



October 30, 2023

Edward A. Blazel  
Assembly Chief Clerk  
Risser Justice Center  
17 West Main Street, Suite 401  
Madison, WI 53703

Richard Champagne  
Acting Senate Chief Clerk  
B20 – Southeast, State Capitol  
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Assembly Chief Clerk Blazel and Acting Senate Chief Clerk Champagne:

In compliance with 2009 Wisconsin Act 78, the Child Welfare Public Disclosure Act, please accept the Department of Children and Families' 2023, third quarter report on alleged sexual abuse of children residing in out-of-home care. The data presented below addresses reports of alleged sexual abuse for the period July 1 through September 30, 2023, and fulfills the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) reporting requirements under Section 48.981(9)(a), Wis. Stats.

We appreciate the Legislature's interest in Wisconsin's child welfare system and their commitment to supporting 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. 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 very challenging situations with children and families on a daily basis.

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 [chart](#):

*Number of Reported Incidents: 57*

Wisconsin child protective services agencies screened in and investigated 57 reported incidents of suspected sexual abuse to 54 children residing in out-of-home care.

*Dates of the Incidents:*

The 57 reported incidents are estimated to have occurred between March 2013 and September 2023. 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 57 reported incidents, maltreatment determinations were made for 26 (46%) of the reported incidents, while 31 (54%) maltreatment determinations are pending because the investigations are not complete.

Of the 26 reported incidents where the maltreatment determination was made, 19 (73%) were unsubstantiated (i.e., preponderance of the evidence indicating that sexual abuse occurred was not found) and seven (27%) were substantiated.

*Nature of Maltreater Relationship:*

Of the seven substantiated incidents, the relationship of the maltreater to the child was a minor maltreater in the placement setting in four incidents, a non-caregiver in two incidents, and a non-relative foster parent in one incident. One of the substantiated incidents included allegations of sex trafficking.

*Types of Placement:*

Of the seven substantiated incidents, three incidents occurred while the child was placed in a detention center, three incidents occurred while the child was placed in a non-relative foster home, and one incident occurred while the child was missing from out-of-home care.

*Location of Substantiated Incidents:*

Of the seven substantiated incidents of sexual abuse to children residing in out-of-home care, three incidents occurred in Racine County, two incidents occurred in Milwaukee County, one incident occurred in Barron County, and one incident occurred in Price County.

*Ages or Age Group of Children:*

The alleged sexual abuse was reported and investigated for children 2-17 years of age. The seven incidents of sexual abuse were substantiated for six children, one of whom was 17 years old, one of whom was 16 years old, one of whom was 15 years old, one of whom was 14 years old, one of whom was 12 years old, and one of whom was four years old at the time of maltreatment.

In closing, thank you for your continued partnership in ensuring all Wisconsin children are safe and loved members of thriving families and communities. Feel free to contact DCF with questions or requests for clarification.

Sincerely,



Emilie Amundson  
Secretary

cc: Governor Evers