

July 19, 2021

Edward A. Blazel
Assembly Chief Clerk
Risser Justice Center
17 West Main Street, Suite 401
Madison, WI 53703

Mike Queensland
Senate Chief Clerk
B20 – Southeast, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Assembly Chief Clerk Blazel and Senate Chief Clerk Queensland:

In compliance with 2009 Wisconsin Act 78, the Child Welfare Public Disclosure Act, please accept the Department of Children and Families' 2021 second 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 April 1 through June 30, 2021, for incidents that occurred between January 2012 and June 30, 2021, and fulfills the Department of Children and Families' reporting requirements under section 48.981(9)(b) of the Wisconsin Statutes.

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 [report](#):

Number of Reported Incidents:

Wisconsin child protective services agencies screened in and investigated 52 reported incidents of suspected sexual abuse to 49 children residing in out-of-home care.

Dates of the Incidents:

The 52 reported incidents are estimated to have occurred between January 2012 and June 30, 2021. 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 20 (38%) of the reported incidents, while 32 (62%) maltreatment determinations are pending because the investigations are not complete.

Of the 20 reported incidents where the maltreatment determination was made, 14 (70%) were unsubstantiated (i.e., preponderance of the evidence indicating that sexual abuse occurred was not found), and six (30%) were substantiated.

Nature of Maltreater Relationship:

Of the six substantiated incidents, the relationship of the maltreater to the child was other non-caregiver(s) in three cases, siblings(s)/step-siblings(s) in one case, unknown in one case, and child(ren) in licensed care in one case. Four of the substantiated incidents included sex trafficking allegations.

Types of Placement:

Of the six substantiated incidents, four incidents occurred while the child was placed in a group home and two occurred while at a relative foster home.

Location of Substantiated Incidents:

Of the six substantiated incidents of sexual abuse to children residing in out-of-home care, four incidents occurred in Milwaukee County and two incidents occurred in Waushara County.

Ages or Age Group of Children:

The alleged sexual abuse was reported and investigated for children 3 to 17 years of age. Incidents of sexual abuse were substantiated for four children, one of whom was 17 years old, one of whom was 16 years old, one of whom was 15 years old, and one of whom was 8 years old at the time of maltreatment.

In closing, thank you 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

cc: Governor Tony Evers