



October 28, 2024

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

Linsay Hale
Senate Chief Clerk
B20 – Southeast, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Assembly Chief Clerk Blazel and Senate Chief Clerk Hale:

In compliance with 2009 Wisconsin Act 78, the Child Welfare Public Disclosure Act, please accept the Department of Children and Families' (DCF's) 2024 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, 2024, and fulfills the DCF's 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 [report](#):

Number of Reported Incidents: 27

Wisconsin child protective services agencies screened in and investigated 27 reported incidents of suspected sexual abuse to 24 children residing in out-of-home care.

Dates of the Incidents:

The 27 reported incidents are estimated to have occurred between July 2019 and September 2024. 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 27 reported incidents, maltreatment determinations were made for 14 (52%) of the reported incidents, while 13 (48%) maltreatment determinations are pending because the investigations are not complete.

Of the 14 reported incidents where the maltreatment determination was made, 12 (86%) were unsubstantiated (i.e., preponderance of the evidence indicating that sexual abuse occurred was not found), and two (14%) were substantiated.

Nature of Maltreater Relationship:

Of the two substantiated incidents, the relationship of the maltreater to the child was an unknown maltreater in one incident and other minor maltreater in one incident. One of the substantiated incidents included allegations of sex trafficking.

Types of Placement:

Of the two substantiated incidents, both incidents occurred while the child was placed at a non-relative foster family home.

Location of Substantiated Incidents:

Of the two substantiated incidents of sexual abuse to children residing in out-of-home care, one incident occurred in Milwaukee County and the other occurred in Outagamie County.

Ages or Age Group of Children:

The alleged sexual abuse was reported and investigated for children 0-17 years of age. Incidents of sexual abuse were substantiated for two children: one of the children was 17 years-old at the time of the incident and the other was six years-old at the time of the incident.

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 the department with questions or clarification requests.

Sincerely,



Jeff Pertl
Secretary-designee

cc: Governor Evers