

October 27, 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 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, 2021, and fulfills the Department of Children and Families' reporting requirements under Section 48.981(9)(b), Wis. Stats.

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 55 reported incidents of suspected sexual abuse to 49 children residing in out-of-home care.

Dates of the Incidents:

The 55 reported incidents are estimated to have occurred between 2010 and September 29, 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 55 reported incidents, maltreatment determinations were made for 20 (36%) of the reported incidents, while 35 (64%) maltreatment determinations are pending because the investigations are not complete.

Of the 20 reported incidents where the maltreatment determination was made, 13 (65%) were unsubstantiated (i.e., preponderance of the evidence indicating that sexual abuse occurred was not found), five (25%) were substantiated, one (5%) was unable to locate source, and one (5%) was deemed services needed.

Nature of Maltreater Relationship:

Of the five substantiated incidents, the relationship of the maltreater to the child was a staff member in a congregate care facility in two cases, step-parent(s) in one case, non-relative foster parent(s) in one case, and relative non-care provider(s) in one case. None of the substantiated incidents included allegations of sex trafficking.

Types of Placement:

Of the five substantiated incidents, two incidents occurred while the child was placed at a non-relative foster family home, two incidents occurred while the child was placed in shelter care, and one incident occurred while placed in court-ordered kinship care.

Location of Substantiated Incidents:

Of the five substantiated incidents of sexual abuse to children residing in out-of-home care, one incident occurred in Brown County, one incident occurred in Eau Claire County, one incident occurred in Manitowoc County, one incident occurred in Ozaukee County, and one incident occurred in Waukesha County.

Ages or Age Group of Children:

The alleged sexual abuse was reported and investigated for children 0 to 17 years of age. Incidents of sexual abuse were substantiated for five children, one of whom was 17 years old, one was 15 years old, one was 13 years old, one was 8 years old, and one was 6 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

Attachment

cc: Governor Tony Evers