



July 24, 2020

Jeffrey Renk  
Senate Chief Clerk  
State Capitol, B20 SE  
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 second 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 April 1 through June 30, 2020 and fulfills the Department of Children and Families' reporting requirements under Section 48.981(9)(b), Wis. Stats.

We 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.

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: 53*

Wisconsin child protective services agencies screened in and investigated 53 reported incidents of suspected sexual abuse to 45 children residing in out-of-home care.

*Dates of the Incidents:*

The 53 reported incidents are estimated to have occurred between December of 2017, and June 30, 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 53 reported incidents, maltreatment determinations were made for 17 (32%) of the reported incidents, while 36 (68%) maltreatment determinations are pending because the investigations are not complete.

Of the 17 reported incidents where the maltreatment determination was made, 10 (59%) were unsubstantiated (i.e., preponderance of the evidence indicating that sexual abuse occurred was not found), six (35%) were substantiated, and one (6%) were unsubstantiated/unable to locate source.

*Nature of Maltreater Relationship:*

Of the six substantiated incidents, the relationship of the maltreater to the child was a stranger in two incidents, a non-caregiver in two incidents, and an unknown maltreater in two incidents. Of the six substantiated incidents, two included sex trafficking allegations.

*Types of Placement:*

Of the six substantiated incidents, one incident occurred while the child was placed in shelter care, one incident occurred while the child was placed in a group home, one incident occurred while the child was placed in a non-relative treatment foster home, and three incidents occurred while the children were placed in a non-relative foster homes.

*Location of Substantiated Incidents:*

Of the six substantiated incidents of sexual abuse to children residing in out-of-home care, one incident occurred in Dane County, one incident occurred in Dodge County, one incident occurred in Kenosha County, one incident occurred in Milwaukee County, one incident occurred in Walworth County, and one incident occurred in Wood 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 six children, one of whom was 5 years old at the time of maltreatment, one of whom was 7 years of age at the time of maltreatment, one of whom was 15 years of age at the time of maltreatment, two of whom were 16 years of age at the time of maltreatment and one of whom was 17 years of age at the time of maltreatment.

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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

Attachment

cc: Governor Tony Evers