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Governor Tony Evers
Secretary Emilie Amundson

Secretary's Office

April 30, 2020

Jeffrey Renk
Senate Chief Clerk
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P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707

Patrick E. Fuller
Assembly Chief Clerk
Risser Justice Center
17 West Main Street, Suite 401
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Senate Chief Clerk Renk and Assembly Chief Clerk Fuller:

In compliance with 2009 Wisconsin Act 78, the Child Welfare Public Disclosure Act, please accept the Department of Children and Families' 2020 first 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 January 1 through March 31, 2020 and fulfills the Department of Children and Families' reporting requirements under Section 48.981(9)(b), Wis. Stats.

We continue to 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.

Particularly in these very difficult times, 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 attached report:

Number of Reported Incidents: 47

Wisconsin child protective services agencies screened in and investigated 47 reported incidents of suspected sexual abuse to 44 children residing in out-of-home care.

Dates of the Incidents:

The 47 reported incidents are estimated to have occurred between February 7, 2011, and March 29, 2020. 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 47 reported incidents, maltreatment determinations were made for 24 (51%) of the reported incidents, while 23 (49%) maltreatment determinations are pending because the investigations are not complete.

Of the 24 reported incidents where the maltreatment determination was made, 20 (83%) were unsubstantiated (i.e., preponderance of the evidence indicating that sexual abuse occurred was not found), four (17%) were substantiated, and no reported incidents were unsubstantiated/unable to locate source.

Nature of Maltreater Relationship:

Of the four substantiated incidents, the relationship of the maltreater to the child was another child in licensed care in one incident, a non-caregiver in one incident, and a stranger in two incidents. Of the four substantiated incidents, three included sex trafficking allegations.

Types of Placement:

Of the four substantiated incidents, one incident occurred while the child was placed in a shelter, one incident occurred while the child was placed in a non-relative treatment foster home, one incident occurred while the child was missing from out-of-home care, and one incident occurred while the child was placed in a group home.

Location of Substantiated Incidents:

Of the four substantiated incidents of sexual abuse to children residing in out-of-home care, one incident occurred in Dane County, and three incidents occurred in Milwaukee County.

Ages or Age Group of Children:

The alleged sexual abuse was reported and investigated for children three to 17 years of age. Incidents of sexual abuse were substantiated for four children, one of whom was 11 years old at the time of maltreatment, two of whom were 14 years old at the time of maltreatment, and one of whom was 17 years old at the time of maltreatment.

In closing, thank you for the opportunity to provide the attached information and 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

Senate Chief Clerk Jeffrey Renk
Assembly Chief Clerk Patrick Fuller
April 30, 2020
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Attachment

cc: Governor Tony Evers