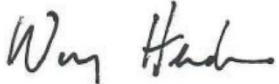


To: DCF/DMCPS Administrator  
DCF Area Administrators  
Child Placing Agency Directors  
Child Welfare Agency Directors  
County Departments of Community Programs Directors  
County Departments of Human Services Directors  
County Departments of Social Services Directors  
Group Home Providers  
Tribal Social Service/Indian Child Welfare Directors  
Private Child Placing Agencies  
Residential Care Center Providers  
Shelter Care Providers  
Tribal Chairpersons

From: Wendy Henderson  
Division Administrator 

Re: **Initial Assessment Case Record Review Results and Next Step**

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this memo is to provide local Child Protective Service (CPS) directors, managers, supervisors and staff with a summary of the results from the Initial Assessment Case Record Review completed for the calendar years of 2019 and 2020 and to provide important updates regarding the use of this information to support improvements in our state’s child protective service system. The goal of this case record review is to better understand Initial Assessment (IA) case practice across the state and to collect data that is being used to support a deeper analysis of what pieces of information add value to decision making related to key decisions during the IA process.

**BACKGROUND**

Wisconsin’s Child Welfare Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) System relies on multiple sources of data and information to understand performance and develop strategies for improvement. One critical source of information related to our state’s CPS system is case record reviews. Wisconsin’s case record review process uses formal evaluation tools to assess practice in Access, Initial Assessment, and Ongoing Services practice. More information about our state’s case record review tools and results from prior case record reviews can be found at the following website: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cqireports>.

Initial Assessment case reviews were completed in 2019 and 2020. The random sample included 300 IAs that were approved in 2019 and 300 IAs that were approved in 2020. Of the total 600 cases reviewed over the span of 2019-2020, 200 cases were from Milwaukee and 400 cases were from the Balance of State. These reviews were completed with the assistance and expertise of several local agency supervisors and practitioners who were certified by DCF to perform reviews using the state’s standardized IA case record review tool. While case reviews continued during calendar year 2021, beginning in 2022, the department’s case review efforts will be directed to deeper, more targeted case record reviews to better understand those practices and resources that contribute to successfully serving children in their family homes.

**INFORMATION SUMMARY**

The immediate goals of the IA case record review were to: (1) determine the consistency of practice with

the state's [CPS Access and Initial Assessment Standards](#) and (2) collect data that could be used to support a deeper analysis of information that most influences the quality of decision-making associated with IA practice. The key learnings from this case record review related to the following areas of IA practice statewide:

- 83% of present danger assessments in [2019](#) and 84% of present danger assessments in [2020](#) were consistent with Standards.
  - When present danger is identified, protective action was almost always taken which typically resulted in either the implementation of a Protective Plan (approximately 58% of cases in [2019](#) and [2020](#)), taking physical custody of an unsafe child (approximately 31% in 2019 and 26% in 2020), or multiple protective actions (approximately 11% in 2019 and 17% in 2020).
- 78% of maltreatment determinations in [2019](#) and [2020](#) were consistent with Standards across the state.
  - Present danger assessments and maltreatment determinations were the two practice areas most consistent with Standards.
- Impending danger and safety assessments were consistent with Standards approximately 63% and 61% respectively in [2019](#) and 69% and 67% respectively in [2020](#).
- Case disposition decisions were consistent with Standards in 63% of the cases in [2019](#) and 73% of the cases in [2020](#).

Over the last two years, the Child Welfare CQI Advisory Committee, a committee comprised of state, local child welfare agency staff, representatives from the Wisconsin's Child Welfare Professional Development System (PDS) and the state's Children's Court Improvement Project (CCIP), have served to advise DCF in the completion of the comprehensive analysis described above using data from the IA case record reviews completed for 2019 and 2020. Further analysis of these case review results has been completed to identify what information-gathering variables, or groups of variables, impact the quality of IA practice related to present and impending danger, maltreatment determinations, and case disposition decisions.

With the continued support of the Child Welfare CQI Advisory Committee and in partnership with local CPS agency leadership, the Division is using this analysis, along with the support and involvement of local CPS agency stakeholder, to support improvements to the IA process. These improvements will be focused on streamlining IA practice and documentation responsibilities, as well as to advance our efforts to transform our state's CPS system response toward providing needed services and supports while serving children in their family homes, as highlighted by the recent federal Family First Prevention Services Act.

The Division wants to thank the Department's Bureau of Performance Management, the numerous local CPS agency supervisors who supported the case review process, and the state's Child Welfare CQI Advisory Committee for their advice and guidance as we seek to strengthen the Initial Assessment process.

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608-422-6964

MEMO WEB SITE:                                    <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy>

ATTACHMENT LINKS:                              2019 and 2020 One-Pagers  
<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cqireports>