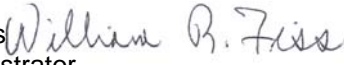


STATE OF WISCONSIN
Department of Health and Family Services
Division of Children and Family Services

DCFS Memo Series 2007 -08 /Action
June 6, 2007
Re: Child And Family Services Improvement
Act Of 2006 – Child Welfare Disaster
Planning And Technical Assistance

To: Area Administrators/Human Services Area Coordinators
Bureau Directors
County Departments of Community Programs Directors
County Departments of Developmental Disabilities Services Directors
County Departments of Human Services/Social Services Directors
Licensing Chiefs/Section Chiefs
Tribal Chairpersons/Human Services Facilitators
County CPS Supervisors

From: William R. Fiss 
Interim Administrator

The purpose of this memo is to inform agencies about new federal requirements contained in the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 for states to have procedures and plans that address the child welfare system's responses to a disaster for programs funded by Title IV-B and IV-E, and to provide information about technical assistance available to help agencies meet these requirements. A state's failure to have plans in place by September 28, 2007 that address the following federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), criteria may jeopardize federal funding:

- Identify, locate and continue availability of services for children under State Care or supervision who are displaced or adversely affected by a disaster;
- Respond to new child welfare cases in areas adversely affected by a disaster, and provide services in those cases;
- Remain in communication with caseworkers and other essential child welfare personnel who are displaced because of a disaster; and
- Preserve essential program records and coordinate services and share information with other States.

The Children's Bureau has provided a publication, *Coping with Disasters and Strengthening Systems—A Framework for Child Welfare Agencies*, to help agencies decide what strategies might be put into place to cope with disasters and how these changes can improve systems for serving children and families. The document was developed by the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement in consultation with State staff members who have experienced disasters. It is intended as a guide that agencies can use as they develop their own disaster plans and is available at the following web address: <http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/rcpdfs/copingwithdisasters.pdf>

The publication recommends that counties, tribes, and the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare first look at any existing disaster recovery or business continuity plans and emergency government plans, as child welfare disaster plans should flow into and be consistent with these plans. It is recommended that an agency person be assigned the task of overseeing the child welfare disaster planning and input be obtained from key stakeholders during the planning process. Some of the strategy areas covered in the publication include:

- Developing Communication Systems
- Strengthening Information Systems
- Preparing Staff and Contractors
- Preparing Families, Providers, and Youth

Document Summary

The purpose of this memo is to inform agencies about new federal requirements contained in the the Child and Family Services improvement Act of 2006 for state to have plans that address child welfare disaster planning.

The Department of Health and Family Services has also contracted with Lutheran Social Services Disaster Human Services Project to provide technical assistance to counties, tribes, and BMCW to assist in meeting the requirements of the act. The contract provides for:

- A. Technical assistance and consultation to BMCW, county, and tribal staff relative to disaster planning for child welfare to help ensure compliance with the Child and Family Services Improvement Act.
- B. A toll-free number that BMCW, county, and tribal staff may contact with for information about child welfare disaster planning. **The toll-free number is: 1/866-422-3742.**
- C. Coordination with Area Administration to survey counties and tribes to assess the status of current child welfare disaster planning for compliance and to obtain input from key stakeholders. *(Note: The Bureau of Programs and Policies will work with Area Administration to conduct a follow-up survey to assess the status of compliance with the federal requirements.)*
- D. Development of model contract language that child welfare agencies can use where child welfare services, and particularly case management services, have been contracted.
- E. Developing and sharing a summary of current strategies used by counties to assist in meeting the federal criteria. Additional strategies that can flow into and be consistent with larger existing county disaster plans include:
 - Strategies for coordinating with key partners, strengthening internal and external communications systems, providing critical information to staff, families, and providers and staying in touch with these partners.
 - Strategies to develop mutual aid agreements between counties and specify how each agency will assist the other in times of crisis as appropriate, including sharing staff, facilities, and other resources. These strategies can be incorporated in existing mutual aid agreements.
 - Determining possible alternative service delivery and staff location sites during a disaster.
 - Strategies for internal communication; information for staff, families, providers, and youth; and media communication.
 - Strategies for the agencies records and information systems for storing and access to critical information.

In addition, LSS will provide consultation and training in disaster planning at five regional trainings, which will include information on Psychological First Aid in the face of disasters and Emergency Support Function # 6 (Non-medical Mass Care, Housing and Human Services). The 2nd day of the training will offer information about the child welfare disaster response requirements. The dates and locations for the trainings are:

- June 21 & 22 – Madison – Comfort Suites
- June 28 & 29 – Eau Claire – The Plaza
- July 10 & 11 – Rhinelander – Holiday Inn Express
- July 24 & 25 – Green Bay – Tundra Inn
- July 30 & 31 - Waukesha – Country Springs

Contact Jane Bloss at 608-834-4444 or email jbloss@lsswis.org to register or obtain more information.

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Area Administrator

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