



July 28, 2025

Cyrus Anderson  
Senate Chief Clerk  
State Capitol, B20 SE  
P.O. Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53703

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

Dear Senate Chief Clerk Cyrus Anderson and Assembly Chief Clerk Blazel:

In compliance with 2009 Wisconsin Act 78, the Child Welfare Public Disclosure Act, please accept the Department of Children and Families' (DCF's) 2025 second 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 April 1 to June 30, 2025, 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 professionals, 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: 33*

Wisconsin child protective services agencies screened in and investigated 33 reported incidents of suspected sexual abuse to 28 children residing in out-of-home care.

*Dates of the Incidents:*

The 33 reported incidents are estimated to have occurred between October 2022 and June 2025. 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

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abuse involving non-verbal children, dates of alleged maltreatment are often difficult or impossible to determine.

*Maltreatment Determinations:*

Of the 33 reported incidents, maltreatment determinations were made for 16 (48%) of the reported incidents, while 17 (52%) maltreatment determinations are pending because the investigations are not complete.

Of the 16 reported incidents where the maltreatment determination was made, nine (56%) were unsubstantiated (i.e., preponderance of the evidence indicating that sexual abuse occurred was not found), four (25%) were substantiated, and three (19%) had a determination of services not needed.

*Nature of Maltreater Relationship:*

Of the four substantiated incidents, the relationship of the maltreater to the child was a non-caregiver in three incidents and a stranger in one incident. Three of the four (75%) substantiated incidents included allegations of sex trafficking.

*Types of Placement Settings:*

Of the four substantiated incidents, three incidents 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:*

The four substantiated incidents of sexual abuse to children residing in out-of-home care occurred in Milwaukee County.

*Ages or Age Group of Children:*

The alleged sexual abuse was reported and investigated for children 3-17 years of age. The four substantiated incidents of sexual abuse involved three children, ages 14, 15, and 16.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey Pertl", written in a cursive style.

Secretary Pertl

cc: Governor Evers