

Jim Doyle
Governor

Reggie Bicha
Secretary



State of Wisconsin
Department of Children and Families

201 East Washington Avenue, Room G200
P.O. Box 8916
Madison, WI 53708-8916

Telephone: 608-267-3905
Fax: 608-266-6836
dcf.wisconsin.gov

Wednesday, August 12, 2009

Contact: Erika Monroe-Kane, Department of Children and Families, 608-266-9000

DCF Announces Strategies for Increasing Foster Homes

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) released today a [strategic plan for increased recruitment and retention of foster parents](#). Enlisted by DCF, nationally recognized expert Kelly Peterson, Utah Foster Care Foundation has outlined strategies to increase the number of Milwaukee foster homes.

"It is critical that we take a fresh, honest look at our current work recruiting and supporting foster families," stated Reggie Bicha, Secretary of the Department of Children and Families. "Since our first day as a Department one year ago, we have been unwavering in our focus on improving lives for children and families in Milwaukee. We enlisted national experts, so that by adding knowledge and experience we can most effectively move forward."

This important work was made possible by a public and private partnership between DCF and the Child Welfare Philanthropy Group of Milwaukee, which provided the resources for this research.

"We are honored to partner with the Department of Children and Families on this important project, which we are confident will reap incredible rewards for Milwaukee children and families," stated Linda Davis of the Child Welfare Philanthropy Group. "This is the first time we partnered with the State and were motivated by their proactive approach to improving life for children in out-of-home care and to supporting foster parents, who generously give so much to foster children."

The Recruitment and Retention Plan for Milwaukee County, outlines a number of recommended strategies and tasks to increase the number of foster homes. This plan is aligned with the Department's vision as well as its emphasis on results and outcomes.

"The Department of Children and Families has demonstrated a willingness to make an honest appraisal of the child welfare system currently in place in Milwaukee County and to take whatever action necessary to improve the lives of children in foster care," stated Kelly Peterson, CEO Utah Foster Care Foundation.

The Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare, overseen by DCF, has embraced this opportunity to work with Kelly Peterson and is enthusiastic about moving forward with the recommendations. Children Service Society of Wisconsin (CSSW) has been involved in this entire process and are committed to making the necessary improvements to increase foster home retention and recruitment.

Recruitment and Retention Plan recommended strategies include:

- Strengthen the expectation that everyone who works for BMCW or contract agencies must see recruitment and retention of foster/adoptive families as their responsibility
- Recruit foster and adoptive families simultaneously
- Developing a coordinated community relations effort to improve the public perception of foster care and adoption and increase community response to recruitment efforts
- Increase in foster parent rates in Milwaukee county and statewide
- Assess what can be done to better meet the needs of foster/adoptive parents, through expanded use of the Mobile Urgent Treatment Team

These recommendations build on the budget recently approved by the legislature and signed by the Governor. Among other new areas of support, the state budget includes increased financial support for foster parents, improved statewide training, creation of a foster care public information campaign, expansion of the Mobile Urgent Treatment Team, and the creation of a graduated licensing system to match the needs of foster children with the skills and abilities of foster parents.

“We have seen so many positive changes in the child welfare system. We wouldn’t continue to do this job if we weren’t treated as partners.” Paulette and Scott Drankiewicz, foster and adoptive parents in Milwaukee.

The Department of Children and Families, created one year ago, is dedicated to protecting children, strengthening families and building communities. Over the past 12 months, DCF has delivered on this commitment, creating immediate results and setting a foundation for continued impact and improvements.

Individuals or families interested in becoming foster parents are encouraged to:

- Contact Arles Lawrence at Children’s Service Society of WI (414) 231-4944 or arles.lawrence@cssw.org.

- Attend an upcoming informational meeting:

Thursday, August 13, 2009 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

at Children’s Family and Community Partnerships, 1730 W. North Ave.

Saturday, August 15, 2009 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Washington Park Library, 2121 N. Sherman Blvd.

Monday, August 17, 2009 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Children’s Service, 620 S. 76th St.

- Visit the Department of Children and Families website at <http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/children/foster/progserv/fosterparent.HTM>

- END -