities under previous waivers.

## **John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood**

*Chafee Program (Chafee) and Educational and Training Voucher (ETV) program:*

Wisconsin's Independent Living (IL) Program is designed to help system-involved youth age 14 and older develop crucial life skills and achieve outcomes like their non-system involved peers. The Positive Youth Development philosophy is embedded in all services available in the Chafee program. In addition to the IL supports young people receive while in out-of-home care (OHC), youth who exit OHC at age 18 or older, or after age 16 via an adoption or court-ordered Ch. 48.977 guardianship, are supported by the program until age 21. The department also receives approximately \$700,000 in Chafee Education and Training Voucher (ETV) funds annually to support youth in achieving their postsecondary goals. IL eligible youth can access this funding for five years or up to age 23, whichever occurs first. Services provided are in alignment with the requirements of the federal John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for the Successful Transition to Adulthood. This plan addresses both Sec. 477 (42 U.S.C. 677) (a) of the Social Security Act and Wisconsin's progress on the Children and Family Services Plan (CFSP) goals.

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### **SUPERVISION AND ADMINISTRATION**

In 2016, the department intentionally shifted the use of Chafee funds from the county human services agencies to regional Transition Resource Agencies (TRAs) to provide eligible youth with continued support after exiting OHC. The implementation of the regional model was phased, with the last regional agency becoming operational January 2019. As a result of that final phase, all Wisconsin counties are served by a TRA; no counties currently operate on the prior service model. All TRAs are selected through a competitive procurement process and there is one TRA per Youth Services Region. Counties utilize their Child and Family Allocation to provide IL services to youth 14 and over while they are in OHC, while TRAs use Chafee funds to provide services at the regional level. Taken together, the efforts at both the county and regional levels, and the efforts DCF puts forth to support and oversee its partner agencies, ensure that there is a continuum of IL service provision for youth 14 to 21 (or 23 for ETV). Currently, no state funds support Wisconsin's IL program.

To ensure equity in youth accessing services, some Chafee dollars have historically been utilized to support tribes and the Division of Juvenile Corrections (DJC) in providing IL programming to their youth as well. In 2019, DJC elected to no longer receive Chafee funds from DCF starting in 2020, choosing to instead leverage other funding sources to serve its youth in OHC. DCF provides each of Wisconsin's federally-recognized tribes the opportunity to receive Chafee funds to administer its own IL program. Currently, five tribes have an IL program and receive Chafee funds through a direct allocation, rather than a competitive process. These tribes submit an annual plan to the department that details how they identify the youth they intend to serve and the services they will provide. Each tribe completes a budget that identifies what is needed to fund their IL program. Thus far DCF has been able to fully fund tribal requests for funding in addition to providing Chafee funds to the TRAs.

### DESCRIPTION OF ELIGIBILITY, CONTINUUM OF SERVICES AND LINKAGES TO OTHER SERVICES

Wisconsin's IL and ETV programs provide services and supports to youth aged 14-21 years. Eligibility for Wisconsin's Chafee services while youth are in care includes the following:

- Those youth who are in court-ordered out-of-home care for at least 6 months any time after the age of 14, for as long as they remain in a qualifying placement setting; and
- Those youth who turn 17.5 while in court-ordered out-of-home care or who are 17.5 or older when they enter care are automatically eligible for as long as they remain in a qualifying placement setting.

Eligibility for Wisconsin's Chafee services after a youth exits from care and up to age 21 (23 for ETV) includes the following:

- Those youth who are adopted after age 16 who not eligible for room and board supports;
- Those youth who enter guardianship under Chapter 48.977 or long-term kinship care after age 16; and,
- Those youth who discharge court-ordered out-of-home care at age 18 or older, including youth justice youth living in and aging out of a court-ordered out-of-home care placement setting.

The assessments used by CW agencies to determine the level of life skills development are the Casey Life Skills Assessment and Daniel Memorial Assessment. The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment, required of all Wisconsin children in OHC, provides further information about the youth's level of overall functioning, impact of trauma, strengths, needs, and more. Many agencies will also use information from a youth's Special Education Transition Assessment (if they have one) to inform decisions around appropriate activities. Many Transition Resource Agencies also conduct assessments with young people to determine their IL needs and goals; these may include the Casey Life Skills and Daniel Memorial Independent Living Skills assessments, as well as others like job readiness assessments, and

self-assessments. DCF's strategic planning committee focused on articulating a home-like continuum has reached out to youth to secure feedback on needs and resources that will assist them in more successful transitions to the community.

Services provided by the counties and tribes to IL-eligible youth still in care focus on promoting normalcy and providing youth with opportunities to learn skills associated with daily living, job readiness, interpersonal relationships, etc. Youth are also supported with obtaining employment and housing, identifying and pursuing education related goals, and remaining connected to caring adults and their communities for ongoing support. For youth who identify as LGBTQI+, TRAs have helped youth pursue name changes and obtain revised documents. TRAs are a resource for tribal and county child welfare professionals serving youth in care, as TRA staff are responsible for being aware of and connected to community resources (via a "pro youth network") that may be assets to young people at any stage of IL eligibility. The TRAs include LGBTQI+ partners in their "pro-youth network" of community partners and resources. Youth being served by the county are also encouraged to become involved with the regional Youth Advisory Councils (YACs), which the TRAs coordinate.

Wisconsin currently permits extended foster care for youth 18-21 who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and are still in high school. By default, the regional IL service model in many ways operates similarly to an extended care program by dedicating specific staff, funding, and supports in key independent living domains for young adults ages 18-21. It therefore allows youth eligible for extended care, but electing not to participate in it, to receive support through a type of community-based extension of care. In this arrangement, youth are no longer required to be connected to "the system" but they still receive similar supports, such as individual coaching/case management; support with job readiness and employment; connections to housing and financial assistance, when needed; access to the resources needed to pursue post-secondary educational goals; support and guidance regarding health, well-being and relationships; and advocacy opportunities through regional YACs. Youth participation in any TRA service is voluntary and can be as robust or minimal as the youth chooses. At minimum, at age 17.5, the county-level caseworker, TRA IL coordinator, youth, and other supportive adults identified by the youth create the youth's Independent Living Transition to Discharge (ILTD) plan and complete the required activities in the 90 days prior to the youth exiting OHC. This process is in line with the requirements defined in the federal Fostering Connections and Increasing Adoptions Act pursuant to Wis. Stat. s. 48.39 and 938.38. For youth who elect to remain in extended care, their ILTD is still started at age 17.5 and is updated as relevant as they continue their time in care.

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## PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

DCF's goal is for all youth to thrive in adulthood. Services to help youth meet this goal should be provided in a timely, flexible, coordinated, and developmentally appropriate way building on the strengths of youth, families, the community and cultural groups, and utilizing the expertise within the home, school, and community. Efforts aligned with these objectives are described throughout this report.

It is expected that the bulk of life-skills development occurs in the natural setting of the home, school, and community as foster parents and care providers create teachable moments in the home, encourage involvement in extracurricular activities, and meet with the youth, school counselors, and other partners for career and college advising, etc. For youth in group and residential settings, life skills development should be provided by the group care provider or social worker, as agreed upon by the county or tribal child welfare agency, provider, youth, and other supportive adults as relevant.

For young people who never achieve permanence, it is critical that significant transition activities and supports are available to meet their individualized needs as they exit care and enter adulthood. These supports, at minimum, are started at time of transition when the TRA participates in the ILTD process and continue for as long as the youth wants to receive services from the TRA, up to age 21 (23 for ETV). Even if a young person does not choose to engage with a TRA immediately after leaving OHC, they have the option to do so later, so long as they engage prior to turning age 21 (prior to 23 for ETV). The TRAs work to remind young people of the services for which they qualify by engaging in creative outreach, such as checking in on a regular basis, leveraging social media platforms, providing birthday cards, spreading the word among other “touch points” for these qualifying population, and more.

The overarching goals of Wisconsin’s IL program are outlined in the Youth Services Framework and include:

- **Connections:** Youth are connected to supportive adults and to their community. The youth defines what community means to them.
- **Education:** Every youth has a high school diploma or is on track to receive a high school diploma and has the support to pursue and complete post-secondary education, training, and employment that aligns with the youth’s needs and goals.
- **Employment/Financial Stability:** All youth have had at least one paid job opportunity before they turn 18 years old. Through training and employment opportunities, all youth have obtained the skills needed for employment that pays a living wage with benefits and a career path. Those that qualify for public assistance access those supports, with assistance as needed.
- **Health and Well-Being:** Youth have the opportunity and support for their well-being in its many forms, including social, emotional, mental, intellectual, and physical.
- **Housing:** All youth are in safe, stable, and affordable housing and have access to a range of housing options.

## **Services and Outcomes Data**

DCF collects and records data related to its IL program in three primary ways: service information documented in eWiSACWIS, TRAs’ and tribes’ biannual data outcomes reporting, and National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) survey data. Specific to NYTD, DCF continues to survey all 17-year-olds eligible for the NYTD survey every year and administers the follow-up surveys to those same youth at ages 19 and 21. Staff work with its contracted partner,



University of Wisconsin Survey Center, to maximize its outreach efforts directly to young people and the child welfare professionals and supportive adults with whom they are connected in hopes of increasing youth participation. This includes direct outreach to the county and TRA workers who are most closely connected to many of the young people eligible for NYTD. Additionally, DCF staff recently revamped existing and created new NYTD resources and processes to support the state's efforts. In recent years, DCF unveiled outward-facing resources that include a revised NYTD overview presentation, a thorough FAQ document, and talking point documents for workers to assist their explanation of NYTD to their clients (specific to each age cohort). Recent document development also includes internal process guidelines that guide DCF's timeline and processes for the different cohorts, as well as valuable templates to assist with outreach and follow-up. Together, these resources help to better educate DCF staff and partners on their role in the NYTD process and make the state's NYTD efforts more robust. In the coming year, DCF will work with UW-Survey Center to translate the NYTD surveys into Spanish, to better accommodate Spanish-speaking participants.

*Has the state noted any challenges with the NYTD data collection and/or data entry processes that may warrant attention?*

In late 2018, Wisconsin DCF designated its IL coordinator as its new NYTD coordinator. In that role, the IL coordinator serves as the main liaison between the different entities involved with the NYTD process (county and contracted IL partners, contracted survey administrator, DCF eWiSACWIS and data reporting/analytics staff, etc.) and works to craft and refine processes and guidelines and address areas needing improvement. Recent efforts include:

- Better identifying youth eligible for baseline cohort and/or follow-up cohorts by
  - Making sure that eWiSACWIS system logic aligns with NYTD eligibility and the agency's decision to survey all 17-year-olds who qualify;
  - Working to differentiate between NYTD and IL eligibility since they are not 1-to-1 but oftentimes confused as such. This includes refining eWiSACWIS logic, tickler notifications; and
  - Refining follow-up cohorts since staff have found that sometimes youth complete the survey at age 17 but are ultimately determined to be ineligible for the survey (e.g., lag in placement data entry) and it is necessary to make sure they are not subsequently included in follow up survey cohorts.
- Refining reporting procedures to identify eligible youth, track their participation, and submit data to the feds by
  - Having contracted survey administrator provide specific and robust feedback on current reporting processes directly to DCF data reporting/analytics staff. Currently, DCF is in the process of reviewing and possibly enhancing key reports, with the goal of consolidating duplicative reports and ensuring that the reports include the most important information for surveying youth.
- Better leveraging partnerships to identify and contact eligible youth to encourage their participation

- Continued contracting with UW-Survey Center to administer the survey. The UW-Survey Center has established timelines and processes to conduct outreach to eligible youth and collect and report issues, and participation status.
- Developed processes and guidelines to better inform CWA and IL partners of NYTD, youth eligibility, and their unique role to help incentivize youth to participate. DCF liaisons directly with CWA and IL partners to notify them of youth currently or formerly served who are eligible for the survey, in hopes program partners can connect with eligible youth and encourage them to participate; these efforts supplement UW-Survey Center's efforts.
  - Most of these processes are defined internally. NYTD Coordinator also developed talking points, overview PPT, and FAQ document to educate partners: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/ys/nytd>.

Some challenges persist, including:

- Difficulty connecting with youth eligible to take the survey as part of follow up cohorts. Even if the youth is eligible for regional IL services at age 19 and 21, they do not always choose to participate. Even if they do participate in the TRA IL program, they do not necessarily want to complete the NYTD survey.
- Often, contact information is out-of-date, collateral contacts cannot be located, and/or prior CWA contacts are no longer in contact. This makes connecting with youth not involved with IL services to age 21 particularly difficult. UW-Survey Center uses many methods to locate and contact youth who are eligible for the survey, but DCF would welcome any suggestions on how to better ID and survey these youth who are tricky to locate.
  - This has been particularly true during the pandemic due to increased housing instability and youth prioritizing other needs.
- Little discrepancies between eWiSACWIS logic and NYTD eligibility. Some of these are not obvious until after-the-fact and NYTD Coordinator works to address them both in regard to the specific situation and implementing system changes to prevent future occurrences.
- Limited funding limits the compensation DCF can provide to NYTD participants. DCF currently provides youth who complete the survey a total of \$25. DCF would like to provide them more to compensate them for their time and more adequately thank them for their expertise and participation, but are limited since DCF does not currently receive any state funding specific to IL or NYTD.

*Are findings routed back to the CQI advisory committee for review as part of the state's broader efforts to address programmatic or systemic issues?*

If there are findings that require follow up related to providing guidance regarding system functioning or broad program practice expectations, these can be brought to the CQI committee to provide such guidance and advice however findings from these types of reviews to date have

generally been vetted with the state's CCWIS Data Quality Committee and or through involved of local agency staff and supervisors in the eWiSACWIS design and development processes that relate to corrections related to these findings.

DCF uses this collective information to identify areas to improve its oversight via continuous quality improvement measures, understand training and resource needs, as well as identify and address issues at the county, regional, and state levels. The three most common areas that youth identify as challenges on their NYTD surveys are related to employment, homelessness and housing stability, and access to health care. DCF continually evaluates opportunities to report and share NYTD data and information both internally and externally, including the potential of revamping the existing report for different audiences, and will cooperate in any national evaluation related to the objectives of the Chafee program and/or NYTD. The department has and will continue to partner with agencies at all levels of government and in the community, both in the public and private realms, to record, track, and share youth outcomes information to inform best next steps for its IL program, service providers, and target population.

A current strength of the program is the number of young people continuing to receive services after exiting OHC. This is due in part to enhancements made to the transition process since regionalization began – namely, requiring collaboration between the county and regional-level workers, TRAs building rapport with young people prior to transition, TRAs' continued outreach efforts, and DCF IL staff's development of resources specific to youth transition from care. The regional model provides a robust safety net option for young people leaving care to ease their transition to adulthood. An identified weakness continues to be the lack of available and affordable housing resources in the state, which increases the difficulty in ensuring young people with no credit or poor credit have access to stable, quality housing. This is a challenge even as material supports for housing (e.g., the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) housing vouchers) increase. For example, as noted in last year's APSR as well, all TRAs have reached out to Public Housing Authorities in their service areas to establish the necessary MOU to refer youth for FYI vouchers and secure support but have had mixed results due to PHAs' lack of capacity or interest. Even for those areas where FYI vouchers are now an option, the next step – identifying and securing a safe and affordable housing location – is an ongoing and considerable challenge. TRAs and other partners share that often youth have the voucher and the financial means to rent a place but lack options to do so. The lack of other resources, namely substance abuse and mental health services, which can help stabilize a young in addition to the stability reliable housing offers, is also a struggle in many parts of the state.

Overall, DCF continues to evaluate if the current regional service model and funding structure are the best option to ensure a continuum of IL services for eligible young people.

#### **IV-E Foster Care Assistance After Age 18**

Wisconsin passed legislation to extend foster care for youth who have not graduated from high school, who have an active IEP, and are full-time students. This legislation was effective August

2014. All costs related to the extended OHC placement for youth are paid for with state and county dollars, with matching IV-E funds as applicable. Life skills development and practice opportunities continue to be made available, with young people taking on increased responsibilities commensurate with their age and developmental abilities. Wisconsin has a small number of youth that are in the state extended foster care program. The regional IL structure offers a parallel service model that has a lot of similarities with supported extended care. DCF continues to encourage and support counties that have options to develop Supervised Independent Living (SIL) placements where youth can gradually transition from their time in care. In the past, DCF facilitated information sharing between counties that currently offer SIL and those that may want to; DCF staff continue to facilitate connections between these different county partners and educate them on the requirements and options associated with SIL, including how it may serve as an innovative “step-down” placement option for young people. In calendar year 2020, 13 counties had a placement using this program.

### **Coordination and Consultation with Public and Private Stakeholders**

DCF’s efforts to best execute its IL program require collaboration at various levels of government, educational systems, and individuals in the youth’s life; these are documented throughout this plan. Of special note are the following collaborative efforts, many of which are ongoing:

- DCF regularly convenes or attends gatherings with representatives from other divisions within DCF, as well as Wisconsin’s other state agencies to share information about services available to the state’s young people, including those eligible for IL. These interactions help DCF staff map resource availability and needs, youth services and uptake, and funding throughout the state to assess areas in which to partner, streamline services, and/or address system needs/gaps.
- The regional TRAs are required to build pro-youth public/private networks of services, providers, and supports to respond to the needs of the youth living throughout the region who qualify for their services. As a result, regional partnerships in the areas of education, employment, housing, health, and social/emotional well-being continue to expand and strengthen. Taken together, these enhanced networks may provide IL-eligible youth with resources both while in care and after exiting care. These networks have evolved and strengthened since the start of regionalization. More and more often, TRAs note that partners and stakeholders know more about them and take the first step to collaborate; previously, the onus was primarily on the TRAs to do so.
- DCF staff hold monthly video meetings open to all TRA IL coordinators and Youth Advisory Council advisors. These serve as an opportunity for DCF to offer direct updates to TRA partners, while also asking and responding to questions. Contracted partners also can network with each other, engage in peer learning, and troubleshoot difficult issues. DCF also invites subject matter experts (e.g., Department of Workforce Development, Department of Corrections, Department of Health Services, Covering Wisconsin, DCF tribal liaisons, University of Wisconsin partners, and others)

- to participate on the call to share out information that will help inform contracted partners' practices, and is trying to infuse more training opportunities into these regular calls. TRA IL coordinators directly inform which topics are covered in the calls – including which guest speakers participate. The DCF IL coordinator has a standing invitation for TRA staff to make requests and directly solicits recommendations on a regular basis.
- Some of the recent training/presentation topics included:
    - Understanding and addressing workforce burnout;
    - Anti-human trafficking service provision input gathering
    - Wisconsin Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) overview
    - Overview of Wisconsin's tribal child welfare agencies
    - *Keys to Your Financial Future* financial literacy tool
    - *Working with Trans Young Adults and Expanding Competency*
    - *Working with LGBTQI+ Youth*
    - Introduction to strengths-based tools to use when working with high risk and trafficked youth
  - Forthcoming training/presentation topics will include, but are not limited to:
    - BadgerCare+ (Medicaid) Non-Emergency Medical Transportation overview
    - BadgerCare+ (Medicaid) program overview
    - Similarities and differences between county and tribal child welfare agencies
  - DCF staff hold quarterly video meetings with staff in supervisory roles with the TRAs. The objective of these meetings is like that of the monthly coordinator calls mentioned above in that they are meant to facilitate connections between agencies and offer opportunities to connect directly with DCF but are different in that they are focused on higher-level programmatic considerations, input gathering, and decision-making. Increasingly, the DCF IL coordinator supports and encourages TRA agencies using each other as resources.
  - DCF staff hold conference calls with tribal IL program staff at least quarterly. Like those provided with TRA staff, these calls are an opportunity for participants to hear from each other about recent updates, successes and challenges, best practices, and innovations, while also connecting with and receiving information directly from DCF. Calls also provide a forum for tribes to highlight how they use IL funding to help preserve youths' cultural connection.
  - In recent years, DCF staff held summits in each of the IL regions. DCF staff facilitated these meetings, but the intent was that they provided an opportunity for different individuals involved with IL service provision to receive updates directly from DCF, ask questions, troubleshoot issues, provide feedback, etc. The summits were held in each region at least once per year and were open to county, tribal, and regional staff providing IL services to youth in each region. All attendees were encouraged to provide input on the meeting content and structure to ensure that

each summit was as valuable as possible for the given region and its unique considerations. In addition, the questions and conversations that came up during these gatherings informed DCF's work (including updates to eWiSACWIS and resource development).

- Due to the pandemic, the summits were virtual in 2020, still fulfilling many of the same goals outlined above.
- Due to the priority that stimulus funding took in 2021, DCF did not hold summits that year.
- It is still being determined whether DCF will hold summits again in 2022, primarily because wrapping up stimulus funding efforts continues to be a priority and many agencies, including DCF, are still determining if/when to transition back to select in-person gatherings. Though virtual summits are possible, in-person is much more successful for achieving the meetings' networking and peer sharing objectives.
- In 2019 and 2020, DCF staff facilitated a TRA convening meeting to provide an opportunity for all TRA staff involved with the IL programs to meet in-person for a day of information-sharing, networking, training, and case scenario discussions. This interagency gathering was borne out of TRA agencies' eagerness to interface with each other in-person more often. The two convening meetings each built upon the existing monthly and quarterly phone calls for coordinators and supervisors, respectively, and, though supported by DCF, are largely TRA developed and driven.
  - However, TRA and DCF staff elected not to have this meeting in 2021 due to fatigue over having to hold all meetings virtually and TRA staff dedicating their energy to mediating the public health crisis's impact on youth. In addition, administration of stimulus funding took precedent.
  - As with the summits, DCF is still determining if it will hold summits again in 2022, primarily because wrapping up stimulus funding efforts continues to be a priority. Many agencies, including DCF, are still determining if/when to transition back to select in-person gatherings. Though virtual summits are possible, in-person is much more successful for achieving the meetings' networking and peer sharing objectives.
- Since the second half of 2019, DCF has been in regular contact with its HUD regional contact to identify the best way to introduce and have agency take-up on the federal FYI housing voucher initiative. As a result, DCF has been able to localize its outreach, information-gathering and sharing, and process structure while aligning with HUD and FYI voucher program expectations. This includes DCF releasing an agency info memo specific to the initiative, document development to support TRAs' outreach efforts, ongoing information-sharing with and gathering from TRAs, and continued collaboration and consultation with HUD. The latter includes, but is not limited to, DCF staff joining the HUD point of contact on a joint FYI voucher/Independent Living informational session to educate housing authorities and other partners on the

- initiative and how it operates given Wisconsin's child welfare and IL structure. As noted above, despite these efforts, FYI has had mixed success in Wisconsin.
- DCF contracts with the University of Wisconsin Survey Center to administer the NYTD Survey.
  - DCF hosts a biennial Youth Services Conference which brings together DCF staff, county agency staff, contracted providers, and community partners for two days of sessions focused on improving youth outcomes and rooted in the bureau's youth framework. The Conference was virtual in 2021.
  - DCF hosts a biennial grantee meeting (alternating years with the Youth Services Conference), which includes at least one representative from each of the agencies contracted to provide services via DCF's Independent Living, Brighter Futures, Anti-Human Trafficking, and Runaway and Homeless Youth Initiatives. This is part of an intentional effort to better connect DCF's service partners to each other to both strengthen and align the different providers young people interact with. This gathering was canceled in 2020 due to the health crisis but will resume in 2022 – likely in the fall.
  - In January 2021, DCF facilitated a virtual Learning Exchange for its different program grantees to discuss the challenge of engaging youth virtually during the health crisis. DCF coordinated this gathering in direct response to similar feedback across programs that connecting with youth and keeping them involved in services and events is especially hard when so many interactions need to be virtual. DCF staff created the space for grantees to connect and facilitated their conversation with the goal that participants discuss the challenge, innovative and successful responses, and help each other identify valuable resources and partnerships. Grantees came together for this peer learning opportunity and shared ideas, helpful tips, and specific resources to aid each other and further the shared goal of keeping connections with young people during this challenging time. DCF may offer future opportunities for peer learning if staff capacity and grantees' interest suggest it would be possible and valuable.
  - DCF staff facilitate the Foster Youth to College (FYC) advisory group that is made up of high school and postsecondary representatives, as well as DCF and Department of Public Instruction staff. This group works to identify the challenges youth formerly in out-of-home care face to enter and succeed in postsecondary programs and develop resources to increase positive outcomes. The group focuses on leveraging existing postsecondary supports to assist this population while also developing resources and creating training opportunities to increase the supports available to the youth. In 2020, DCF added a rotating youth member position to the group. The position is intended to demonstrate the varied postsecondary paths young adults with foster care experience take, inform the work of postsecondary representatives, and ensure resource development and training aligns with on-the-ground experiences. This group took a hiatus during the pandemic due to other emergent needs; however, during the pandemic DCF staff began and continue to attend a group that developed

organically with higher education stakeholders and community leaders across the state called Foster Youth Advocates (FYA). Conversations regarding the intersections and distinctions between the groups are ongoing. Notably, Wisconsin designated \$500,000 in GPR per biennium towards Fostering Success programs at Wisconsin's public institutions due in large part to the advocacy efforts of these groups.

- DCF established a strategic plan with the Department of Public Instruction to implement the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which became effective in December 2016. Members from each department meet monthly and offer technical assistance as-needed to local education agencies and county/tribal child welfare agencies in order to support local efforts to improve educational stability for youth in out-of-home care. More info is available at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/essa>.
- DCF's most important stakeholders are the young people it serves. To this end, DCF staff support two youth councils, the Youth Advisory Council (YAC; made up of young people with child welfare experience) and the Youth Leadership Teams (made up of young people with youth justice experience), to ensure youth voice is represented in the bureau's, division's, and department's work. Additionally, DCF staff are intentional and strategic about soliciting and including youth input on its initiatives and compensating them appropriately for their input and time.
  - Over the past two years, YAC members consulted on a project that involved revamping the Permanency and Safety planning process and related documents within DCF. In May 2020, the Wisconsin Youth Advisory Council convened a virtual statewide meeting. At that meeting young people with lived experience in the child welfare system expressed their concerns and needs related to the COVID-19 health crisis. The information collected highlights the youth's most pronounced needs and concerns at the time. DCF staff used this information to put together a document that includes the youth's reflections; this will be shared with direct service providers in Wisconsin.
  - Looking farther back, in recent years, a young person served as a consultant when DCF revamped its ETV program structure.
  - Overall, DCF expects that the inclusion of youth voices grows at the county, tribal, and regional levels through the TRAs. Due in part to DCF modeling the prioritization of youth input in its work, many agencies have individual youth, or their local Youth Advisory Councils advise key program elements like service structure, document development, outreach efforts, etc. DCF intentionally creates other opportunities for youth input and empowerment as well. Some examples include sponsoring two Foster Club All-Star internship slots, youth attendance at the national IL/ETV Coordinator meeting, youth participation in a 2020 HUD roundtable focused on the FYI voucher and the importance of housing supports for youth with foster care experience, and



youth participation at various conferences as co-presenters or facilitators, panel participants, consultants, as well as participation on numerous panels and agency and community events.

- Looking ahead, the YAC plans to advocate for increased funding for the IL program to provide the support necessary to permanently expand the state's program eligibility to age 23.

The Wisconsin Youth Advisory Council (YAC) is the primary youth stakeholder group that DCF consults with on issues related to OHC and independent living. Wisconsin encourages youth currently or formerly in the foster care system to participate. Subsidiary YAC groups, supported by Independent Living Transition Resource Agencies (TRAs), are also located in each of the seven Youth Services Regions across Wisconsin. Regional YACs meet monthly to influence policy change and best practices at the local level and to educate communities and DCF about youth experiences in foster care. Their mission is reaching out to and advocating for young people currently in the foster care system. They do so through presentations, meetings with legislators, participating in trainings and events, coordinating their annual Hands Around the Capitol event, contributing to community campaigns and efforts, and participating in panels with various stakeholders. The state's YAC is also a Citizen Review Panel, so its work and efforts also overlap with the requirements of being a panel and allows for interactions with other panels in the state and even nationally. State YAC members chose to be led and governed by peer officers. The current YAC officer positions are president, vice president, historian, and secretary. Due to COVID, youth attendance has decreased in comparison to prior years when meetings were held in-person. However, compared to prior years, there is less turnover and the members that join the meetings are consistent with their attendance.

Taken together, key youth engagement opportunities include:

1. DCF coordinates six statewide YAC meetings per year, and TRAs coordinate at least one local council meeting each month.
2. YAC's continued service as a Wisconsin Citizen Review Panel under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). Members attend the National Conference annually and have even participated on a panel to help educate other CRPs. YAC completes the annual report required of all CRPs, which includes recommendations to DCF.
3. DCF sponsors two Wisconsin foster youth alumni for participation in the Foster Club All-Star Internship. Interns may return to Wisconsin and become an active member of YAC (if not already), and serve as a mentor to peers regarding advocacy, outreach, and leadership. Past interns have assumed leadership roles in local YACs, participated at the DCF conference, and/or helped develop DCF's roadmap to independent living resources. DCF staff are in the planning stages of developing the future collaborative project with this year's All-Star interns.
4. DCF helps YAC members plan and execute events to commemorate National Foster Care Month in May.

5. YAC's continued engagement at the state and local level, including meetings with legislators, panels at conferences, and regular consultation regarding child welfare policy.

### *Coordination and Consultation with Tribes*

Of the eleven federally recognized tribes headquartered in Wisconsin, five currently receive IL funding. They are the Bad River, Ho-Chunk, Lac Courte Oreilles, Menominee, and Red Cliff tribes. Except for Lac Courte Oreilles and Ho-Chunk, these tribes started their IL programs in 2018. DCF continues to offer this funding opportunity to other tribes in the state, should they also be interested in starting an IL program. This has been communicated at Intertribal Child Welfare (ICW) Committee meetings as well as via email notification. All tribes receiving IL funds have access to the eWiSACWIS Independent Living page, should they choose to look at service information entered by county and TRA providers for their youth. Like the TRAs, they also submit data outcome information to DCF twice a year.

During the 2020 public health crisis, tribal Independent Living programs were given the opportunity to amend their existing DCF Independent Living contracts and increase their funding by up to 20 percent. One of the five tribal Independent Living programs, Red Cliff, opted to receive these additional dollars to increase stability for IL eligible youth in their community. In 2021, they were provided a similar opportunity to receive stimulus funding and two tribes elected to do so, receiving \$25,000 each. Additionally, starting in 2021 DCF allowed tribal IL partners to use stimulus or regular IL funding to support youth vehicle purchases. This was in response to consistent feedback from tribal partners that transportation is an acute challenge and barrier in tribal communities. DCF wanted to make sure that IL-eligible youth served by tribal agencies have access to this meaningful support.

Tribes receiving IL funds directly from DCF participate in training and receive one-on-one technical assistance from DCF, including support for new programs in developing policies and procedures, annual program visits, data outcome reporting, notifications of resources and culturally relevant trainings, and confirming youth eligibility for services. Tribes have discretion to tailor their IL programs according to their population needs, with some targeting their IL program towards younger youth who qualify for Chafee services and others focusing more on young people posed to exit care at age 18 or older.

Tribes also connect with each other via regular conference calls that DCF coordinates every two to three months. Additionally, DCF invites tribal representatives to its annual regional IL summits. As previously described, the department holds summits throughout the state to discuss policy/programming initiatives and issues and to provide technical assistance and consultation to agency IL coordinators; some tribes have elected to attend, providing a good opportunity for them to network with each other, if in the same area, as well as TRA and county partners.

Tribal youth in Wisconsin who are not able or choose not to access IL services directly through their tribe are able to receive services through the child welfare agency in their resident county

while in out-of-home care, and through a regional TRA upon “aging out.” Even if tribal youth do not engage with a TRA for IL services, they must work with the TRAs to receive ETV supports if they want to access that support since tribes do not allocate ETV funds. In 2020, DCF staff developed a process and information packet to assist tribal youth referrals to TRAs for IL and/or ETV supports. This has aided increased collaboration and information-sharing between TRAs and tribes. DCF staff have revised the packet once since its original creation.

Additionally, county agencies serving tribal children confirm collaborative efforts with local tribes. DCF is not aware of any tribes planning to apply directly to ACF for funds. All tribes, whether they receive funding directly from DCF or services from the county agency, are made aware of IL policies and procedures, including eligibility through DCF’s Policy and Informational Memo process.

### Health Care Coordination for Youth Aging Out-of-Care

DCF, TRAs, counties, and tribes, in collaboration with the youth, their supportive adults, and other state and community agencies, as appropriate, work to facilitate youth access to high-quality and affordable healthcare. Some of the ways in which they do so are:

- Local child welfare agencies work with youth prior to their exit from care to ensure that the youth understands their medical needs, signs up for BadgerCare+ (Wisconsin’s Medicaid), and understand how to recertify their enrollment each year. At minimum, these activities ensure a connection to health and are important steps of the ILTD planning process. TRA staff also work with their clients to ensure that they remain insured. This includes collaborating with another state’s IL program to enroll the youth in another state’s Medicaid program if the youth relocates elsewhere. Similarly, Wisconsin already provides BadgerCare+ to youth who qualify and are from another state and TRAs assist youth with their insurance enrollment/retention as needed if the youth elects to participate in Wisconsin’s IL program.
- DCF collaborated with DHS to ensure proper implementation of the provision of the Affordable Care Act relating to former foster youth. Youth can sign up electronically, over the phone, or by filling out a paper enrollment form. Regional TRAs and local DHS entities are available to assist former foster youth in the process. DCF and DHS also established an agreement which allows all youth who aged out of care in another state and subsequently move to Wisconsin to receive health care coverage under this provision. The agencies continue to consult on how to better facilitate youth’s continued enrollment and make sure the information DCF shares with partners as it pertains to youth currently or formally in foster care is correct and current.
  - DCF coordinated with DHS to apply and receive approval for a 1115 waiver to provide Medicaid coverage to former foster youth from any state until required by federal law starting January 1, 2023 and will update its memo (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/memos/2020-37i.pdf>) prior

to the effective date of the law to ensure CWAs and TRAs are aware of the change.

- Recently, the DCF IL coordinator connected with, staff in DHS's Bureau of Eligibility and Enrollment to learn more about BadgerCare Plus and share feedback from partners about the successes and challenges of supporting youth in that need area. Those DHS staff will present at a monthly TRA Coordinator meeting later in 2022.
- The Medicaid Care4Kids program provides coordinated and comprehensive physical, behavioral and dental care during the period a youth is in out-of-home care and for a year after a youth leaves care in six counties, thus providing continuity of care and the benefit of a health coordinator for youth who age out of care.

Additionally, in early 2021, DCF staff coordinated with Kids Matter, Inc., to offer a Power of Attorney for Healthcare (POAHC) overview to system partners, with the goal of educating adult supporters on the value of a POAHC, particularly for young people exiting care. Participants represented a diverse set of adult supporters who care for, assist, or otherwise support youth with out-of-home care experience, and included independent living coordinators, foster care coordinators, youth justice workers, tribal child welfare staff, and many others. Kids Matter, Inc., provided a thorough background of POAHC, why it is important – especially for youth coming from care – and the steps required to complete it. Their overview even included a walk-through of a POAHC sample form. The DCF IL coordinator hopes to offer a similar opportunity – on this or a related topic – in the future.

### *Chafee Division X Funding*

In May 2020, DCF staff worked hard to implement options to support young people aging out of care during the health crisis and the child welfare agencies and service providers in place to meet the population's needs. Because Wisconsin's governor does not have the authority to put a moratorium on youth aging out of care, the department had to operate within the existing child welfare processes and requirements. DCF elected to prioritize youth's housing needs; its overarching goal was to work with contracted partners to make targeted investments in youth's housing stability. As a result, DCF offered additional money in the form of a 20 percent contract increase to contracted Transition Resource Agencies and tribal IL programs. The Foster Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) increase included as part of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act financed this effort. Additionally, DCF offered to reimburse counties for the cost of one-time payments to support maintaining youth in their previous placement home or incentivizing relatives or unlicensed caregivers to house young people. In all cases, DCF instructed partners to prioritize youth "aging out of care" between March and August 2020 and to use the funds to meet the costs of housing and other basic needs. Transition Resource Agencies that did not expend their full contract increase had until the end of CY2021 to fully expend this additional funding. Their priority remained recently aged out youth and their housing needs, but DCF did provide permission to TRAs near the end of CY2020 to broaden the applicable population to be other IL-eligible youth engaged in a TRA program who have been affected by the public health emergency.

DCF Memo 200-19i (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/memos/2020-19i.pdf>) includes more information and guidance about this effort.

Following this initial form of support, Wisconsin DCF embraced the additional funding and flexibilities included as part of Division X of the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021*. It did so in ways intended to be as impactful, efficient, and equitable as possible while best leveraging the state's existing partnerships and service model. Wisconsin's approach has included:

1. Utilizing the alternative definition of foster care permitted by the Program Instruction (PI) for the purpose of temporarily suspending aging out and permitting re-entry. Youth whose court-ordered placements end(ed) between January 27, 2020, and September 30, 2021, qualified for direct financial assistance along with age-appropriate supervision and case management. Each youth who within this cohort qualified to receive \$1,000/month in direct assistance for six months, totaling \$6,000 per youth. DCF's contracted Transition Resource Agencies, which already provide IL services to many of these youth, has provided these funds in ways that cause as little burden for the youth as possible while also aligning with their agency and fiscal procedures. Youth complete a simple attestation of hardship to affirm the negative impact the health crisis has had on their well-being, stability, needs, etc. and the TRA provides funding via check, direct deposit, cash app, or some combination, being as responsive as possible to youth preference. The TRAs also provide the age-appropriate supervision and case management services, which are already included in their service models.
  - a. DCF identified 534 youth eligible to receive this support (in the "age out cohort"). As of April 18, 2022, nearly \$2 million has been provided to youth in the form of direct financial assistance to more than 60% of qualifying youth. This includes youth across the state in different stages of their life and involvement with the IL program more broadly.
2. Providing additional funds to contracted Transition Resource Agencies, county partners, and tribal partners to collectively support IL-eligible youth needs up to age 23 (currently, the IL program serves youth only up to age 21 with the exception of ETV, which is offered to age 23). These partners already allocate IL services and/or funding for eligible youth; the additional funds will give them the means to continue to be highly responsive to youth needs during the public health crisis, as defined and driven by the youth themselves. DCF will provide partners with funding and reporting guidance, including, but not limited to, direction about temporary program flexibilities and lists of highly recommended areas of focus. These lists prioritize the needs directly attributable to or more pronounced because of the public health crisis and are informed by the feedback DCF has heard from its Youth Advisory Council, IL clients, IL service providers, and other advocacy groups during the health crisis. Partners may also use funds to support staff and/or administrative costs related to the IL program and the increased provision of funding and supports.
  - a. Specific to the counties, CWAs are permitted to support IL-eligible youth either in care or newly aged out of care. For youth still in care, the county may support

several IL-eligible costs. If a county chooses to use funds to support a youth newly discharged from care, they must use funds to support youth's immediate housing needs following their exit from care by providing financial support to have the young person remain in their prior placement setting though now off an order.

- i. Feedback provided to DCF thus far is that this funding helps youth with costlier or less conventional needs, including many related to the key domain of "normalcy."
  - b. Specific to the tribes, DCF offered all five tribes with IL programs additional funding, with both Red Cliff and Bad River each receiving \$25,000 to provide additional supports to their IL eligible populations and enhance existing programming. All tribal IL programs were also given the option of allowing up to \$4,000 per year per youth to go towards vehicle purchases. Many tribal programs are in rural communities with little to no public transit, which greatly impacts youths' employment and education options.
  - c. Specific to the TRAs, some of the key program flexibilities DCF allowed were using stimulus funds to provide IL services to eligible youth to age 23 and using stimulus funds to support youth vehicle purchases. Additionally, TRAs took advantage as much as possible for the temporary suspension of the room and board caps and limitations.
    - i. Feedback provided by the TRAs and young adults to DCF thus far is that the ability to serve youth to age 23 has been particularly impactful, further stabilizing young adults into their 20s. Additional funding to TRAs overall, which has benefited their clients, has resulted in youth having less stress and more time to thrive; youth having greater choice; and youth having the opportunity to avoid certain expenses, get out of debt, and/or generally improve their financial stability.
3. Wisconsin's two Permanent Connections, Academics, Training and Employment, Housing, and Social and Emotional Well-being (PATHS) providers, which currently serve IL-eligible youth via runaway and homeless youth programming were provided additional funding to support programming. Partners have used these funds to support youth's housing costs and cover the salary and fringe costs of new housing specialists and/or lived experience workers.
4. Used a small amount of funding to conduct a publicity campaign to connect with youth eligible for IL services in general and additional assistance during the health crisis more specifically. DCF's IL team worked with the department's Communications Office to provide information via multiple avenues, including, but not limited to, other service partners, DCF website, social media platforms, etc. For example, the DCF webpage <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/foster-relief>.

Both <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/memos/2021-12i.pdf> and <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/memos/2021-24i.pdf> include more information about key stimulus funding efforts, namely support for TRAs, counties, and tribes.

### *Youth Engagement*

DCF applied Division X spending in a variety of strategies to promote youth engagement:

- Supplemental funding to support young people up to age 23 was in direct response to advocacy/requests from Wisconsin's Youth Advisory Council to increase the IL program eligibility age limit.
- Funding as an opportunity to adjust DCF's ETV eligibility to use it to support higher degrees (e.g. grad school). DCF plans to keep that change in place even when the upper funding limit expires.
- The increase in and more robust nature of IL supports served as a "carrot" for many young people to participate in IL programming – for example, the provision of direct financial assistance sometimes "hooked" a young person. After receiving that support, many were also receptive to additional IL supports.
- DCF's publicity campaign to inform young people of their potential eligibility for direct financial assistance – and other IL supports – in addition to IL partners' direct and community outreach, led to new or increased connections to young people themselves and the other partners and touch points with which they interact.
- Some IL partners used the additional funding to finance positions – namely, those for individuals with lived experience in foster care. This increased staff capacity was tremendous, particularly when offered via people with intimate knowledge of the individuals being served and the systems they've experienced.
- With additional funding, the TRAs were able to continue and increase their investments in their local Youth Advisory Councils, moving initiatives forward and also investing in relationship building among youth participants. Additional funding for the YACs certainly mattered, though it's also important to note that youth participation did drop off during the COVID-19 pandemic due to youth not wanting/being able to participate virtually, and/or having other more important needs/concerns to address.

Looking ahead, DCF hopes to build upon the positive feedback it has received to keep some of the piloted efforts in place on a more permanent basis. Some of this is contingent on securing additional funding, and the agency hopes that stimulus funding efforts and input regarding them can serve as a solid basis for developing future state budget requests. In general, while stimulus funding has been a great boon to Wisconsin's IL program and the youth it serves, its expiration in September 2022 will create a "fiscal cliff" for program partners and their clients that DCF staff are working hard to temper as much as possible. At the same time, the amount of money provided and the short timeframe for which it was available (not to mention the *very* short timeframe for some key flexibilities in the Act) limited DCF's key initiatives to operating within the existing infrastructure with existing partners.

## Education and Training Vouchers

Wisconsin's ETV Program eligibility requirements are:

- Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) will be available to all youth that exit out-of-home care at age 18 or older or those that exited care after age 16 due to adoption or Ch 48.977 guardianship for costs associated with postsecondary attendance and participation up to age 23, or for a maximum of five years.
- Continued eligibility is dependent on a recipient's enrollment in an accredited or pre-accredited postsecondary program and satisfactory academic progress toward the completion of that program.

Services, equipment, and other items beneficial to youth accessing and participating in higher education and training programs are regularly identified and incorporated into the ETV Program. When DCF transitioned to its regional IL model in 2016, it designated some ETV responsibilities to the newly contracted TRAs. They were responsible for allocating "local ETV funding," while DCF remained responsible for its DCF Scholarship using another portion of its state ETV allocation and targeting only a few ETV-eligible cost categories. Starting in 2019, DCF streamlined its ETV program to eliminate the DCF Scholarship and have TRAs responsible for ETV fund allocation. As a result, the agencies have the flexibility to provide eligible youth with ETV funds, now known in Wisconsin as Brighter Star, for the whole spectrum of qualifying postsecondary needs. TRAs now serve as "one-stop shops" for youth eligible for independent living services and supports, including ETV. All youth eligible for independent living services until age 21 are also eligible for Brighter Star up to age 23, or a maximum of up to five years if they meet the school type and academic requirements. TRAs also collaborate with Wisconsin's tribes to provide ETV funding to qualifying youth, whether those youth are being served via their tribe's IL program or a TRA's IL program.

In addition to the program criteria, defined in section 102 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, Wisconsin instituted the following guidelines in 2018 and these remain in place:

- Brighter Star/ETV assistance will not exceed the lesser of \$5,000 per year or the total cost of attendance as defined in section 472 of the Higher Education Act.
- Brighter Star may provide funding for any direct costs (e.g., tuition, books, and fees) associated with attending an institution of higher learning. Funds may also be used for the purchase of technical equipment or assistance to include, but not be limited to computers, books, and supplies associated with coursework.
- Local agencies may provide additional assistance or support necessary to mediate barriers that risk compromising successful completion of higher education; these include, but are not limited to tutoring, transportation, childcare, housing, program entry testing, registration fees, equipment needs, and vocational training activities.
  - In 2021, DCF changed its Brighter Star criteria to allow funds to be used for higher degrees, rather than only up to and including a bachelor's.



The state method to ensure the total amount of educational assistance does not exceed the total cost of attendance and efforts to avoid duplication of benefits for this or other federal benefit programs is implemented through the Wisconsin's larger independent living services model. Because of the steps taken in 2018 to streamline the state's ETV program starting in 2019, a youth's ETV eligibility and funding is more fully integrated with other IL supports and assistance. Its inclusion is therefore part of the TRA's broader conversations with and service planning alongside the young people. This includes looking at and supporting their ETV and IL needs in full, including overall financial needs for school. Because the TRA IL coordinator works with the youth and is aware of the full spectrum of their IL and educational needs, the coordinator is familiar with young person's postsecondary costs. They and/or their agency are in close connection with the youth and the schools themselves about cost of attendance, including any other forms of aid the youth may be receiving to avoid duplication or overpayment. TRAs provide funds directly to schools according to DCF guidelines, federal regulations regarding ETV funds, uniform guidelines, and other requirements as necessary. ETV funds should be applied as a last resort – after other educational aid has been applied. It may be applied prior to or instead of loans. In their role and through collaboration with youth, the TRAs are in a great position to maximize ETV funds that are flexible and responsive to youth needs. One result has been an uptick in ETV expenditures.

The integration of ETV in Wisconsin's TRA service model was especially valuable during the health crisis since TRA staff had established relationships with the young people and familiarity with their educational goals, needs, and challenges because of and separate from the effects of the pandemic. TRAs kept in regular contact with young people to identify and assess the pandemic's impact on their educational and employment goals. For many youth, this meant the TRAs helped them to pivot in crucial ways including, but not limited to, helping them communicate their different or increased needs to their postsecondary institution; identify and secure resources needed for remote learning (e.g. hotspots, laptops, internet); identify and access prosocial supports during a time of disruption and increased isolation; and ensure housing stability in the event that reduced dorm capacity, loss of income, or other occurrences endangered a youth's preexisting housing situation. For youth who chose to leave school due to the pandemic or struggled with virtual participation, TRA staff not only fulfilled the role of making sure youth had the equipment needed to stay or once again become enrolled in school, but also served in the key role of mentor, helping youth identify the root of their academic struggle and what resources, supports, or alternate academic setting may help them continue their educational pursuits.

State and local agencies partner with secondary and postsecondary institutions and each other to increase awareness of the educational challenges faced by youth aging out of out-of-home care and the Brighter Star through collaborations with DPI and local school districts.

#### *Additional ETV Funding (Division X)*

Transition Resource Agencies worked directly with youth and postsecondary institutions to meet eligible youth's academic needs and costs during the pandemic using additional ETV

funding. As with regular and stimulus IL funds, DCF provided these partners with funding and reporting guidance, including direction about temporary program flexibilities. The TRAs have worked with eligible youth to identify needs up to the temporary maximum of \$12,000 per youth per academic year. While not all youth have needed the increased amount, it has been a major asset for those who have high financial need or are attending an expensive program or school. TRAs and youth both share that the higher ETV cap is particularly helpful for youth pursuing a four-year degree (or higher). DCF closely monitors both regular and stimulus ETV expenditures across the state to prevent overspending.

DCF provided two separate communications to postsecondary partners to both remind them of disproportionate impact the public health emergency – and the disruption to postsecondary programs and its resources as a result – and inform them of the youth’s potential eligibility for up to \$12,000 in ETV funds. DCF shared this with postsecondary partners via various methods, including via the TRAs and the FYC/FYA groups mentioned previously. The feedback DCF has received thus far is that the increased ETV cap has been a “gamechanger” for some young people, namely those in more expensive programs, such as 4-year colleges. Even for youth at less expensive institutions, like community colleges, the increased award amount has been crucial for paying for more expensive needs like equipment costs. As noted above in regard to the general benefit of increased IL funding for eligible youth, the increased ETV allocation and higher cap has put many youth on the path to greater educational success and financial stability, by allowing them to avoid substantial educational debt. Stakeholders report this has allowed students to focus more on their studies rather than having to work many hours or otherwise be stressed by expenses. The young people are therefore in a better position to thrive.

DCF has elected to end the provision of \$12,000 to qualifying youth at the start of the 2022-2023 academic year. Though that temporary increase is available through September 30, 2022, programmatically it makes sense to time the end of that flexibility with the start of the new school year. The TRAs continue to take lead on providing ETV supports to youth who qualify, informed by youth’s postsecondary wants, needs, and goals.

Overall, DCF saw a slight dip in postsecondary enrollment and persistence during the health crisis, but that has not been a uniform or prolonged impact. There has been considerable variability across the state though, in general, many young people have shared that they struggled with virtual learning compared to in-person instruction.

### *Chafee Training*

- In 2019, DCF IL staff provided strategic sharing training for members of all seven of the local Youth Advisory Councils. The intent of this training was to provide a foundational strategic sharing training for all young people involved in a local council to help prepare them to share their story safely and strategically – whether as part of their local council, or as a participant in another forum like a panel or community event. DCF presented it as a “train the trainer” opportunity, with the goal that local council advisors would learn how to execute the training to be able to offer it to additional youth without DCF’s presence.

- In the years since that original round of training, many of the local councils have built upon this strategic sharing training – providing follow-up trainings and refreshers to both new and continuing members. The feedback DCF has received is that youth are better prepared to share their stories and their advisors and adult supporters are in a better position to prep the youth beforehand and support them throughout and afterward.
- In 2019, DCF partnered with the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System to create a training to assist child welfare professionals in completing the credit check process and credit remediation.
- In 2019, DCF cooperated with the department’s Bureau of Permanence and Out-of-Home Care to better incorporate IL considerations and training needs in trainings for foster care and other OHC providers.
- In 2020, DCF cooperated with the University of Wisconsin – Madison’s Division of Continuing Studies to create a training for county and tribal CW agencies, foster parents, and contracted providers on the topic of creating the Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan.
- In 2020, DCF again cooperated with the University of Wisconsin – Madison’s Division of Continuing Studies to refresh its overview presentation to educate its partners on the importance of the NYTD survey. This was done at the same time as DCF staff updated or created additional NYTD training resources for county and TRA partners, as mentioned previously in this report.
- In 2021, the DCF IL coordinator developed the routine of providing an “IL 101” overview to all new TRA IL coordinators (or those just wanting a refresh) to go over IL expectations and requirements, key considerations, and primary systems/databases. This has been well-received and has continued into 2022.
- In 2021, a training was developed for the TRA in Region 4 due to large turnover at both the county and regional levels in that part of the state. As part of the training, BYS staff encouraged county and TRA participants to re-envision existing IL supports considering Families First and stressed the importance of making robust services available to youth throughout their time in OHC.
- BYS staff took the lead on providing onboarding training and resources to the new Lac Courte Oreilles IL coordinator. BYS provided the coordinator with immediate connections to other tribal IL programs nearby and the regional TRA point of contact.
- Trainings and one-on-one consultations with counties markedly increased because of the pandemic; video calls made it much more commonplace for DCF IL staff to attend and/or present at partners’ unit meetings and provide TA whereas travel time in-person work did not.
- See also the trainings/presentations noted in the Coordination and Consultation with Public and Private Stakeholders subsection.

DCF does not anticipate any specific training needs from the Children’s Bureau to support program activities.

## 6. Consultation and Coordination with Tribes

The Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA), passed in 2009, specifies the responsibilities of the state and counties regarding Indian children, as well as protections for Indian children under state court jurisdiction. The law can be found at <http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/48/1/028>. DCF and the eleven federally recognized tribes headquartered in Wisconsin collaborate to ensure lines of communication remain open and share the goal of supporting the safety, health, and well-being of tribal children, families, and communities.

As sovereign nations, tribes establish and administer their own codes, policies, procedures, and programming related to child welfare. Because of their sovereignty, their codes, policies, and procedures may differ from state statute and policies – and from each other’s. For example, some tribal codes and standards have a lower threshold than state statute to screen in cases for further assessment. This allows for earlier intervention with their families; in these cases, the tribe is solely responsible for managing the case. In other situations where county/Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS) child welfare professionals have primary case management responsibility, they are statutorily required to invite the child welfare professionals, from the Indian child’s tribe, to participate in case management. County and DMCPS child welfare professionals collaborate with the tribal child welfare professionals to ensure WICWA compliance as well as identify and provide culturally appropriate and effective services and supports to Indian children and families involved in the child welfare system.

Relative to funding, DCF provides limited child and family service (child welfare, childcare, domestic violence) funding directly to tribes through a consolidated Family Services Program with multiple funding streams. In addition to the Family Services Program funding, tribes may also receive funding to operate in-home safety services, Brighter Futures programming, Independent Living programming, kinship care, and home visiting programs. They also have the option to enter into a title IV-E pass through agreement. Currently seven tribes have IV-E pass-through agreements with DCF and can submit quarterly administrative claims. The seven tribes include the following:

- Bad River
- Lac Courte Oreilles
- Lac du Flambeau
- Oneida
- Menominee
- Red Cliff
- Ho-Chunk

### Process Used to Gather Input from Tribes

#### *Consultation with Tribes*

Wisconsin Executive Order #18 outlines requirements for each Wisconsin cabinet agency regarding working and collaborating with tribes on a government-to-government basis.

Furthermore, Wisconsin collaborated with the tribes to update the tribal consultation policy. DCF signed the consultation policy in December 2021. In line with this order and in the spirit of collaboration, DCF is committed to maintaining positive government-to-government relationships with the tribal governments and their child welfare departments. To this end, and as directed by the federal Administration for Children and Families, DCF developed a policy committing the department to good faith negotiations with tribes and tribal consortia on child and family-related issues. This was done in consultation with the Intertribal Child Welfare (ICW) Committee and can be found in informational memo 2015-03 at

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/memos/2015-03i.pdf>

DCF has several ways in which it executes its policy to work alongside tribes. The primary method by which it does so is via annual consultation sessions where DCF leadership convenes with tribal leaders. Parties jointly develop the agenda and, broadly, focus on the addressing issues or concerns regarding department policies, implementation plans, services, and challenges. The annual consultation provides a venue for DCF to enhance our overall relationship with tribes and identify actions that will improve conditions of and services for American Indian children and families. The 2022 DCF/Tribal Consultation was held on May 10<sup>th</sup>: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/tribalaffairs/consultation>

Aside from annual consultation meetings, DCF staff also consult with tribes via bimonthly ICW Committee meetings, which include the DCF tribal affairs specialist, tribal liaison, and division leadership, as well as tribal child welfare directors and attorneys. The ICW directors or designee are also invited to participate and serve on committees and workgroups established by the DCF as projects and tasks require. Most recently, tribal staff have been critical in assisting with reviewing and revising the statewide permanency plan, safety threats, and the safety assessment process. Given their unique opportunity to work with many counties around the state, tribal child welfare staff are positioned to provide feedback on state-wide practice.

The contact list for tribal officials is available at <http://witribes.wi.gov/docview.asp?docid=19085&locid=57>

A list of ICW directors is available at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/wicwa/wifedrectribes.pdf>

### *Tribal Foster Parent Recruitment*

In addition to the consultation opportunities described above, DCF initiated a tribal foster care recruitment campaign in 2017 with the intent to address the need for American Indian foster homes state-wide. Foster care coordinators from all eleven federally recognized tribes in Wisconsin were invited to assist in the development of campaign materials targeted to recruit American Indian foster homes.

## Ongoing coordination and collaboration with tribes in the implementation and assessment of the CFSP/ APSR

The bi-monthly ICW Committee meetings are crucial to DCF's ongoing coordination and collaboration with tribes. This group broadly discusses child welfare-related issues, including but not limited to policy and procedure changes and development. For the first time since the 2020 pandemic, these meetings will move from a virtual format to an in-person hybrid format in June 2022. Travel costs can create a barrier to tribal participation. To address this barrier, DCF will resume covering hotel costs and reimbursing other travel related expenses.

In addition to the large group, DCF, tribal child welfare, and legal staff and professionals from related organizations (e.g., Children's Court Improvement Program) comprise the Tribal/State Child Welfare Policy & Law (PALS) Workgroup; this group meets upon request of the ICW Committee and focuses on policy and legal issues, including:

- Interpretation of and answers to questions related to ICWA and WICWA;
- The relationship between Wisconsin's infant relinquishment law and the Indian Child Welfare Act;
- Notification of tribes in voluntary child custody proceedings;
- The intersection of tribal authority to perform child welfare functions and county responsibility under state statute;
- Input on the DCF strategic planning process and issues related to FFPSA implementation
- Potential program and policy implementation or changes;
- Legislative updates;
- WICWA compliance;
- County compliance with state standards and policies;
- Independent living services; and,
- Youth justice Issues.

## Case Review System and WI Tribes

For Circuit Court cases, where WICWA and ICWA apply, the tribe is a legal party to the case and maintains the right to participate at all reviews. County agencies must provide notice of the reviews to the Indian child's tribe(s) and invite them to participate in the review process. If the review occurs at a court hearing, the court must also send notice of the review to the tribe. The tribe does have the right to decide on their level of participation and that can vary, depending on the tribe's capacity and resources.

For Tribal Court cases, each tribe will have their own laws, policies, and procedures to guide their review system. As sovereign nations, they have the authority to develop a system that works best for their community. State and county agencies do not have a role in these reviews and have no regulatory authority over another sovereign.

## Compliance with ICWA in Consultation with Tribes

The codification of the federal Indian Child Welfare Act into state statute was an important step to improving ICWA compliance in Wisconsin. After a four-year effort that included considerable discussion and negotiation, 2009 Wisconsin Act 94 passed unanimously in the Wisconsin Legislature and codified the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA). The process of developing and passing the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act is shown in a following documentary video available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCLUbS4FxWo>.

Following the codification of WICWA, DCF worked with WCWPDS to develop the “Case Practice with American Indian Tribes” training. This training reviews the reason and legislative intent of the Indian Child Welfare Act, how child welfare professionals shall comply with WICWA, and important considerations related to tribal culture and working effectively with tribal families. The training was since updated to include eWiSACWIS documentation and 2016 ICWA Regulation requirements. The re-designed curriculum was piloted in June 2018 with follow up training that same month.

DCF also collaborated with WCWPDS in 2016 to develop an online training resource for county child welfare professionals that provides a basic understanding of ICWA elements such as active efforts, notification, and more, as well as direction on how to document such information in eWiSACWIS. After being piloted in seven different counties and all 11 tribes, the training was finalized and published January 2018. It can be accessed anytime through WCWPDS online at [https://media.wcwpds.wisc.edu/foundation/WICWA\\_Online\\_Resource/](https://media.wcwpds.wisc.edu/foundation/WICWA_Online_Resource/).

DCF also collaborated with WCWPDS in 2020 to revise several pre-service training modules. The revisions incorporate WICWA and cultural considerations into the online training new workers take upon entering the child welfare field. This will empower new child welfare professionals to start their career with an understanding of the importance of partnering with tribes when working and Indian child.

In addition to these specific trainings, DCF staff also offer ongoing and as needed technical assistance and desk guides to aid child welfare professionals’ efforts and compliance. These desk guides consist of the following:

- A Child Welfare Practitioner’s Guide for Meeting the WICWA Active Efforts Requirement - <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/464.pdf>
- WICWA eWiSACWIS Desk Aid - <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/423.pdf>

## Chafee Foster Care and Independence Act/Educational and Training Vouchers (Tribal)

See the Chafee Foster Care Independence and Education and Training Vouchers Program Section prior to this section, pages 159-160 for information relating to Tribal Consultation, eligibility for benefits and services, and ensuring fair and equitable treatment for American Indian youth under the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act and ETV.

## **Exchange Copies of the APSR**

DCF will inform the ICW Committee of the publication of our annual APSR and provide electronic access to the final report.



## Section D CAPTA Requirements and Updates

### 2022 Annual CAPTA Report

*Substantive changes, if any, to state law or regulations that could affect the state's eligibility for the CAPTA State Grant*

Legislation was passed in 2021 and that went into effect on May 23, 2021, related to good faith immunity. [2021 Wisconsin Act 41](#) updated state law to conform with the amendments to section 106(b)(2)(B)(vii) of CAPTA to provide immunity from civil and criminal liability for people who make good-faith child abuse or neglect reports or who provide information or assistance, including medical evaluations or consultations, in connection with a report, investigation, or legal intervention pursuant to a good-faith report of child abuse or neglect.

During the last year, no new substantive changes to state law or regulation were made that would affect the state's CAPTA grant eligibility.

*Significant changes from the state's previously approved CAPTA plan*

There have been no significant changes from the state's previously approved CAPTA plan in how the state proposes to use funds to support the 14 program areas enumerated in CAPTA.

*How CAPTA Funds Used*

In the last year, DCF has continued to support and expand the Parents Supporting Parents program. This initiative is part of Wisconsin's PIP and is shaped by the department's goal to comprehensively and systematically incorporate the voices of those who experienced the child welfare system. This initiative is further described in Objective 3.4 of Section 3.

DCF was also able to use funds to support a collaboration to support work with the UW-Milwaukee School of Social Work to analyze who, when, and how families became co-involved with local Family Foundations Home Visiting (FFHV) programs and local child protective service agencies and how outcomes of families involved in child welfare vary based on whether they received home visiting services. The key evaluation questions included the following:

- What are the patterns of child welfare involvement among families enrolled to receive FFHV services?
- Are co-involved families different than other families in home visiting?
- Are co-involved families different than other child welfare families?

Generally the analysis determined that families involved in the child welfare system are a good fit for primary and secondary prevention efforts, like home visiting programs. DCF continues to utilize this evaluation and analysis in effort to inform our prevention planning and support with families.

### *Supplemental CAPTA Funding (American Rescue Plan)*

DCF will use supplemental funding to support the purposes of the CAPTA act with an emphasis on plans of safe care.

Additional uses of CAPTA funds in FFY 2022 consistent with the purpose of CAPTA include the following.

#### *Wisconsin Act 78 and Systems Change Review*

CAPTA funds continue to support the Wisconsin Systems Change Review process that is detailed in the “Efforts to Track and Prevent Child Maltreatment Deaths” section of the APSR on page 147.

#### *Wisconsin Child Welfare Model for Practice*

CAPTA Funds are used to support the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System and its role in implementing the Child Welfare Model for Practice. This model is available at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/model>.

#### *Multi-Disciplinary Outreach, Consultation, and Coordination*

In addition to the initiatives listed on the following pages, review the collaboration section that begins on page 10 for additional information about DCF’s many collaborations over the last year.

#### *CPS and Law Enforcement Agencies*

DCF continues to be a member of the Wisconsin Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (WIDEC) and the DEC Steering Committee. WIDEC is a multidisciplinary partnership that assists communities in assessing service needs, coordinating efforts, and keeping children safe and free from exposure to dangerous drug environments. Efforts are focused on assisting with training development and sharing resources. DEC efforts in Wisconsin exist on three levels - county/tribal, state, and national. As a member of the DEC Steering Committee, DCF collaborates with partners from local, state, and federal agencies, including child protective services, sheriff and police departments, district attorney offices, prevention services, law enforcement, health departments, American Family Children’s Hospital, the WI Department of Justice, WI Department of Health Services, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The WIDEC supports local DEC programs to better serve the children in Wisconsin by expanding DEC resources and supports, offering basic DEC training, and providing an annual DEC conference. In addition to serving as a Steering Committee member, DCF allocates CAPTA funding to support the conference each year. The DEC Steering Committee organizes the statewide conference where local DEC programs are formally recognized. National and state experts are brought in to educate Wisconsin on current issues and promising practices.

#### *CPS and Child Abuse Prevention*

DCF serves as a member of the Child Abuse Prevention Month workgroup; this is in partnership with the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board (CANPB) and the Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin program through Children’s Hospital. In April 2022, Wisconsin underwent efforts to

transform Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month into Family Strengthening Month began, and the [2022 Family Strengthening Month Toolkit](#) was developed to provide resources for counties, ideas of how to promote the month, and local strategies to address prevention. A governor's proclamation recognizing April as Family Strengthening Month was also issued.

#### *Together for Children Conference*

CAPTA funding continues to support the Together for Children Conference, the annual Wisconsin child abuse and neglect prevention conference. The conference, which DCF regularly sponsors and helps plan, strives to improve prevention, treatment, investigation, and prosecution of child abuse and neglect by providing training that addresses emerging issues and increases the knowledge and skills of attendees. A virtual conference was held in April 2022 that focused on improving prevention, treatment, investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect by providing knowledge and skills to address emerging issues, research questions and public policy changes in child welfare and child protection. Specifically in the April 2022 conference, DCF lead a panel session highlighting the department's efforts to elevate, amplify, and leverage lived experience expertise of parents and caregivers who had received child welfare services in system improvement efforts. More information is available at <https://childrenswi.org/-/media/chwlibrary/files/childrens-and-the-community/pcaw/together-for-children-brochure.pdf>.

#### *CPS and Domestic Abuse Programs*

There is a well-established overlap between domestic abuse and the maltreatment of children both in the literature and in practice experience in Wisconsin. Since 2018, DCF supported development of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between counties and domestic abuse programs to permanently elevate collaboration between child protective services agencies and domestic abuse programs. Eleven counties have completed this initiative since 2018: Adams, Dunn, Fond du Lac, Iron, Lacrosse, Lincoln, Outagamie, Portage, Rock, Washington, and Wood .

Each county created year-long calendars to implement the specific tasks and deliverables identified in the MOU's. Some of the common elements in each MOU include:

- Commitment to cross-training, with specific training topics identified;
- Identification of a process and hierarchy of persons to be involved in "conflict resolution" situations between the agencies;
- Process for reporting of child abuse and neglect by the domestic abuse agency;
- Joint referral protocols between the agencies;
- Clear and specific recognition of relevant confidentiality laws and requirements, how they will affect collaborative work, and how potential problems may be addressed; and,
- Plan for sustaining the on-going relationship, including the identification of agency liaisons or an on-going committee.

Thus far, participating agencies' feedback is overwhelmingly positive. They state that working relationships are stronger as a result and that they follow the MOU. DCF continues to encourage

other counties to create a similar MOU specific to their community's needs and collaborative relationships. To help with the process, DCF has created a resource guide on the creation of an MOU. In partnership with End Abuse WI, DCF provides opportunities to receive onsite technical assistance in developing MOU's between CPS and Domestic Abuse Programs.

DCF is also involved in a multidisciplinary workgroup to navigate a holistic response where domestic violence and child welfare intersect to interrupt cycles of violence. One key focus of the workgroup will be to update DCF's 2010 publication, *Domestic Violence Handbook for Wisconsin Child Protective Services Workers*. The workgroup seeks to review and update this handbook through accomplishing the following tasks:

- Use more inclusive language (e.g., non-binary),
- Utilize a racial justice lens that addresses disparities in how Black, Indigenous or People of Color (BIPOC) survivors experience systems,
- Make the handbook more accessible and straightforward for child welfare professionals,
- Consider how to gather updated information from families with lived experience to inform additional improvements.

The revised handbook will be shared with stakeholders and serve as a resource for professionals in supporting families and will be introduced in the updated CPS/DV Pre-Service on-line new child welfare training that is also being revised in partnership with End Abuse WI.

#### *CPS and Health Care Professionals*

The Department of Children and Families also uses CAPTA funding to support the Wisconsin Child Abuse Network (WI CAN), an inter-disciplinary public-private partnership formed in 2009 and dedicated to improving the accuracy of child abuse investigations. It is led by representatives of The Medical College of Wisconsin; Child Advocacy Centers of Wisconsin; Children's Hospital of Wisconsin; the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault; the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board; and the Departments of Children and Families, Health Services, and Justice.

WI CAN works to improve interagency responses to child maltreatment through ongoing education and a web-based peer review network. It connects professionals statewide to medical expertise to improve access to medical input in child maltreatment investigations.

The WI CAN Educational Series consists of statewide, web-based lectures and case-based discussions on various topics related to child maltreatment delivered and led by subject matter experts. The target audience consists of physicians, advanced practice providers, nurses, other allied health professionals, law enforcement officials, social workers, and attorneys. The goal of the educational series is to help health care professionals improve their recognition of child maltreatment and management of cases when child maltreatment is a concern. Webinars are held on the third Friday of each month. DCF continues to support the effort through the WI CAN Educational Series. WI-CAN established a website, which can be viewed at <http://www.wichildabusenetwork.org/>.

### *Support for Legal Preparation and Representation*

DCF is using IV-E funding for this effort, information on DCF efforts can be found on page 122 of this report.

### *CPS and Tribal Child Welfare Agencies*

Tribal coordination efforts are described in several places of this report, the most detailed description is in the Consultation and Coordination with Tribes Section that begins on page 178.

### *CPS and the Judicial System*

Please see the Collaboration Section for an update on DCF's collaborative efforts with the judicial system starting on pages 20-22 as well as the case review system descriptions for Items 21-24 beginning on page 56.

### *Citizen Review Panels*

Citizen Review Panels are also supported through Wisconsin's CAPTA. They are described in detail in the collaboration section on page 19 and a link is provided for all reports.

### *Update on the state's continued efforts to support and address the needs of substance-exposed infants*

The following section describes the efforts to support and address the needs of infants born that are identified as being affected by substance abuse or withdrawal symptoms resulting from prenatal drug exposure, or a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Information follows about how the state is following requirements of CAPTA that were included as amendments to the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA). These efforts include:

- Any changes made to policy or practice and/or lessons learned from implementation of plans of safe care.
- Information on the current monitoring processes for plans of safe care to determine whether and in what manner local entities provide referrals to and delivery of appropriate services for substance-exposed and affected family members and caregivers.
- Processes for ongoing monitoring of the plans of safe care.
- Challenges in implementing the provisions of CARA and any technical assistance the state has determined is needed to remove or mediate those challenges.

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## OVERVIEW OF POLICY AND PRACTICE

Effective June 25, 2004, DCF issued an addendum, "Assessing the Safety of Drug Affected Infants," to the Child Protective Services Standards. This policy required Wisconsin CPS agencies to develop a plan of safe care for an infant born and identified as being affected by illegal substance abuse or withdrawal symptoms. The policy includes procedural instructions, directing CPS agencies to screen in these reports for child welfare services rather than child protective services cases, unless the report is accompanied by allegations of abuse or neglect. The policy also references section 46.238 of Wis. Stats., which states the county department shall offer to provide appropriate services and treatment to the child and the child's mother. In

compliance with federal laws, DCF has policies and procedures in place to address the needs of drug-affected infants. In April 2014, 2013 Wisconsin Act 260 was enacted, bringing state statutes in compliance with CAPTA requirements regarding the evaluation of infants for fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) and the requirement that CPS agencies offer to provide, or make arrangements for, the provisions of those services and treatment to the infant and the infant's mother.

The legislation requires a physician to evaluate an infant if there is a serious risk that an infant has FASD. If FASD is diagnosed, the physician is required to report that diagnosis to the CPS agency. In addition, Wis. Stat. s.146.0255 requires health care providers of substance-exposed infants to notify CPS of the infants' condition. The CPS agency is required to offer, provide, or arrange for the provision of services and treatment for the infant and the infant's mother.

The Child Protective Services Access, Initial Assessment Standards, and Safety Intervention Standards issued by DCF include requirements and guidance regarding CPS agencies' responsibility for the development, monitoring, and follow-up of a plan of safe care (safety plan) for a drug-affected infant or an infant with FASD known to the child welfare system. At this time, DCF has not identified any technical assistance required to improve practice and implementation to address the needs of drug affected infants.

Wisconsin's Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems (eWiSACWIS) allows for data collection related to the monitoring of the safe plan of care for families involved in the state child welfare system. eWiSACWIS allows agencies and the state to gather information documented in the case record (i.e., Access/Intake Report and Safety Plan) as to the reason why the case is open and service type categories identified for the families. Inclusive of CARA monitoring requirements, DCF conducted case reviews of the state's Access, Initial Assessment, and Ongoing Services practices. Results of these reviews, including cases which presented with concerns related to caregiver substance misuse, are being used to inform system improvements in the areas of CPS reporting, including refinements to the state's mandated reporter training, Initial Assessment practices, and Safety Assessment and Planning decision-making.

In addition, two executive orders relate to this important issue. The first, Governor's Executive Order #214 issued in September 2016, mandated the formation of a Governor's Task Force on Opioid Abuse and the formation of Steering Committees by several state agencies. Soon thereafter, Governor's Executive Order #273 on January 19, 2018, directed DCF to improve documentation in the eWiSACWIS system about substance use issues in child welfare cases.

Related to Executive Order #273, in a memorandum dated February 20, 2018, DCF informed local child welfare agencies of the changes that had been made to eWiSACWIS to improve documentation of substance use issues in child welfare cases. When removing a child from the home, one or more of sixteen unique reasons for the child's removal from the home are required to be documented in eWiSACWIS, which are much like the descriptions chosen when adding maltreatment allegations. Prior to the changes, caregiver substance use was not included as

reference values to be selected to describe the result(s) of or condition(s) associated with an allegation of maltreatment. The expectations set forth in the memorandum have been incorporated into the Child Protective Services Access, Initial Assessment Standards, and Safety Intervention Standards issued by DCF

Maltreatment descriptions provide further information about allegations and can help convey the underlying challenges for families. Using this information, DCF updated the description reference values that can be documented as part of the Descriptions page to both enhance and streamline this list of values to improve the availability and quality of the resulting data. In addition, two new descriptions better capture the influence of alcohol and drug use in relationship to an allegation of maltreatment. These added descriptions include Caregiver Alcohol Abuse and Caregiver Drug Abuse. Lack of Medical Care was also added to encompass multiple aspects of medical neglect as a description of a result of the neglect of a child or infant.

The removal reasons are documented in eWiSACWIS at the point of a child's placement in out-of-home care and are specific to the federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) required data elements and cannot be altered. In order to assist agencies with the selection of these reasons, definitions are now provided in eWiSACWIS under the resources flare on the removal address and reasons page and on the Child Welfare Worker Portal at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/ongoing/ohc>. DCF strongly encourages child welfare staff to select the main maltreatment allegation (i.e., neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse) and, where applicable, also select the underlying factor(s) that may have contributed to the child's removal (i.e., caretaker alcohol abuse, caretaker drug abuse, inadequate housing, incarceration of caretaker(s)).

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#### UPDATES TO PRACTICE

State legislation passed in April 2018, 2017 Act 261 and 2017 Act 262, provide additional supports to address the issue of substance use disorder. Specifically, these bills direct and provide funding to DCF to establish opioid-related training for child welfare professionals, provide grants for youth prevention programs, and provide grants for Family Drug Treatment Courts. DCF has implemented these efforts.

In addition, in 2019 DCF updated procedures and practices pertaining to drug-affected infants into DCF's child welfare standards to eliminate language perceived to be ambiguous and to clarify state expectations around the handling of these cases. DCF also collaborated with the University of Wisconsin's Child Welfare Professional Development System to develop an online training addressing the critical intersect between alcohol and other substance use disorders and child welfare. This training went live in 2020 and is available at <https://wcpds.wisc.edu/web-based-courses/substance-use-in-child-welfare/>.

Case review and monitoring results are being used to inform refinements to the state's safety assessment decision-making model, including the assessment factors that are associated with caregiver substance misuse and child vulnerability. Resulting changes to the model, as well as



to those related to the state’s eWiSACWIS and professional development system began in June 2022 and will occur iteratively over the next two years.

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### MONITORING PLANS OF SAFE CARE

As a county-administered state, monitoring of processes of plans of safe care continues to be a function that county agencies perform consistent with policy and training support from the state. This function includes determining whether and in what manner local entities provide referrals to, and delivery of, appropriate services for substance-exposed infants and affected family members and caregivers. As noted above, DCF conducts case reviews of the state’s Access, Initial Assessment, and Ongoing Services practices. These reviews include documentation contained in our state’s eWiSAWIS system related to plans of safe care for infants and their families served by the state’s local CPS agencies. Results of these reviews, including cases which presented with concerns related to caregiver substance misuse, are being used to inform system improvements in the areas of CPS reporting, including refinements to the state’s mandated reporter training, Initial Assessment practices, and Safety Assessment and Planning decision-making.

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### CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTATION

As noted throughout this report, the ability to prescribe policy can be challenging. This is especially true in a county-administered, state-supervised state like Wisconsin where responses rely even more heavily on individual county, community, family, and child circumstances. Given these challenges, DCF continues to prioritize high-quality and comprehensive collaboration with systems partners and stakeholders, especially the voices of those with lived experience. The newly hired lived experience coordinator will be an important resource for improving collaboration in this work.

#### *Use of CQI*

Wisconsin completes regular case record reviews related to child protective services practices, including those related to substance exposed infants, and uses the results of these reviews to analyze case practice trends. This analysis is used by DSP to inform discussions related practice improvement with the state’s Child Welfare Continuous Quality Improvement Advisory Committee and other key system partners.

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### CHILDREN’S BUREAU (CB) SITE VISIT

The state has not participated in a Children’s Bureau site visit regarding the development of plans of safe care for infants born and identified as being affected by substance abuse or withdrawal symptoms resulting from prenatal drug exposure, or a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

#### *Supplemental CAPTA Funding – American Rescue Plan*

DCF will deploy new CAPTA resources to support ongoing efforts related to plans of safe care and other areas of CAPTA programming that align with Wisconsin’s Putting Families First approach. Current initiatives under consideration for deployment of supplemental CAPTA



funding, which include infants and their families subject to CARA and who are opened for ongoing services within a local CPS agency, are to use funds, such as those provided as part of Wisconsin's TSSF program, to address both the concrete/basic needs that directly and immediately affect child safety, as well as to promote timely access to formal treatment services needs by the family.

*CAPTA Contact Information*

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## Section E - Targeted Plans with the 2022 APSR

See below for transmittal of plans within APSR and those provided as separate documents and included in the June 30, 2022, transmittal e-mail. For copies of these documents, please submit a request to [DCFCFSR@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DCFCFSR@wisconsin.gov).

### Health Care Oversight Plan

All children placed in out-of-home care through a court order or voluntary placement agreement are eligible to receive Foster Care Medicaid (Title XIX). Children who have an adoption assistance or subsidized guardianship agreement continue to be eligible for Title XIX Medicaid until their agreement expires. Within 30 days of the child's placement into foster care, they are required to have a medical and dental examination in accordance with the schedule of the HealthCheck program. HealthCheck is a Medicaid health care benefit that provides continuous, quality health care for individuals until age 21. HealthCheck exams are scheduled on a regular basis using guidelines developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Additionally, DCF and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) work collaboratively to improve the quality, access, and timeliness of health care services to children and youth in out-of-home care through the implementation of a Medicaid medical home service delivery model called Care4Kids. Since its inception, Care4Kids' staffing model has utilized two coordinators: a health care coordinator and an outreach coordinator. Based on internal and external stakeholder feedback a single care coordinator model was proposed. After a successful pilot of a single care coordinator model, it was approved for this staffing model to be reflected in the CY22 contract.

In 2021 MetaStar Inc., a quality improvement organization, completed an independent evaluation of managed care organization (MCO) compliance with federal Medicaid managed care regulations. Since last year's review, Care4Kids made improvements in completing comprehensive care plans. Care4Kids exhibits strengths in the following areas:

- Completion and comprehensiveness of the OHC Health Screens (23% increase from previous year)
- Timeliness of initial HealthCheck assessments (6.8% increase from previous year)
- Follow through of coordination the service needs identified during the Initial HealthCheck assessment (remained unchanged from previous review, 93.2%)
- Timeliness of care plans (4.5% increase from previous year)

Care4Kids is required to report on 15 quality measures that primarily focus on process objectives that track timely access to care and service utilization, measures of clinical prevention services, and access to needed mental health services including oversight of psychotropic medications.

Quality Measure 15: Psychotropic Medication Measure represents children who have been newly identified as taking four or more psychotropic medications during the reporting period. This select population benefits from an in depth case review by the child's assigned care team. The polypharmacy review is expected to take place within 60 days of Care4Kids being notified of the child's psychotropic medication count by the Department of Health Services (DHS). Polypharmacy Review completion rates were 100% this year.

The structure of these reviews is based on a quaternary tier review process. This tiered approach allows for the appropriate level of review and support mechanisms to be provided to a child based upon their level of need. The difference between Tiers 1 through 4 is primarily related to intensity and the number of individuals involved in the review process. For children who are prescribed four or more psychotropic medications and continue to demonstrate difficulties within their home, school, etc. a 45 minute in-person tier 4 review with stakeholder professionals involved in the care of the child occurs. At any time, any stakeholder can request this level of review for a child outside of those children who meet criteria based upon the operational guide.

DCF's COVID-19 Emergency Rule that granted exceptions to regular well-child physical and dental exams for children in out-of-home care expired on February 12, 2021. DHS has expanded the definition of telehealth in permanent policy and added permanent coverage via telehealth for currently covered services that are functionally equivalent to an in-person visit.

### **Foster and Adoptive Training Update**

- Separately attached to the transmittal email.

### **Disaster Plan Update**

- There are no updates to the state disaster plan as submitted in the 2020-2024 CFSP. Wisconsin was operating under a federal disaster declaration in FY 2022, however, did not update the plan during this time frame. Earlier in this report on page 147, efforts supported by federal disaster relief are described.

### **Training Plan**

- Separately attached to this transmittal email.

## Section F: Statistical and Supporting Information

### CAPTA Annual Data Report Items

This section provides annual updates to the CAPTA Annual State Report as required in the 2022 APSR instructions.

#### *Child Welfare Workforce Data*

**Table 40**

<i>Target Group</i>	<i>Primary Employees</i>	<i>All Employees</i>
Child Protective Services (CPS)	1550	4429
Child Welfare	588	763
Youth Justice (YJ)	492	1163
<b>2020 Worker Total</b>	<b>2,630</b>	<b>6,355</b>

**Table 41**

<i>Function</i>	<i>Primary Employees</i>	<i>All Employees</i>
CPS Access	124	1469
CPS Initial Assessment	446	1115
CPS Ongoing	702	1386
CPS Supervisor	278	459
Foster Care Coordinator	259	491
Case Aide/Management	233	233
YJ Worker	506	895
YJ Supervisor	82	268
<b>2020 Worker Total</b>	<b>2,630*</b>	<b>6355*</b>

\*These numbers are based on projections informed by data collected by the WCWPDS Online Learning Management System. Not all staff represented are assigned to child welfare related functions as an FTE, particularly in medium and smaller sized counties; in these jurisdictions some or all of child welfare staff also perform other human or social service functions not specific to child welfare. Individual professionals may also provide more than one function within the child welfare service array.

#### *Information on Child Protective Services Workforce*

Wisconsin is a state-supervised, county-operated child welfare system for all counties other than Milwaukee where the state administers the child welfare system through the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services. As a result, the processes to recruit, hire, and make case

assignments are based on agency specific human resource policies and procedures. The Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services must follow the process outlined by the Wisconsin Office of State Employee Relations.

Wisconsin child welfare professionals are not required to have a social work degree and have degrees from a variety of fields. To have the title "Social Worker" in Wisconsin, staff must hold a valid certification through the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services.

As in the past, Wisconsin does not track statewide data on the supervisor to worker ratio, staff turnover or vacancy rates, or caseload size for the balance of the state outside of Milwaukee County. DCF did contract with ICF, Inc. to conduct a workload study to better understand workforce needs at the local level. Please see the Monthly Caseworker Visits section on page 133 for more details on the workload study. As a county-administered state, there are no statutory requirements and CPS Practice Standards do not include requirements or guidance regarding the agencies' staff ratios, caseloads, or other workload management. Within the county-administered child welfare system, the size, and population of each county impacts the local agency's staffing needs and caseload ratios.

Duties for the local child welfare workforce also vary based on the needs of the agency and community. For example, in a smaller county, the supervisors, social worker, caseworker, and/or other paraprofessional staff are likely to have other child welfare program responsibilities in addition to CPS duties. Workers in a larger county may be assigned to one specific function within the local agency, rather than assume responsibilities across the entire scope of child welfare and/or human service areas.

In Milwaukee County, where child welfare services are administered by DCF through DMCPDS, a performance monitoring metric per child has been established for Contracted Case Management Agencies where at least 65% of child welfare professionals will have 15 children or fewer on their caseload. Caseload size also depends on the acuity of concerns within the family being served and team composition. The ratio of supervisors to child welfare professionals is either 1:6 or 1:8 depending upon the supervision model, e.g. clinical or coaching.

#### *Demographic Information of the Workforce*

WCWPDS collects a wide range of information for the workforce which includes the information in the screenshot on the following page.

## Qualtrics Form Data

<b>Are you required to complete Basic Intake Worker training?:</b> No	<b>Do you perform after hours/on-call duties that require you to attend child welfare training?:</b> No
<b>Birth to Three:</b> Yes	<b>CLTS:</b> Yes
<b>CPS Access:</b> No	<b>CPS Initial Assessment:</b> No
<b>CPS On-going:</b> No	<b>CPS Supervisor/Manager (Access, Initial Assessment, On-going):</b> Yes
<b>Foster Care Coordinator:</b> No	<b>Foster Care Supervisor/Manager:</b> No
<b>Home Visitor Supervisor:</b> No	<b>Home Visitor Worker:</b> No
<b>ICW:</b> No	<b>Support Staff:</b> No
<b>Youth Justice Supervisor/Manager:</b> Yes	<b>Youth Justice Worker:</b> No
<b>Kinship Care Coordinator:</b> No	<b>4E Stipend Program:</b> No
<b>Certified Licensed SW in WI:</b> Yes	<b>Employer Name:</b> Crawford County Health & Human Services
<b>Highest Education Level:</b> Bachelors	<b>Highest Social Work Degree:</b> BSW
<b>Sex:</b> Male	<b>Year of Birth:</b> 1971
<b>Form Filled - dropdown:</b> Yes	<b>Are you a Pre-Adoptive Parent?:</b> No

DCF, in partnership with the University of Wisconsin, has collected additional information about the child welfare workforce. As previously mentioned, DCF has collected this additional workforce data using flash surveys. For example, the Child Welfare and Youth Justice Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Workforce Surveys cover a wide range of topics pertaining to case workers and supervisors in Wisconsin. Survey responses go to centralized database managed by University of Wisconsin-Madison Survey Center (UWSC), where they are aggregated and kept confidential.

These flash surveys are intended to be very brief. They are designed to gauge:

- Workforce knowledge of specific issues or topics
- Professional needs and challenges
- Strengths and gaps in practice and policy areas

The purpose of these flash surveys was to identify:

- Strengths and challenges faced by the child welfare/youth justice workforce in Wisconsin
- Ensure this information is representative of the workforce as a whole

The input and feedback helped DCF:

- Identify and refine priorities
- Influence policy development and implementation efforts
- Provide input into developing other initiatives to improve the child welfare system.

In June and July 2020, a flash survey was administered by UWSC under the direction DCF. Questions were designed to assess child welfare professional satisfaction based on workload, other job stressors, intention to stay in current job and field, colleague, supervisor, and agency support, and satisfaction in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. DCF created a subcommittee to review the survey results and developed recommendations for further consideration. DCF continues to evaluate and prioritize the recommendations with the focus on increasing professional time with families. You can find the flash survey Executive Summary and Report at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cqi/surveys>.

### *Youth Justice Transfer*

The CAPTA Amendments of 2003 require states, to the extent possible, to collect information on children under the care of the state child protective services (CPS) system who are transferred to the custody of the state youth justice system. In Wisconsin, under the supervision of the Department of Children and Families (DCF), county human service departments and DMCPs operate the Child Protective Services (CPS) program. County human service departments also typically operate community-based youth justice functions, although some youth justice programs are attached to courts. In most counties, child welfare professionals carry a mix of CPS and youth justice cases. Beginning in January 2016, DCF is now responsible for oversight of the community-based youth justice system. The Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) retained responsibility for juvenile correctional facilities as well as aftercare programs for certain juvenile offenders.

Wisconsin counties are required to use the eWiSACWIS system to record all activity for child protective services cases. DCF is in the process of developing a youth-specific case management functionality in eWiSACWIS, which will be used for collecting and tracking all youth system activity including the data that derives from the Youth Assessment Screening Instrument (YASI). Currently counties are required to record youth intake and referrals with eWiSACWIS. DCF is in the process of moving toward a system that will track all youth justice program activity. The only youth justice placements counties are required to record in eWiSACWIS are non-secure placements in settings where the placements are subject to federal Title IV-E and AFCARS reporting requirements.

For a child to transfer from the custody of the state child protection system to the custody of the state youth justice correctional system, the child would have to be placed in a juvenile correctional facility after having a history of out-of-home placements in an open CPS case. Most of the children placed in DOC custody have delinquency activity and youth justice-related services at the county level before being transferred from the county agency to juvenile correctional facilities.

To calculate an estimated number of children under the care of the CPS system who transferred into the custody of the state youth justice system, eWiSACWIS records for Calendar Year 2021 were queried to identify children who were placed in a juvenile correctional facility (using the service ending reason in eWiSACWIS) after having been in out-of-home placement in an open

CPS family case. This method used for the prior CFSP annual update identified 18 children meeting the transfer criteria.

### **Education Training Voucher**

As per APSR PI, please see Children's Bureau Attachment D of this report.



## Adoption Disruptions and Dissolutions

There were 27 international adoptions finalized in fiscal year 2021. Data for Federal Fiscal Year 2021 of disruptions and dissolutions follows.

Between October 1, 2020, and September 30, 2021, six internationally adopted children entered OHC. Of these six children, zero adoptions dissolved.

<b>Country of Birth</b>	<b>Number of children</b>
China	1
Guatemala	1
Haiti	1
Nepal	1
Russia	1
Ukraine	1
<b>Adoption Agency</b>	
Unknown	6
<b>Primary Reason for disruption</b>	
Delinquency/Runaway	1
Aggression and violence towards family	3
Parents Unwilling/Unable	1
Mental Health/Substance Abuse Treatment	1
<b>Plans for the child</b>	
Reunification	3
Reunified	3
Age Out (OPPLA)	1 *concurrent plan
Adoption	1 *concurrent plan

There were six disrupted international adoptions in federal fiscal year 2021:

- The first disruption occurred on October 7, 2020, when the child was placed in a secure inpatient treatment facility to address violent behaviors and mental health needs that the parents could not address in the home. This child was adopted at the age of five from Haiti through an unknown agency. Upon discharge from the treatment facility, the goal for the child is reunification, with a concurrent plan of adoption.
- The second disruption occurred on March 19, 2020, after the adoptive family requested placement due to the child's violent behaviors toward family members. The child was removed from the home and placed in a residential care facility. The child was adopted at the age of ten from China from an unknown agency. The child reunified on December 9, 2021, upon discharge from the residential care facility.
- The third disruption occurred on April 1, 2021, when a child was placed in a treatment facility to address drug use and aggressive behaviors. The child was adopted at the age

of one from an unknown agency in Russia. The child was reunified on June 23, 2021, and continues to receive in-home services.

- The fourth disruption occurred on June 8, 2021, after the child's father refused to allow the child to return home. The child had previously been staying in a youth shelter but was discharged due to shelter rule violations. The child is now placed in a foster home. The child was adopted before the age of one from an unidentified agency in Guatemala. The plan for the child is reunification.
- The fifth disruption occurred on July 8, 2021, when a child began a 30-day in-patient clinical assessment due to a variety of behavioral disorders manifesting in aggressive behaviors and property damage. The child was adopted from Ukraine at age one through an unknown agency. The child was reunified on August 24, 2021, and continues to receive in-home services.
- The sixth disruption occurred on July 18, 2021, when the child was placed in secure detention after multiple instances of running away and suspected contact with sex traffickers. The child was adopted at age one from an unidentified agency in Nepal. The plan for the child is reunification.

### **Monthly Caseworker Visits**

As per APSR 2022 Program Instruction, DCF will provide this data to the Children's Bureau as required on December 15, 2022.

## **Section G: Financial Information**

### **Payment Limitations – Title IV-B, Subpart 1:**

In FY 2020, Wisconsin did not spend any IV-B subpart 1 funds on child care, foster care maintenance or adoption assistance.

Child Care: \$0

Foster Care Maintenance: \$0

Adoption Assistance: \$0

Non-Federal funds that were expended for foster care maintenance payments in Wisconsin were not used to match title IV-B subpart 1 funds in FY 2005. In FY 20120, Wisconsin did not expend any non-federal funds for foster care maintenance payments that were used to match title IV-B subpart 1 funds, and thus did not exceed the amount of FY 2005 level. Other allocated state and local funds are used for matching purposes. Wisconsin plans to spend less than ten percent of title IV-B, subpart 1 Federal funds for administrative costs (section 424(e) of the Act) in FY 2021.

### **Payment Limitations – Title IV-B, Subpart 2**

Each of the four service categories of PSSF - family preservation, community-based family support, time-limited family reunification, and adoption promotion and support services - had a minimum of 20 percent of the total title IV-B subpart 2 funds allocated to provide services in each category. The amounts allocated to each service category are specified in the CFS-101, Part II. Wisconsin plans to spend less than ten percent of federal funds for both PSSF and monthly caseworker visits under title IV-B, subpart 2 for administrative costs in FY 2021.

Wisconsin's accounting and reporting procedures and processes do not support the classification of child welfare costs financed with state and local county funds into categories that align with subpart 2 programs when comparing FY 2020 costs to the FY 1992 base year.

The Community Aids program in Wisconsin was established in 1980 and provided state and federal funding to counties to use for social, mental health, alcohol/drug abuse, disability, and child welfare services. These funds were distributed to counties in the form of one general unrestricted block grant that could be used for any local social service and child welfare activities. Such services included, at each county's discretion, subpart 2-type services.

As part of the creation of the new Department of Children and Families in 2008, the Community Aids GPR funds were divided into two separate allocations. DCF was provided with \$28,959,400 GPR for child welfare services and the Department of Health Services was allocated GPR for local social services, AODA, developmental disabilities, and mental health services.

In 2021, counties reported spending a total of \$231.3 million on child abuse and neglect services and services for children and families. These expenditures were supported by \$101.1 million in state general purpose revenue fund and federal IV-E, IV-B, and SSBG funds for the Children and Families Allocation to counties to support local child welfare costs. The balance,

\$130.2 million, is local funding. This increase in expenditures from 1992 to 2021 was greater than the change in federal funds received for child welfare services, resulting in the state/local share accounting for a greater proportion of the total expenditures. The portion of these state and local funds used for IV-B subpart 2 services is estimated to be at least \$3.1 million.

Wisconsin does assure that subpart 2 funds provided to the state will not be, and have not been, used to supplant federal or non-federal funds for existing services and activities which promote the purposes of subpart 2.

Wisconsin also funds family support services through programs administered by the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board. Those programs are summarized below.

**Table 44: Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board Programs (SFY 2020)**

Program	Category of Service	Funding	Geographic Distribution	Target Group
Community Based Programs	Prevention/Support Services			
a. Evidence-informed Parent Education	Prevention/Support Services	\$1,245,000	7 funded programs; 4 agencies with MOUs in 27 counties	Universal
b. Abusive head trauma prevention	Prevention/Support Services	\$175,000	4 programs in 3 counties	Universal (for all new births)
c. Child Sexual Abuse Prevention	Prevention/Support Services	\$200,000	Statewide	Professionals
d. Newborn home visits	Prevention/Support Services	\$75,000	1 program in 1 county	Universal (for all new births)
Professional Development		\$90,000	26 certified trainers and parent co-presenters	Professionals

**Table 45: General data for Community Based Prevention Programs from July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020**

<b>Program</b>	<b># Caregivers</b>	<b># Families</b>	<b># Children</b>	<b># Professionals</b>
Parent Education	514	509	975	139
Parent Education (one-time)	1,570	N/A	788	N/A
Abusive Head Trauma	3,872	3,701		50
Child Sexual Abuse Prevention				312
Protective Factors				1,655
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5,956</b>	<b>4,210</b>	<b>1,763</b>	<b>2,156</b>

Summary of caregivers who participated in Parent Education:

Race/ethnicity: 49% white, 11% African American, 15% Hispanic/Latino, 4% American Indian, 4% Asian, 5% multi-racial, and 12% did not respond or selected preferred not to answer.

Summary of caregivers who participated in Parent Education (for parents who participated in a one-time event):

Race/ethnicity: 66% white, 4% African American, 5% Hispanic/Latino, 2% American Indian, 1% Asian, 1% multi-racial, and 20% did not respond or selected preferred not to answer.

### **State Match Requirement**

The Title IV-B program requires a 25% state match for Subpart 1 and 2 funds. The Chafee program requires a 20% match for the CCFCIP and ETV funds. No match is required for CAPTA funds.

## **Attachment 1 – Kin Navigator Annual Report**

Type	Resource	Detail
Information and Referral	<i>Kinship Navigator Portal</i>	DCF continues to enhance and maintain the <a href="#">Wisconsin Kinship Navigator Portal</a> . The portal is a resource for all of Wisconsin’s relative caregivers, regardless of involvement with the child welfare system. Caregivers are asked a series of questions and based on their answers, they are provided with information about resources and eligibility for state-sponsored services based on their specific caregiving situation. Between October 2020 to December 2021, there have been 1,535 unique visits to the portal.
	<i>Relative Caregiver Guided Search</i>	DCF contracted with United Way – 211 Wisconsin to support the annual maintenance and ongoing updates of the Relative Caregiver Guided Search on their website. The Relative Caregiver Guided Search is a database for caregivers to find local resources based on keywords and specific topics they are interested in. In 2021, there were 309 individual searches made.
	<i>Informational Print Materials</i>	DCF is working to revise and update the six “KinFACTS Information Guides” to help caregivers answer questions about certain topics including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Child Support</a>,</li> <li>• <a href="#">Child Care Options</a>,</li> <li>• <a href="#">Education</a>,</li> <li>• <a href="#">Healthcare Coverage</a>,</li> <li>• <a href="#">Legal Resources</a>, and</li> <li>• <a href="#">Permanency Options</a>.</li> </ul> These are published on the Wisconsin Kinship Navigator Portal and were accessed 251 times from October 2020 to December 2021. A printed booklet of this information is published into a Kinship Navigator Guide and available to caregivers via local agencies who serve relatives.
Caregiver Education	<i>Kinship Navigator Training for Relative Caregivers</i>	The web-based course <a href="#">Kinship Navigator Training for Relative Caregivers</a> , is available to caregivers through the Kinship Navigator Portal, on various pages of DCF’s general website, and through the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS) website. This training seeks to normalize relative caregiver’s complex feelings about their caregiving role and support them by providing information about services and resources available to them. This training was viewed 271 times from October 2020 to December 2021.
	<i>Families Like Mine: Wisconsin Relative Caregivers for</i>	DCF sponsored the 3 <sup>rd</sup> annual <i>Families Like Mine: Wisconsin Relative Caregivers for Children Conference</i> on July 19, 2021. This conference was held virtually and was free for any relative caregiver in Wisconsin to attend. Post-

	<i>Children Conference</i>	<p>conference surveys indicate that 85% of respondents were “satisfied” or “extremely satisfied” with the conference.</p> <p>On May 21, 2022 DCF held the in person 4<sup>th</sup> <i>Annual Families Like Mine: Wisconsin Relative Caregivers for Children Conference</i> for 84 relative caregivers in Wisconsin.</p>
<b>Caregiver Support</b>	<i>Relative Caregiver Support Groups</i>	<p>DCF has continued to fund the development and maintenance of Relative Caregiver Support Groups throughout the state. For FY 2021, 14 agencies were awarded funding, with two agencies receiving a start-up award, 11 agencies receiving a maintenance award, and one agency receiving both. These groups met a total of 125 times and provided support to 1,238 relative caregivers of minor children.</p>
<b>Caseworker Education</b>	<i>Kinship Navigator Training for Caseworkers</i>	<p>The web-based course <a href="#">Kinship Navigator Training for Caseworkers</a>, is available to caseworkers on various pages of DCF’s general website and through the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS) website. This training seeks to highlight the importance of keeping children with their relatives and provide the unique perspectives that relative caregivers have. This training was viewed 89 times from October 2020 to December 2021.</p>
<b>Outreach and Evaluation</b>	<i>Relative Caregiver Stakeholder Group</i>	<p>The Relative Caregiver Stakeholder Group is made up of 19 relative caregivers from various regions in Wisconsin. The members bring various types of caregiving experience and different levels of child welfare system involvement to the group.</p> <p>From October 2020 to December 2021, this group met virtually on a bi-monthly basis to review the KinFACTS Information Guides and provide lived experience feedback on DCF’s Putting Families First approach and “Kin-First” culture.</p>



**Children's Bureau Attachment D – Annual Reporting of Education  
and Training Vouchers**

## Annual Reporting of Education and Training Vouchers Awarded

Name of State/Tribe:

Wisconsin

	Total ETVs Awarded	Number of New ETVs
<u>Final Number</u> : 2020-2021 School Year (July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021)	182	81
2021-2022 School Year* (July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022)	178	69

*\*In some cases this might be an estimated number since the APSR is due on June 30<sup>th</sup>, the last day of the school year.*