



**Leadership Council on Early Years
Virtual Meeting Minutes**

September 30, 2021

9:00 - 11:00am

- **YouTube Link for public:** <https://youtu.be/6migEPO-hVo>

Members Present: Governor Tony Evers, First Lady Kathy Evers, Emilie Amundson (DCF), Joel Brennan (DOA), Kevin Carr (DOC), Rebecca Murray (CANPB), Jill Underly (DPI), Amy Pechacek (DWD), Linda Hall (OCMH), Joaquin Altoro (WHEDA), Mary Kolar (DVA)

Others Present: Andrea Cammilleri (DCF), Nadya Pérez-Reyes (DCF), Bojana Zoric Martinez (DCF), Dan Hereth (DSPS), Sarah Smith (OCI), Bettsy Wood (WEDC), Tracy Luber (WEDC), Catherine Haberland (DFI), Curtis Cunningham (DHS)

9:00 - 9:10am **Welcome, Introductions, and Approval of Meeting Minutes**
Emilie Amundson, DCF Secretary

Department of Children and Families (DCF) Secretary offered an introduction:

- Minutes Review and Approval
 - Rebecca Murray motion to approve minutes, Joel Brennan seconds. All in favor, none opposed. Motion to approve minutes carries.
- DCF sent two documents last week:
 - Overview of funding grants and press releases from other agencies
 - LCEY survey results
- DCF assigned staff to review press releases from all other agencies and see where any funding opportunities may be relevant to our audience and pushed it out to the ECE community.
- Secretary Amundson provided an overview of family services, the concept of social connectedness, how to create social support networks in communities for those who have lots of access and those who don't—thanks Rebecca Murray and Linda Hall for their work in this space—preview to theme of presentations.

9:10 - 9:30am **Listening Session & Survey Findings, Q&A and Discussion**
Rebecca Murray, Executive Director, Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board

Rebecca Hall discussed:

- Overview of CANPB's work on primary prevention focused on protective factors, their mission, vision, values, and goal, different types of prevention, public health approach and protective factors framework

- Online survey, wanting to hear about impact of Covid on families.
 - Contractor held 11 listening sessions across the state. 180 survey respondents, all female, mainly from 2-parent households, most had post-high school education. One session was moderated in Spanish, one session was focused on LGBTQ+ youth and/or parents who were LGBTQ+, two tribal sessions.
 - Key findings: Parents are struggling to navigate systems and policies, trust and affordable child care and housing are needed, meeting the basic needs for family prevents parents from being present as nurturing, loving, engaged parents, mental health services are lacking, addiction support is needed, parents worry about the safety of children, bullying, lack of programming for teens that was not sports-related, historical trauma, and addiction and mistrust were brought up in tribal listening sessions and others, intentionality is needed to address the needs of LGBTQ+ children and families, there is a lack of resources and services in rural WI, bilingual programs are critically needed.
 - Conclusions: families are surviving, but very few who participated are thriving. Families are resilient, but systemic change is needed.
- 5 more sessions involved 34 individuals from 20 agencies to discuss these findings and how to use funds.
- Family Resource Centers (FRCs) as a community hub for parenting supports, fostering child and youth development.
 - Many referrals come to them, and they refer to the communities for mental health or substance abuse treatment, basic needs, early intervention, economic supports, job supports, etc.
 - There are about 50 in WI but 22 are a network of FRCs coordinated by SFTA. We received funding from PDG and DCF to really work on an infrastructure with 10 FRCs to complete quality training, develop standards for quality FRCs. Also used ARPA \$1 million for social connections. Humans are special animals in that we need interaction, connectedness.

Questions/Comments:

- Cultural relevance
- Need for a no wrong door system
- What already exists in the state for FRC-type activities, build a bigger table, be sure not to assume there is one right model
 - Community action agencies, schools, COA, etc.

9:30 - 9:50am Fostering Social Connectedness Campaign, Q&A and Discussion

Linda Hall, Director, Office of Children's Mental Health

Linda Hall discussed:

- OCMH is charged with monitoring the mental health of kids and work for better alignment among all our departments to improve services that are available for children.
- Examination of all the departments for the services they offer and identified primary things happening at each phase of life.

- Collective impact lens to work: What's the one thing that we can all work on that would leverage change for kids? Our answer was social connectedness
 - Percentage of children not feeling social connected in various ways range from 17-55% of students surveyed, 28% had difficulty making friends
 - What do we mean by socially connected? Youth are socially connected when they are actively engaged in positive relationships where they feel they belong, are safe, cared for, valued, and supported. Based on CDC definition.
 - How do we measure progress? Looking at state, local, and program levels. Asking programs where they could be doing more independently or collaboratively.
- People like the agenda and feel they are already working on it. They want specifics so we identified categories of connectedness: family, supportive adult, peer, school/early education, community, and cultural identity
- Phase 1 of the campaign is about sharing stories, data, encouraging prioritization of social connectedness. Seeing connections to social isolation of the elderly. We all need the connectedness and there is good work being done at that end of the spectrum.
- Phase 2 will involve creating messages, adding resources
- Phase 3: measure success
- Phase 4: broaden stakeholders engaged (go beyond human services). Triple the number of people working on this, reach business sector.

Questions/Comments:

- Head Start Parent Café
- Groups working on elderly social isolation and impact of technology
- Children are experiencing stress because they sense what adults are feeling
- How a change of even one can have an impact on mindset and behavior
- Ways in which we impeded social connectedness with Indian Boarding Schools, removing children from homes and families
- Need to contend with our history, ask how we move forward, remind us we must do things differently moving forward

10:00-10:05am Remarks on Afghan Refugees in Wisconsin

Tony Evers, Governor

Governor's remarks:

- Support social and emotional needs, mental health, and try to simultaneously accelerate academic achievement
- During visit to Fort McCoy, struck by the number of kids, lots of soccer being played.
- Grateful for all the service here in Wisconsin to execute these operations, including National Guard, Army, non-profits, WEDC, Emergency management, health care providers, and many others. DCF providing case management, coordination, collaborating in family well-being issues
- Reaffirm to federal agencies that WI remains ready to help in any way to support successful transitions for these families

Secretary's Remarks:

- Making sure people had food and clothes, but also started to think about mental health and how families could feel they had a good day.

10:05-10:35 am Resettlement Network's Support for Refugee Families Across Wisconsin

*Bojana Zoric Martinez, Director, Bureau of Refugee Programs & State
Refugee Coordinator, Department of Children and Families*

Bojana's comments:

- Personal experience and journey. Came to US as a refugee in 1999, 11 years old when the war in Bosnia started, 14 when she escaped with the clothes on her back. Didn't speak English or know the culture. Help of community and volunteer resettlement agency to support her family, as well as working in a resettlement agency.
- Overview of DCF's role in refugee resettlement, work with federal agencies and community resettlement agencies in Wisconsin- Milwaukee, Fox Valley, and Dane County, interest from Green Bay and Waukesha.
- Traditionally refugee resettlement has always been about jobs and income. It's only recently that we started to think about mental health, collaboration, and multi-generational approaches.
- We have started meeting with families in refugee communities, for example the Rohingya community in Milwaukee, the largest Rohingya community in US. They told us about domestic violence, then they started talking about transportation, other challenges. The community started to open up and create their own groups to dialogue and address challenges, which is a good thing.
 - Ft. McCoy is already doing this kind of focus group, with men, with women Afghan guests. DCF will hear more from the guests directly next month so we can learn how we can help.

10:35-10:50am Discussion: Fostering Social Connectedness among Wisconsin Families

- OCMH impact group wants to know more what we can do, the group interested in early childhood consultation, help with kids showing behavioral issues or stress.
- Offers to help Afghan refugees. Continue to reach out to DCF.
- Looking for innovation in this time while we wait for funding to offer the supports we feel we need. Looking for ways to resource some of the systems we need to build. We are moving past the emergency phase of the situation and want to plan.
- Important for us to be welcoming and do the right thing.

10:50 - 11:00am Wrap-up and Next Steps

Emilie Amundson, DCF Secretary

- Outreach about membership and ways to approach these meetings. Grateful for trust to work together.

11:00am Adjourn