

October 27, 2020

Jeffrey Renk
Senate Chief Clerk
State Capitol, B20 SE
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707

Patrick E. Fuller
Assembly Chief Clerk
Risser Justice Center
17 West Main Street, Suite 401
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Chief Clerk Renk and Chief Clerk Fuller:

In compliance with 2009 Wisconsin Act 78, the Child Welfare Public Disclosure Act, please accept the Department of Children and Families' 2020 third quarter report on alleged sexual abuse of children residing in out-of-home care. The attached data addresses reports of alleged sexual abuse for the period July 1 through September 30, 2020 and fulfills the Department of Children and Families' reporting requirements under Section 48.981(9)(b), Wis. Stats.

We appreciate the legislature's interest in Wisconsin's child welfare system and their commitment to supporting the Department of Children and Families (DCF), county and tribal child welfare agencies, and the hundreds of non-profit organizations who work to protect Wisconsin children every day. Like you, we are saddened by all cases of child maltreatment and are committed to strengthening families so that child maltreatment does not occur. Wisconsin is fortunate to have dedicated and passionate child welfare workers and we want to recognize and express our appreciation for their commitment and compassion as they engage in these cases on a daily basis.

We encourage legislators and stakeholders to reinforce awareness that prevention of child maltreatment is a community-wide responsibility involving all individuals and organizations in the community, and to continue to support efforts at the local and state levels to develop a more robust and consistent array of child maltreatment prevention services. Through collaborative and data-driven analyses and discussions, we all can support efforts to strengthen the families in our state to provide safe, stable and nurturing homes for their children and help our families and children succeed and thrive.

The following is a summary of the findings in the attached report:

Number of Reported Incidents: 52

Wisconsin child protective services agencies screened in and investigated 52 reported incidents of suspected sexual abuse to 48 children residing in out-of-home care.

Dates of the Incidents:

The 52 reported incidents are estimated to have occurred between August of 2017 and September 29, 2020. Because children disclose abuse in different stages, it is common for children to report incidents months or even years after the incident occurred. Furthermore, in cases of alleged abuse involving non-verbal children, dates of alleged maltreatment are often difficult or impossible to determine.

Maltreatment Determinations:

Of the 52 reported incidents, maltreatment determinations were made for 19 (37%) of the reported incidents, while 33 (63%) maltreatment determinations are pending because the investigations are not complete.

Of the 19 reported incidents where the maltreatment determination was made, 15 (79%) were unsubstantiated (i.e., preponderance of the evidence indicating that sexual abuse occurred was not found), three (16%) were substantiated, and one (5%) were unsubstantiated/unable to locate source.

Nature of Maltreater Relationship:

Of the three substantiated incidents, the relationship of the maltreater to the child was a non-caregiver in two incidents and a biological parent in one incident. Of the three substantiated incidents, two included sex trafficking allegations.

Types of Placement:

Of the three substantiated incidents, two incidents occurred while the child was placed in a group home and one incident occurred while the child was placed with an unlicensed relative.

Location of Substantiated Incidents:

Of the three substantiated incidents of sexual abuse to children residing in out-of-home care, two incidents occurred in Milwaukee County and one incident occurred in Vilas County.

Ages or Age Group of Children:

The alleged sexual abuse was reported and investigated for children one to 17 years of age. Incidents of sexual abuse were substantiated for three children, one of whom was 16 years old at the time of maltreatment and two who were 12 years of age at the time of maltreatment.

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In closing, thank you for the opportunity to provide the attached information and for your continued partnership in ensuring all Wisconsin children are safe and loved members of thriving families and communities. Feel free to contact the Department with questions or clarification requests.

Sincerely,



Emilie Amundson
Secretary

Attachment

cc: Governor Tony Evers