

2025 – 2029 CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES PLAN



Wisconsin Department of
Children and Families

Table of Contents

2025 – 2029 Children and Family Services Plan.....	0
Table of Contents	1
Glossary of Acronyms and Terms	1
1. Overview and Agency Administering the Child and Family Services Plan.....	6
Overview	6
Administering Agency for Title IV-B, Title IV-E, CAPTA, Chafee and ETV	7
Agency Vision Statement	7
Putting Families First Initiative.....	7
Organizational Structure.....	8
Collaboration	10
Collaboration to Support State Policies and Programs	11
Collaboration to Strengthen the Voice of Lived Experience	12
Collaboration Specific to Federal Plans and Reviews.....	14
Cross-Systems Collaborations.....	15
2. Update on the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes.....	22
Context for State’s Current Performance.....	22
Child and Family Outcomes	25
Safety Outcomes 1 and 2	25
Permanency Outcomes 1 and 2.....	33
Well-Being Outcomes 1, 2, and 3	46
Systemic Factors	50
Management Information System (Item 19)	50
Case Review System (Items 20-24).....	54
Quality Assurance System (Item 25)	65
Training System (Initial, Ongoing and Foster Parent Training, Items 26-28).....	71
Service Array Systemic Factor (Items 29-30)	85
Agency Responsiveness (Items 31-32).....	90
Foster and Adoptive Recruitment Systemic Factor (Items 33-36).....	93
3. Plan for Enacting the State’s Vision.....	104
Goal 1: Strengthen Local Communities and Build Services to Support Families in their Homes.	106

Goal 2: To Keep Children in Family Settings Whenever Possible.....	111
Goal 3: Improve Youth Service Provision to Keep Youth Supported in Their Communities...	115
Goal 4: Support the Wisconsin Workforce with Solutions and Improvements.	117
4. Quality Assurance System.....	123
5. Children and Family Services Continuum.....	123
Stephanie Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services Program	123
<i>IV-B, Subpart 1 - Homeless and Runaway Youth Funding</i>	123
Services for Children Adopted from Other Countries.....	124
Services for Children under the Age of Five.....	125
Planned Activities to Address Developmental Needs.....	126
Lived Experience Expansion.....	128
Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA).....	128
Collaboration with Early Care and Education and Other Family Support Programs to Connect to Quality Early Learning, Family Support and Prevention Services.....	128
Coordination with Home Visiting – Family Foundations Home Visiting Program (FFHV).	129
Collaboration with Birth to 3 Program.....	130
Connection to Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Consultation to Support Families	130
Connection to Primary Prevention Programs	131
Coordination with the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board (CANPB) on Primary Prevention.....	131
Efforts to Track and Prevent Child Maltreatment Deaths.....	131
Wisconsin Act 78 and Systems Change Review.....	131
MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program	134
Specific percentage of Title IV-B, Subpart 2 funds spent on Service Delivery.....	134
Service Decision-Making Process for Family Support Services.....	134
Population at Greatest Risk of Maltreatment	136
Monthly Caseworker Visits	137
John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood.....	138
Agency Administering Chafee:.....	138
Description of Program Design and Delivery	138
Serving Youth Across the State	140
Serving Youth of Various Ages and Stages of Achieving Independence.....	141
Collaboration and Consultation with Other Private and Public Agencies.....	142

Determining Eligibility for Benefits and Services.....	143
Cooperation in National Evaluations	144
Education and Training Vouchers (ETV)	144
Chafee Training.....	145
6. Consultation and Coordination with Tribes.....	146
Process Used to Gather Input from Tribes	147
Ongoing Coordination and Collaboration with Tribes in the Implementation and Assessment of the CFSP & Subsequent APSRs.....	147
Case Review System and WI Tribes	148
Compliance with ICWA in Consultation with Tribes.....	148
Chafee Foster Care and Independence Act/Educational and Training Vouchers (Tribal)	149
Exchange Copies of the APSR	149
Section E - Targeted Plans with the 2025 – 2029 CFSP.....	150
Health Care Oversight Plan	150
Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment Plan	152
Disaster Plan	152
Training Plan	152
Section G: Financial Information	153
Payment Limitations – Title IV-B, Subpart 1:.....	153
Payment Limitations – Title IV-B, Subpart 2.....	153

Glossary of Acronyms and Terms

AFCARS = Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System. State and Tribal title IV-E agencies are required to report AFCARS case-level information on all children in foster care and children who have been adopted with title IV-E agency involvement.

AODA = Alcohol and Drug Abuse.

ASFA = Adoption and Safe Families Act, particularly the ASFA requirement to pursue termination of parental rights after a child has been in Out-of-Home Care (OHC) for 15 months.

BCRA = Bureau of Child Welfare Research and Analytics (BCRA) is responsible for the oversight and management of the data analytics and program integrity of DSP programs and policies related to child welfare to ensure compliance with Federal title IV-E requirements.

BITS = Bureau of Information Technology Services in the Division of Management Services (DMS).

BOS = Balance of State refers to information and/or data that describes the counties outside Milwaukee.

BPOHC = Bureau of Permanence and Out-of-Home Care administers the state public-adoption program; provides policy guidance to counties on foster care, kinship care, and other out-of-home-care placements; and licenses and monitors group homes for children, residential care centers for children and youth, child-placing agencies, and shelter care. It also administers the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC), which regulates the safe placement of children across state lines.

BPM = Bureau of Performance Management in the Division of Management Services is responsible for continuous quality improvement, performance review and evaluation, and research/program evaluation.

BRO = Bureau of Regional Operations in the Division of Management Services works with local agencies administering DCF programs, including child welfare, child care subsidy, child support, and W-2 financial assistance.

BSWB = Bureau of Safety and Well Being in the Division of Management Services is the state unit responsible for child welfare program policy and practice standards.

BYS = Bureau of Youth Services administers the youth justice system and supports service delivery systems that move youth towards academic success, safe and stable housing, employment, permanent connections with supportive adults, and healthy lifestyle behaviors.

CFSR = Federal Child and Family Services Review.

Ch. DCF 43 = Division of Safety and Permanence administrative rule on child welfare staff training.

Ch. DCF 56 = Division of Safety and Permanence administrative rule on foster home licensing.

Chapter 48 = Wisconsin Children's Administrative Code.

Chapter 938 = Wisconsin Juvenile Justice Administrative Code.

CANPB = Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board

CFA = Children and Family Aids is a state level block grant funding source distributed to counties to assist with the costs associated with administering child welfare services.

CFSP = Child and Family Services Plan.

CCIP = Children's Court Improvement Program, Wisconsin's Court Improvement program.

COKC = Court-Ordered Kinship Care placements for which providers receive a monthly payment.

CPS = Child Protective Services.

CQI = Continuous Quality Improvement which is DCF's Quality Assurance System.

CWA = Child Welfare Agency

CY = Calendar Year (January – December).

DCF = Department of Children and Families. The Department was created in July 2008 and includes child welfare services, prevention services, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (W-2), child care regulation and licensing, child support, and youth development initiatives.

DHCAA = Division of Health Care Access and Accountability in the Department of Health Services, the state Medicaid agency in Wisconsin.

DHS = Department of Health Services. Department that coordinates health services for the state of Wisconsin, including Medicaid, mental health and substance abuse services, and the Food Share program.

DMS = Division of Management Services is responsible for finance, information technology, performance management, and regional operations.

DMCPS = Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services directly operates child welfare services in Milwaukee and coordinates with DSP and DCF in state child welfare planning.

DSP = Division of Safety and Permanence in the Department of Children and Families, the state child welfare agency in Wisconsin.

dWiSACWIS = DCF's system that works with Business Intelligence (BI) staff to maintain current BI reporting tools and to implement enhancements to its BI data warehouse.

eWiSACWIS = Wisconsin Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS system).

eWiSACWIS Project Team = Staff supporting operations of eWiSACWIS system.

ETV = Education Training Voucher program.

FFPSA = Family First Prevention and Services Act.

FFY = Federal Fiscal Year (October – September).

FCARC = Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center; statewide resource center that provides information and materials on foster care and adoption.

GPR = General Purpose Revenues from state tax revenue.

GPRS = State Geographic Placement Resources system.

ICPC = Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children.

ICWA = Indian Child Welfare Act.

Kinship Care = Payment program to support children living with relatives.

NCANDS = National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System. The Federal child abuse and neglect data system is a source of safety data submitted by states.

NYTD = National Youth in Transition Data Base.

Ongoing Services Standards = The five Child Protective Services Standards and Practice Guidelines issued by DSP that establish program standards for ongoing child welfare services.

OHC = Out-of-Home Care including children placed under court order in foster care, group homes, residential care centers and kinship care. This is equivalent to the federal definition of foster care.

PAC = Policy Advisory Committee

PDSA = Plan Do Study Act is a continuous quality improvement approach to improving practices that incorporates extensive feedback.

PIP = Wisconsin Program Improvement Plan for Round 3 of the Federal CFSR.

QRTP = Qualified Residential Treatment Program.

Rate Regulation = Payment system that ensures that providers are licensed to provide a certain level of care, based on the types of services they offer, and receive a pre-defined amount for providing those services to a child who needs them.

SAFE = Structure Analysis Family Evaluation.

SFY = State Fiscal Year.

TPR = Termination of Parental Rights.

TRA = Transition Resource Agency

WAFCA = Wisconsin Association of Child and Family Agencies.

WCWPDS = Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System is Wisconsin's School of Social Work operated training system that operates at the state level.

WCWPDS Steering Committee = leadership entity comprised of UW School of Social Work, WCWPDS, DCF, DMCPs and counties charged with oversight of the Professional Development System.

WiAPS = Wisconsin Adoption and Permanency Supports.

WICWA = Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act.

WIFCC = Wisconsin Family Connections Center

YAC = Youth Advisory Council.

YJ = Youth Justice is Wisconsin's preferred term for Juvenile Justice.

YLT = Youth Leadership Team.

1. Overview and Agency Administering the Child and Family Services Plan

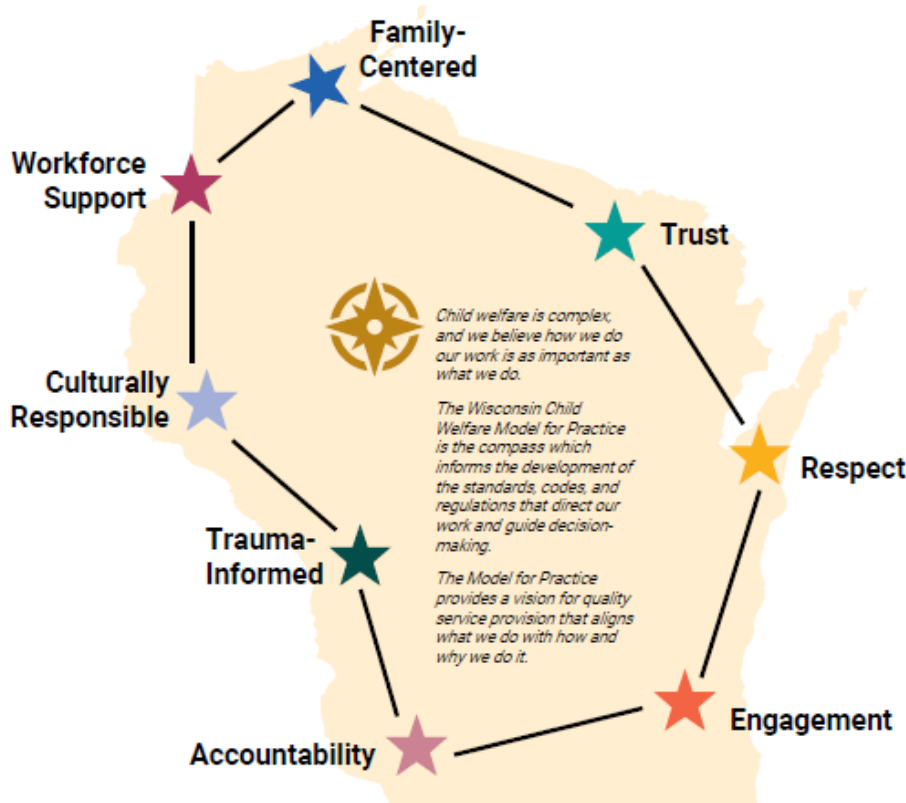
Overview

The 2025 – 2029 Children and Family Services Plan (CFSP) outlines Wisconsin's vision for its child welfare system and provides concrete implementation steps that will be taken over the next five years.

This CFSP is guided by Wisconsin's Child Welfare Model for Practice and further defined by DCF's Putting Families First child welfare transformation to become more in-home, family-focused, and collaborative. This approach is in alignment with the Children's Bureau (CB) service principles found in federal regulations at 25 CFR 1355.25 and the goals of the Family First Prevention and Services Act (FFPSA).



Wisconsin Child Welfare Model for Practice



Our Purpose: Putting Families First

Wisconsin child welfare services help children thrive in safe environments and empower families to provide safe, permanent, and nurturing homes for their children. Local communities and their child welfare agencies and families, with the support and guidance from federal and state partners, do this by supporting children and youth in their own homes, families, tribes, and communities whenever possible.

With a focus on family and community, we will engage with children, youth, and families to expand healthy connections in their communities and tribes and to bolster resiliency in families to help them thrive.

Over this period an ongoing strategic planning process built on collaboration with federal partners, expansion of lived experience through family and youth voice, and data-driven decisions will continue to redefine the 2025 – 2029 plan.

Administering Agency for Title IV-B, Title IV-E, CAPTA, Chafee and ETV

Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF)

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DCF is the state agency that provides or oversees county administration of programs to assist children and families. Those programs include assistance for children in need of protection or services, adoption and foster care services, the licensing of facilities that provide out-of-home care for children, background investigations of child caregivers, child abuse and neglect investigations, and community-based youth justice services. DCF also administers the Wisconsin Works (W-2) public assistance program, including the Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy program, the YoungStar child care quality improvement program, the child support enforcement and paternity establishment program, and programs related to the federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) income support program. Finally, DCF works to ensure that families have access to high quality and affordable early childhood care and education and administers the licensing and regulation of child care centers.

Agency Vision Statement

It is DCF's vision that all Wisconsin children and youth are safe and loved members of thriving families and communities. To reach that goal, with a focus on reducing racial and ethnic disparities in its programs and services, DCF identified five key priorities:

1. Systematically increasing access to quality early care and education programs that support the needs of children and families statewide.
2. Putting families in the center of successful child support and good-paying jobs programs.
3. Safely transforming the child welfare and youth justice system to dramatically increase the proportion of children supported in their homes and communities.
4. Dedication additional resources to support vulnerable and historically underserved youth, specifically teenage girls, kids with complex care needs, and youth transitioning out of the foster care system.
5. Fostering a workplace where agency staff feel engaged, valued, and connected to our vision.

Putting Families First Initiative

Through this strategic child welfare system transformation, DCF aims to dramatically reduce the proportion of child protective services (CPS) and youth justice (YJ) children and youth who are placed into out-of-home care, especially those that are served outside of their community or in congregate care settings. This shift in the system began when research indicated that children and families served by both the youth justice and child protection system have better results when supported in their family homes.

This transformation is focused on keeping families and children together by serving them in-home with resources and services through three priorities:

- Supporting families in-home.
- Keeping Children in family settings.
- Supporting the Wisconsin workforce.

More information on Wisconsin's Putting Families First approach can be found at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/family-first>.

Organizational Structure

Division of Safety and Permanence

Children, youth, and family services are located in the Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP), the unit within DCF responsible for title IV-B Subpart 1, Stephanie Tubbs Jones (Child Welfare Services), title IV-B Subpart 2 (Promoting Safe and Stable Families) and Monthly Caseworker Visit Grant programs, title IV-E (Prevention, Foster Care, Adoption Assistance and Subsidized Guardianship), Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood (Chafee) and Chafee Education and Training Vouchers (ETV).

DSP is responsible for supervising Wisconsin's child welfare system, though services are delivered through county and tribal-administered child welfare programs, except in Milwaukee County and for the public adoption program, both of which are operated by the state.

Bureau of Safety and Well Being

The Bureau of Safety and Well Being (BSWB) within DSP provides policy guidance and statewide leadership on child protective services, including matters related to CAPTA. The bureau also manages statewide prevention programs for DCF, including Promoting Safe and Stable Families, domestic violence programs, the Wisconsin Trauma Project, and the Family Foundations Home Visiting Program.

BSWB staff collaborate with the Department of Health Services (the state public health agency) to manage the Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting Programs (MIECHV) and are responsible for Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) for the statewide child welfare system.

Bureau of Permanence and Out-of-Home Care

The Bureau of Permanence and Out-of-home Care (BPOHC) within DSP is responsible for oversight, licensing, and rate regulation of child placing agencies, group homes, shelter care facilities, residential care centers, and qualified residential treatment programs for children and youth. The bureau also provides policy guidance and statewide leadership on foster care, guardianship, kinship care programs.

BPOHC administers the public adoption program, the adoption search program, oversight of the post-adoption resource centers, the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC), and initiatives related to health outcomes for children involved in the child welfare system.

Bureau of Child Welfare Research and Analytics

The Bureau of Child Welfare Research and Analytics (BCRA) within DSP is responsible for the oversight and management of data reporting, analytics, program integrity, and compliance with federal title IV-E requirements.

Bureau of Youth Services

The Bureau of Youth Services (BYS) within DSP is responsible for overseeing and supporting youth development initiatives and programs as DCF has administration and oversight responsibility for the community-based youth justice (YJ) population in Wisconsin. The bureau also oversees the Federal Chafee Transition to Independence Program, the Educational and Training Vouchers Program (ETV), the Wisconsin Brighter Futures Initiative, the National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) program, Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs, and other youth development efforts.

Division Administrator's Office

In addition to providing overall leadership and coordinating communication efforts for the division, the Administrator's Office (AO) is responsible for oversight of eWiSACWIS (WI's state child welfare data system), tracking state and federal legislative issues, leading child welfare strategic planning efforts and major federally-required projects (including preparation for the 2026 Children and Family Services Review (CFSR)), and expanding lived experience efforts statewide. The Administrator's Office is also responsible for working with tribes in Wisconsin to address tribal child welfare issues, including implementation of the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA).

Division of Management Services

The bureaus of Finance, Regional Operations (BRO), Information Technology Services, and Performance Management (BPM) are part of the Division of Management Services (DMS).

BRO assists the child welfare program through quality assurance, regional technical assistance and training to counties, communication and collaboration with the eleven federally recognized tribes in Wisconsin, and connects child welfare to other DCF program areas (child care, employment services, child support, and refugee services).

BPM provides objective analysis of policy and program effectiveness and efficiency across child welfare programs and assists in CFSR case review efforts.

Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services

The Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS) administers initial assessment and ongoing child welfare services in Milwaukee County, the state's largest county, and collaborates with DSP on statewide child welfare issues and federal reporting/reviews.

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Collaboration

Over the next five years DCF will continue to build on the extensive and established collaboration network that serves as the hallmark of DCF operations as it coordinates the state child welfare system. Of particular significance over this period will be DCF's continued efforts around its Putting Families First system transformation efforts, a stronger emphasis on the meaningful and systematic inclusion of lived experience, and the advancement of equitable practice changes for all populations in WI, including racially diverse and LGBTQ+ identifying youth.

More information on DCF's work with LGBTQ+ youth can be found at:

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/5534.pdf>.

DCF continues to focus collaborative efforts on the meaningful engagement of families, youth, partner agencies, counties, and tribes all working toward shared goals for improving the child welfare system and providing child and family safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes. Some of the ways in which DCF assures collaboration include:

- Securing feedback, collaboration and ongoing input from counties, tribes, and other external partner organizations on DCF's Putting Families First strategic planning process, including securing feedback on agency strengths, areas needing improvement, goals, and objectives.
- Coordinating, facilitating, and/or participating in standing bi-monthly meetings with the Indian Child Welfare (ICW) Committee and with a subset of county directors through the Wisconsin County Human Services Association's Policy Advisory Committee (WCHSA PAC).
- Elevating and engaging individuals, youth, and families with lived experience in policy and procedure development and decision-making.
- Spearheading external partner groups comprised of agency staff at different levels and specializations, and receiving critical advice, feedback, and comment from tribal members on the specifics of the state emerging efforts to outline and implement the Putting Families First vision and meet key requirements of FFPSA.

- Effectively collaborating with judges and other legal external partners, including participation on the Wisconsin Commission on Children, Families and the Courts which focuses on improving the court processing of child abuse and neglect cases in the courts system.
- Soliciting input on federal and state plans and reviews, in part by sharing relevant federal, state, and administrative data about child welfare system trends and issues and requesting feedback on data and information shared to prioritize data-driven decision-making.

These efforts continue to be driven by work necessary to meet the requirements of the Family First Prevention and Service Act that are encompassed in initiatives throughout this CFSP and over the next five years DCF will continue to ensure external partners understand the why, what, and how of its Putting Families First initiative.

Wisconsin's Putting Families First Playbook was created to generate conversation and buy-in across the state, leverage and grow local partnerships, and help system partners better understand Wisconsin's child welfare system. The playbook is publicly available at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/family-first/playbook>

Collaboration to Support State Policies and Programs

Over the next five years DCF will continue to collaborate with other agencies and partners to ensure an inclusive and shared vision and ongoing coordination across systems.

These efforts include representation at councils and workgroups described throughout this section and ongoing communication with county child welfare agencies through department regional meetings for local child welfare agency foster care coordinators, child welfare program supervisors, and fiscal managers to keep them updated about policy and procedures and provide a forum for both state and local child welfare agencies to discuss current child welfare issues. Prior to policy issuance that affects practice requirements, DCF provides the draft policy for comment to counties through the Wisconsin County Human Services Association (WCHSA) and the Indian Child Welfare (ICW) committee. Comments are then solicited and incorporated prior to publication.

Over the next five years DCF will work with groups representing key constituencies to develop program and policy initiatives to strengthen the child welfare system. These groups include, but are not limited to, WCHSA, the Wisconsin Foster/Adoptive Parent Association, the Wisconsin Association of Family and Children's Agencies (WAFCA), the Intertribal Child Welfare (ICW), the Children's Court Improvement Program, the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board (CANPB), the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), Relative Caregiver Stakeholder Group, Foster and Adoptive Parent Advisory Council, the Office of Children's Mental Health, the Wisconsin Council for Mental Health (WCHM), and other state agencies.

In addition to consulting with public and private agencies, DCF will utilize lived experience professionals throughout this period to offer continuous system improvements and identify service gaps, as detailed in the paragraphs below.

Collaboration to Strengthen the Voice of Lived Experience

Over the next five years, DCF will continue ongoing efforts with the goal of more effectively and systematically elevating and incorporating the voice of lived experience in DCF policies and programs in alignment with Putting Families First. DSP created a dedicated lived experience coordinator position whose primary focus is elevating lived experience voice across DSP through the engagement, development, and support of lived experience experts, including parents impacted by the child welfare system and the facilitation of lived experience stakeholder groups.

The lived experience coordinator is responsible for the identification and support of strategies that build engagement with lived experience at every level of the child welfare and youth justice systems, as well as support local county efforts. In addition, this role leads the development, coordination, and implementation of policies and procedures which promote elevating and supporting external partners with lived experience. Over the next five years, this position will assist DCF in further supporting a lived experience framework that will support advocacy, education, and training to a wide array of internal and external partners with the goal to promote lived experience expertise across program and policy areas to best serve children, youth, and families. This position will also continue to build on DCF's long-standing efforts to reach out to existing relative caregiver, foster, and adoptive parent support groups to engage youth voice throughout all aspects of the child welfare system.

In April of 2024, DSP also hired a full-time lived experience specialist who will support the Parents Supporting Parents program, DCF lived experience hiring practices, and other lived experience efforts as needed.

Lived Experience Summit

Sponsored by DCF in collaboration with the Office of Children's Mental Health, Child Welfare Parent Leaders, Youth Advisory Council Members, and Relative Caregiver Partners participated in the 2nd Annual Lived Experience Summit in May of 2024 on the Oneida Reservation. Planned in partnership with Lived Experts, this summit offered an opportunity for those with Lived Experience to learn from each other, create social connections, and participate in learnings that support their ability to bring their unique perspectives to programs and policies within DCF. Lived Experts participated in various workshops and heard from two keynotes throughout the summit. Topics included Mental Health, Policy 201 How to Advocate & Influence Policy, Career Exploration & Expanding Networks, Human Trafficking, Fierce Facilitation, and Embracing Harm Reduction.

Child Welfare Parent Leaders Workgroup

This group is comprised of parents across the state who were involved with the children welfare system. The Office of Children's Mental Health and DCF's lived experience coordinator meet monthly with parents to get insights, provide educational experiences, and build parent capacity to help contribute and make innovative efforts to realize DCF's Putting Families First approach.

Key strategies identified for initial prioritization from this group include:

- Key information parents need about the child welfare system.
- Common service gaps.
- Increasing parent participation in creation of the safety plan and case planning goals.
- Worker/parent engagement.

These efforts, including the collaborative monthly workgroup with the Parent Leaders in Child Welfare Stakeholder Group and monthly planning sessions with the Office of Children's Mental Health, are expected to improve the coordination of services and strengthen efforts around in-home safety planning and the development of parent-informed prevention plans by infusing parent voice throughout the prevention planning process, particularly in addressing the above key strategies.

Over the next five years, work will continue to build a Lived Experience Academy to support the capacity building and networking of all lived experience groups including caregivers, youth, and relatives. This academy will facilitate collaborate discussions on policies, laws, and storytelling between individuals with lived experience.

Youth Advisory Council

DCF continues to support and provide oversight of the Wisconsin Youth Advisory Council (YAC). The YAC was created in 2005 to empower youth who have touched the child welfare system (past or present), advise and contribute to DCF policy and practice, and strengthen member advocacy skills.

The YAC continues to empower youth to organize and testify around key legislative issues, including the annual Hands Around the Capitol event that aims to draw attention to the needs of youth in the child welfare system and advocates for solutions to address these needs. In May 2024, the YAC hosted their second Legislative Day where members received civic education and advocated for change in the child welfare system while speaking with legislators on issues that are important to them and others with foster care experience. At this event members were also given the opportunity to meet with Governor Tony Evers to share their initiatives.

Over the next five years, DCF will continue to support the local and statewide YACs to participate in similar future opportunities.

Youth Leadership Teams

The purpose of DCF's Youth Leadership Teams (YLT) are to engage youth across the state who have lived experience with the youth justice system (past or present) that want to share their

perspectives and provide input to DCF and develop or build upon their leadership and advocacy skills. Input includes what is working well, areas for improvement, and feedback on policies, program, and resources. In addition, youth are provided an opportunity to work on a project of their choosing to improve the system or inform best practice.

Thirteen founding partners that were either county agencies or youth-serving organizations continue to support these teams and their members and new partnerships have been developed across Wisconsin as youth justice service providers continue to learn about this opportunity. Adult supporters assist in recruiting and engaging youth participants, transport youth to and from meetings (when meetings were held in-person), and, recently, help youth overcome any barriers to attending virtual meetings. More details on the teams and their work are available at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/yj/pdf/ylt-youthvision.pdf>. DCF continues to convene virtual, quarterly meetings with YLT members and their adult supporters and support youth from the leadership teams to assist with the Governor's Juvenile Justice Commission, a requirement of Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) funding from the Department of Justice.

Both the YAC and YLT members received leadership training in a variety of areas, including, but not limited to, strategic sharing/effective advocacy, diversity and inclusion, micro-aggressions, the brain game, and healthy coping skills. YAC and YLT members continue to speak on panels to educate state, county and tribal leaders, direct services providers, student social workers, foster parents, kinship care providers, non-and for-profit agencies, and other external partners as they see fit.

Over the next five years, DCF will continue to support and consult with these advisory bodies to ensure broad and consistent youth voice in DCF policies and programs. More information about Wisconsin DCF's youth leadership opportunities can be found at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youthservices/leadership>.

Relative Caregiver Stakeholders

DCF formed a lived experience team of relative caregivers to actively partner with and provide their perspective on DCF's strategic initiatives. The group is comprised of 18 relative caregivers throughout the state with varying caregiving experience and levels of child welfare system involvement. This group meets virtually on a quarterly basis and the members participate in other lived experience opportunities through DCF as desired. Over the next five years, the stakeholders will identify what topics to be presented on during the annual relative caregiver conference and provide an authentic perspective on DCF's strategic initiatives that contributes to a deeper understanding of relative caregiver families' needs and current service gaps.

Collaboration Specific to Federal Plans and Reviews

As articulated in the Child Welfare Model for Practice, DCF encourages external partner feedback in the development of all federal planning documents focused on system strengths, needs, and strategies for improvement, including this CFSP and subsequent APSRs.

Over the next five years DCF plans to further expand these feedback loops through its ongoing National Youth and Transition Database (NYTD) Improvement Plan process, the title IV-E review in 2024, the CCWIS review in 2025, and CFSR Round 4 in 2026.

In addition to posting this CFSP and subsequent APSRs online, DCF will continue to brief its standing advisory bodies and external partner groups on these plans and reviews to secure feedback.

Wisconsin posts all current CFSR federal plans at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cfsr>

Cross-Systems Collaborations

DCF collaborates with external partners and agencies to provide oversight, direction, and to inform its development of policies and programs that support and frame an effective child welfare system.

Feedback from these bodies informed DCF's overall vision, the goals and objectives of this CFSP, and they will continue to be active participants in ongoing strategic planning efforts throughout the next five years.

MILWAUKEE CHILD WELFARE PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL

Through the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS), DCF directly administers the child welfare system in Milwaukee County, the state's largest county. The Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council is a broad-based advisory body, established by statute in 1995, which advises the department on its Milwaukee County system administration. The Partnership Council meets four times per year and is composed of state legislators, county elected officials, members of the judicial and legal systems, and community members appointed by the governor, i.e., health care and child welfare service providers, partners in the birth to five system, advocates, community members, representatives from the K-12 educational system, and representatives from the mental health and alcohol and other drug abuse (AODA) systems. Its members come from varied professional fields and meetings are public to allow for community participation. Section 48.562 of the Wisconsin Statutes specifies the charge of the Partnership Council, which is to recommend policies and plans for the improvement of Milwaukee County child welfare system including outcome measures and recommending processes to evaluate its effectiveness and funding priorities.

More information on the Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council can be found at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/mcps/partnership-council>.

HEALTH

DCF collaborates with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) for the purpose of improving the quality, access, and timeliness of healthcare services to children and youth in out-of-home care (OHC). This collaboration led to DCF's inclusion on the Wisconsin Council for Mental Health (WCMH) which advises DHS, the Legislature, and the governor on the use of state

and federal resources and on the provision and administration of mental health programs for groups who are not adequately served by the mental health system.

Over the next five years DCF will continue work with DHS on a Datamart project to centralize OHC and Medicaid data from the two state agencies, for evaluation, reporting, monitoring, and research capabilities.

EDUCATION

DCF collaborates with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), the state education agency, for the purpose of improving educational outcomes of children in child welfare and coordination of services and supports that enhance educational needs.

Over the next five years, DCF and DPI will continue to collaborate on an education portal to facilitate improved understanding and information sharing of the educational needs and experiences of children in out-of-home care.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Wisconsin will continue to provide funding for Fostering Success programs through the University of Wisconsin System to offer tangible support and resources, as well as guidance and community to students with foster care experience.

Transition Resource Agencies (TRAs) collaborate with the Fostering Success programs in their service areas so that youth involved in Fostering Success can benefit from regional Independent Living (IL) services, and vice versa. This partnership can be a valuable referral avenue for potentially IL-eligible youth since the programs have shared goals to increase youth access to postsecondary programs and increase student academic retention and success.

Over the next five years, DCF will re-evaluate the most meaningful ways to partner with postsecondary institutions to build educational pipelines for youth from out-of-home care.

More information regarding planned collaboration with postsecondary partnerships is detailed in the Chafee section of this plan.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

DCF collaborates with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) for the purpose of ensuring that young children have access to high-quality learning opportunities and other supports for families with young children, such as home visiting. An example of coordination in this area includes the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) which is co-chaired by the DCF secretary and DPI superintendent. The ECAC is a high-level stakeholder group comprised of public and private leaders that provides advice on the strategic direction for the state's efforts to promote early childhood development. The ECAC has developed a cross-system agenda with the overall goal of having all young children be safe, healthy, and successful. DCF anticipates that its strategic planning efforts over the next five years may uncover other potential areas of overlap

and focus between child welfare and early childhood that could be elevated and discussed by this advisory body.

More information on the ECAC can be found at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/ecac>.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT PREVENTION BOARD (CANPB)

The Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board is the designated Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) lead in Wisconsin.

DCF and the Prevention Board currently collaborate on abusive head trauma prevention. The Prevention Board is charged in Wisconsin Statutes with providing educational materials for parents to prevent abusive head trauma and provides community-based funding to implement the Period of PURPLE Crying® with four grantees. Wisconsin Statutes require home visiting programs to provide parents with newborns educational information on abusive head trauma prevention and DCF was able to integrate the Period of PURPLE Crying® utilizing funds provided by CANPB.

DCF also utilizes CANPB funding for its evidence-informed parent education efforts through the Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) to prevent child abuse and neglect, specifically in families with children pre-natal to five years of age.

Over the next five years DCF and the Prevention Board will look to expand collaborative efforts surrounding home visiting and prevention to further leverage resources to ensure children grow up in safe, stable, and nurturing families and communities.

COLLABORATION TO SUPPORT THE CHILD WELFARE WORKFORCE

Over the next five years DCF's Bureau of Regional Operations (BRO) will support the coordination of child welfare and other key local services, including child care, child support and Wisconsin Works (the Wisconsin program for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families – TANF). BRO will continue to work with DCF's child welfare system to provide collaboration, coordination and technical assistance to counties and the child welfare workforce regarding child welfare policies and programs. BRO will regularly share information with county child welfare supervisors and directors through regional monthly meetings, or in response to individual questions or acute agency needs. This offers child welfare supervisors and directors the opportunity to receive DCF updates and guidance, discuss child welfare workforce recruitment and retention issues, provide peer support to each other, and provide information about child welfare professional training.

DCF also collaborates with the Wisconsin County Human Services Association's (WCHSA) Children, Youth, and Families Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) as a mechanism for coordination with the counties and solicitation of feedback. The WCHSA's PAC functions as a steering committee for high level child welfare policy and program development and is comprised of leadership from a subset of counties in the state. In early 2024, DCF presented the

goals of Wisconsin's 2025 – 2029 CFSP to this group and expects that ongoing communication and collaborative approach regarding these efforts to continue over the next five years.

CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS

Consistent with CAPTA requirements for citizen review panels (CRP), Wisconsin currently has seven panels:

- Jefferson County Citizen Review Panel
- Langlade County Citizen Review Panel
- Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council
- Outagamie County Citizen Review Panel
- Polk County Citizen Review Panel
- St. Croix County Citizen Review Panel
- Wisconsin Youth Advisory Council

Over the next five years DCF expects all panels to fulfill their responsibilities as required by CAPTA regarding meetings, mission, and submission of annual reports. Each panel receives CAPTA funds in the amount of \$10,000 per year to support their activities, which includes sending panel members to the annual National Citizen Review Panel Conference.

The panels engage and coordinate local activities and benefit from attending the national conference, where they can make connections, learn about other states' CRP initiatives, and bring ideas back to Wisconsin. For more information about the panel's most recent activities, please see the citizen review panels' annual reports and DCF responses online at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/prevention/crp>.

Ongoing collaborative efforts during this period will include continued CFP alignment with DCF's Putting Families First Initiative, the elevation of lived experience voice, and jointly supporting Wisconsin's child welfare workforce.

COURT SYSTEM COLLABORATION

Over the next five years, DCF will collaborate with the Children's Court Improvement Project (CCIP), and court system overall, in multiple ways for the purpose of ongoing coordination with judicial and legal partners and to support the jointly held goal of improving the safety, permanency, and well-being of children, youth, and families in the state. This includes the semi-annual Wisconsin Commission on Children, Families and the Courts which identifies and addresses barriers to safety, permanency, and child and family well-being within the judicial, legal and child welfare systems. This Commission also created separate subcommittees to address child safety decision-making and the educational challenges faced by children and youth in out-of-home care.

Joint Projects

The two entities regularly engage in joint child welfare program planning, policy and legislative development, and program improvement activities. Projects that will continue over the next five years, the Tailored Dispositional Orders Project, the title IV-E Legal Representation Program, and the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA) Continuous Quality Improvement Project.

The joint Tailored Dispositional Orders Project seeks to promote the shared responsibility of parents, child welfare agencies, court, and legal partners in achieving timely reunification for children. The project outcomes helped to identify strategies for creating shorter, tailored Conditions for Return (reunification), and better promote positive behavior changes needed to safely return children to their home of origin. Future accomplishments will be shared with counties at multi-disciplinary conferences, trainings, and meetings to engage new counties.

DCF and CCIP will continue to expand the title IV-E Legal Representation Reimbursement Program in Wisconsin to improve the quality and frequency of representation for children and parents. Activities will include informing county agencies and courts of available funding, providing technical assistance, exploring ways to implement an interdisciplinary practice model, and monitoring county programs. In the next five years, DCF will take steps to implement a recent federal rule change to allow title IV-E reimbursement in civil legal proceedings necessary to carry out the state title IV-E plan.

Training

The biennial Conference on Child Welfare and the Courts is co-sponsored by CCIP and DCF to bring county, tribal, and state leadership together to advance sustainable solutions to improve the lives of children and families. County and tribal teams review select child welfare agency and court data to develop action plans. The 2023 Conference on Child Welfare and the Courts: Stronger Together, Uniting for Children (offered in-person and virtually) had over 800 court, child welfare, and legal participants from 65 counties, 8 tribes, and multiple state agencies. Joint planning will continue for the September 2025 Conference on Child Welfare and the Courts with an emphasis on incorporating lived experience into the conference. The 2023 conference included parents who presented on their experience with the child welfare/court system and with the Parents Supporting Parents program.

CCIP provides legal trainings to caseworkers through DCF's contracted Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCPDS). CCIP is currently providing four CHIPS and Minor Guardianships trainings and four Termination of Parental Rights trainings to county and tribal caseworkers and supervisors throughout the state. These in-person and virtual trainings focus on the court procedures, defining legal terms, which Circuit Court forms should be filed, and testifying tips for caseworkers. The trainings have been well-received, and most have been at capacity.

CCIP presents at DCF's annual Relative Caregiver Conference on various topics including understanding the Juvenile Court process with an emphasis on explaining CHIPS and Minor

Guardianship cases to caregivers, including their role and rights in court proceedings. These presentations led to CCIP providing webinars for foster parents on the juvenile court process.

Judicial Committees

DCF's involvement in committees staffed by CCIP is varied and extensive. For example, the DCF secretary and leadership serve as members of the Wisconsin Commission on Children, Families, and the Courts, which is a broad-based external partner advisory body that provides input on court improvement projects and child welfare related policies and activities. The commission, chaired by the Wisconsin Supreme Court Chief Justice, is charged with developing and institutionalizing meaningful collaboration across systems to identify and address barriers to safety, permanency, and child and family well-being at the state and local levels. In 2024, a subcommittee on Elevating Family Voice was convened to improve representation and participation by children, parents, and caregivers.

CCIP sponsors the multi-disciplinary Judicial Engagement Team (JET) initiative in 10 counties and DCF child welfare regional coordinators are invited to those multi-disciplinary meetings and trainings. JET is designed to engage judicial systems to support children and their families by integrating best practices, data-centered case management, and cross-system collaboration.

Over the next five years, DCF will continue to utilize the Wisconsin Commission, the Wisconsin Judicial Committee on Child Welfare, and other committees staffed by the Children's Court Improvement Program (CCIP) to provide agency updates to and solicit input from judicial officers, attorneys, and other external partners regarding legislation and policies. Recent topics have included the elevating family voice and lived experience expertise, DCF's Putting Families First efforts, revisions to the safety intervention standards, Family Legal Advocacy and Supports program, racial disparity in the Wisconsin child welfare system, the Permanency Plan Business Process Re-engineering Project, the Quality Case Planning (QCP) Project, and development of the Youth Justice Court Report. These committees also provided input on the Wisconsin's goals and initiatives covered in this Child and Family Services Plan.

DCF Committees

The DCF Judicial Workgroup is currently staffed by DCF's Bureau of Youth Services and facilitates efforts in coordination with CCIP. Members advised DCF on efforts to pilot tailored and effective court orders in youth justice and child welfare. Over the next five years, this group will continue to provide additional expertise related to youth justice initiatives, issues, policies, and legislation.

CCIP and/or circuit court judicial officers also participate in several ongoing DCF efforts, including the Child Welfare Continuous Quality Improvement Advisory Committee; the Family Legal Advocacy and Supports Program (a pre-petition legal clinic designed to keep families out of the formal child welfare system); and DCF's Out-Of-Home Care Office Hours, a standing opportunity for local agency staff to bring specific issues to the Out-of-Home Care Policy Unit for discussion and technical assistance.

Federal Reporting and Reviews

CCIP assisted DCF's strategic planning efforts in the development of Wisconsin's 2025 - 2029 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) and will be an active participant in all federal reviews described under the Collaboration Specific to Federal Plans and Reviews Section.

OTHER CROSS-SYSTEM COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

The DCF secretary or secretary's designee will continue to serve on additional statewide councils and workgroups that promote cross-system collaboration and coordination. Some of these include the State Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse, the Wisconsin Council on Mental Health, the Council on Offender Reentry, the Children's Long Term Support Council, the Governor's Domestic Violence Task Force, the Governor's Birth to 3 Interagency Coordinating Council, and both the Criminal and Governor's Justice Coordinating Councils.

DCF staff also serve on the multidisciplinary Wisconsin Department of Justice State Task Force on Children in Need, as required under sections 107(b)(2) and 107(c)(1) of CAPTA since 1991. This is a key component of Wisconsin's Children's Justice Act compliance plan.

2. Update on the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes

Context for State's Current Performance

This section captures data related to the Children and Family Service Review (CFSR) performance outcomes specific to safety, permanency, and well-being, noted trends with respect to national performance standards, and highlights initiatives Wisconsin plans to address in each area over the next five years.

CFSP Data Sources

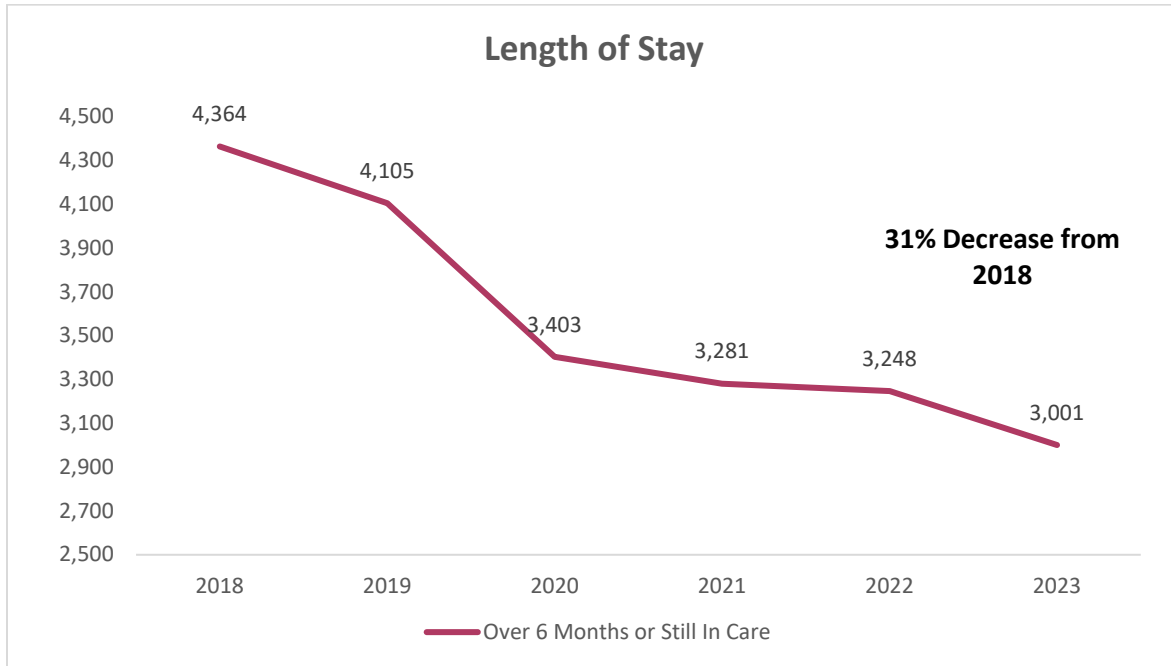
In accordance with 45 CFR 1355.52(b), Wisconsin utilized its Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (eWiSACWIS) in developing the 2025 – 2029 CFSP. In addition, the following data sources were used to evaluate Wisconsin's child welfare system:

- Federal performance measures;
- The most recently available case review data using the federal On-Site Review Instrument (OSRI);
- Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Data;
- Children's Court Improvement Project (CCIP) Review Data;
- Information and reports from counties, tribes, and other external partners; and
- State administrative data when available.

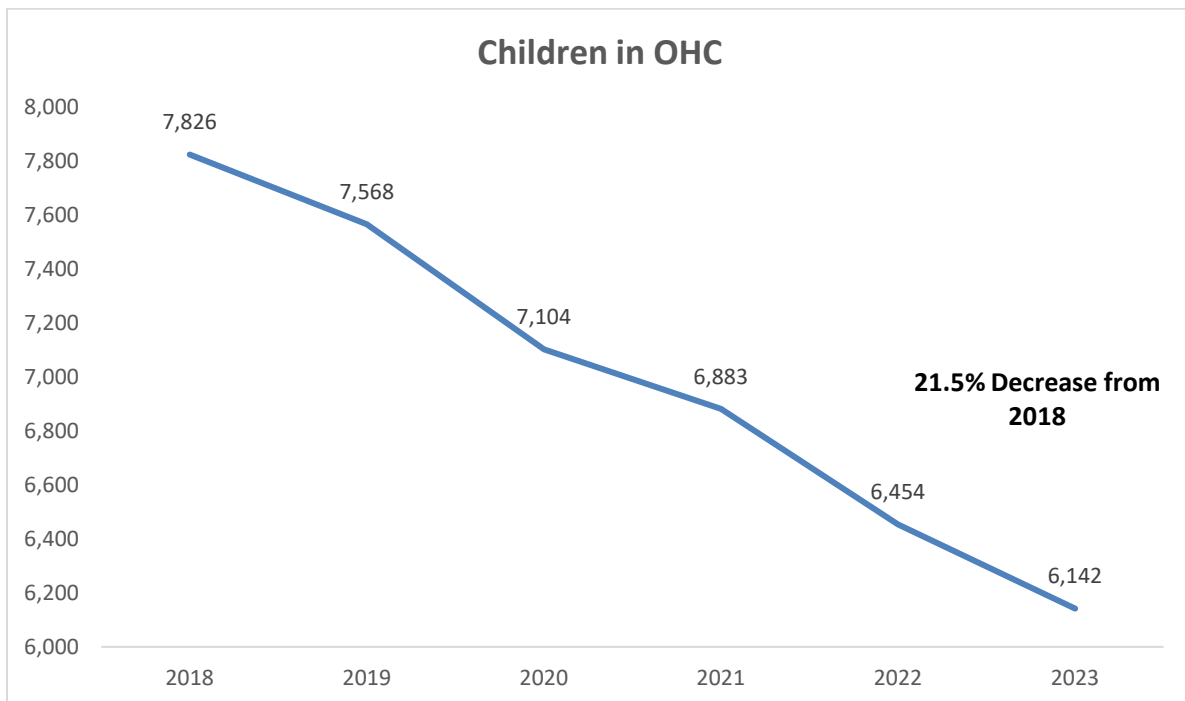
Current Performance Overview

Over the past five years, Wisconsin saw a decline in the number of children staying in care longer than six months and in out-of-home care (OHC) cases overall. This was accompanied by a proportional increase in the number of children placed with relatives and achieving permanency through guardianship as Wisconsin transitioned the child welfare system to be more family-focused and collaborative in serving more children in-home.

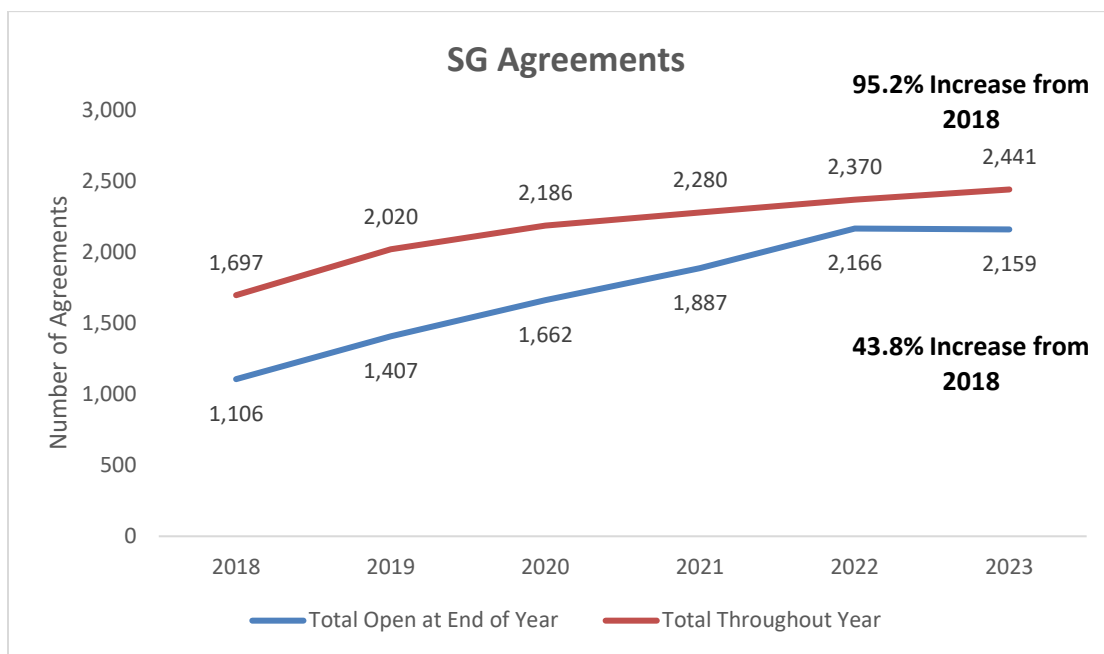
Length of Stay: Children that Entered OHC within a Calendar Year (CY) and Discharged or Remained in OHC at the end of the Year:



Total Children in OHC on 12/31 by Year:



Total Subsidized Guardianship (SG) Agreements by Year:



These trends reflect the impact of Wisconsin's Putting Families First Transformation and if continued, DCF expects the state should see fewer children in OHC over the next five years.

More Wisconsin OHC placement information, including child demographics, trends in the OHC system, and placement and outcomes data (stability, discharges, length of stay, etc.), through 2022 can be found at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/5692.pdf>.

Child and Family Outcomes

This section represents data specific to each of the eighteen safety, permanency, and well-being case review items. Information includes the State 2018 CFSR results, performance on the CFSR national standards, and available state administrative data.

Safety Outcomes 1 and 2

Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.

Item 1: Timelines of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment.

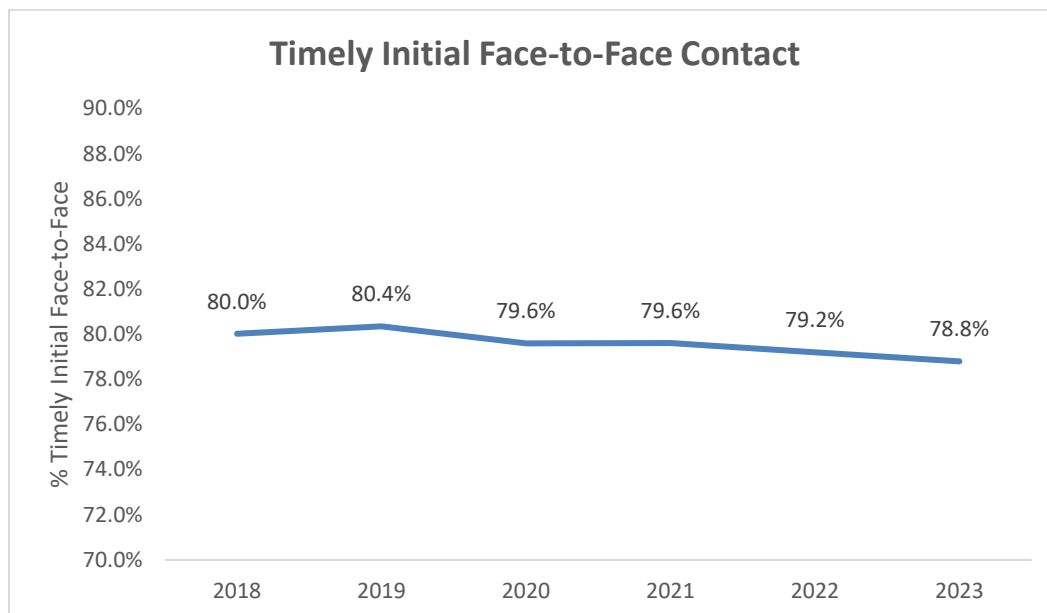
Were the agency's responses to all **accepted child maltreatment reports initiated**, and **face-to-face contact** with the child(ren) made, within the time frames established by agency policies or state statutes?

	2018 CFSR (65)	2019 -2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020 -2021 PIP YR 1 (80)	2021 -2022 PIP YR 2 (77)	2022 - 2023 PIP YR 3 & NOP* (111)
Item 1	93%	75%	74%	77%	81%

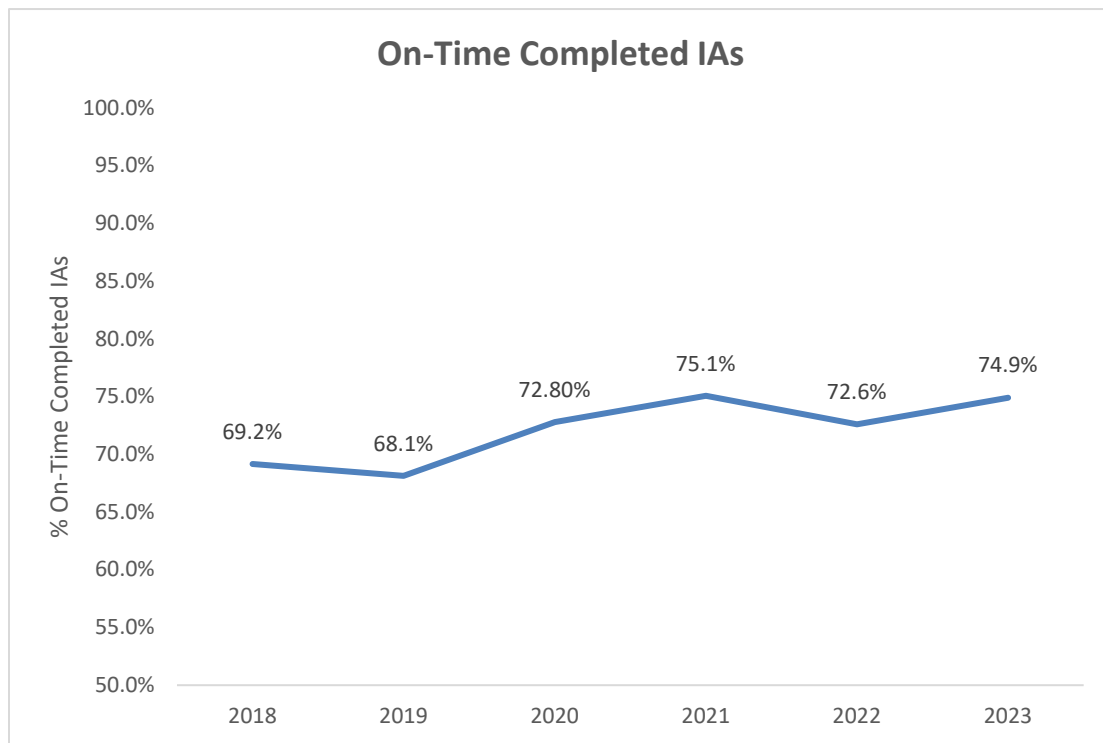
*Wisconsin Non-Overlapping Period (NOP) ran from 6/1/22 through 11/30/23.

It is important to note that case review data consists of point in time measures of randomly selected cases, so it is difficult to compare yearly results. Though that does not preclude DCF from utilizing this data to inform practice and measure the results of its ongoing initiatives throughout the next five years.

Administrative Caseworker Contact Data



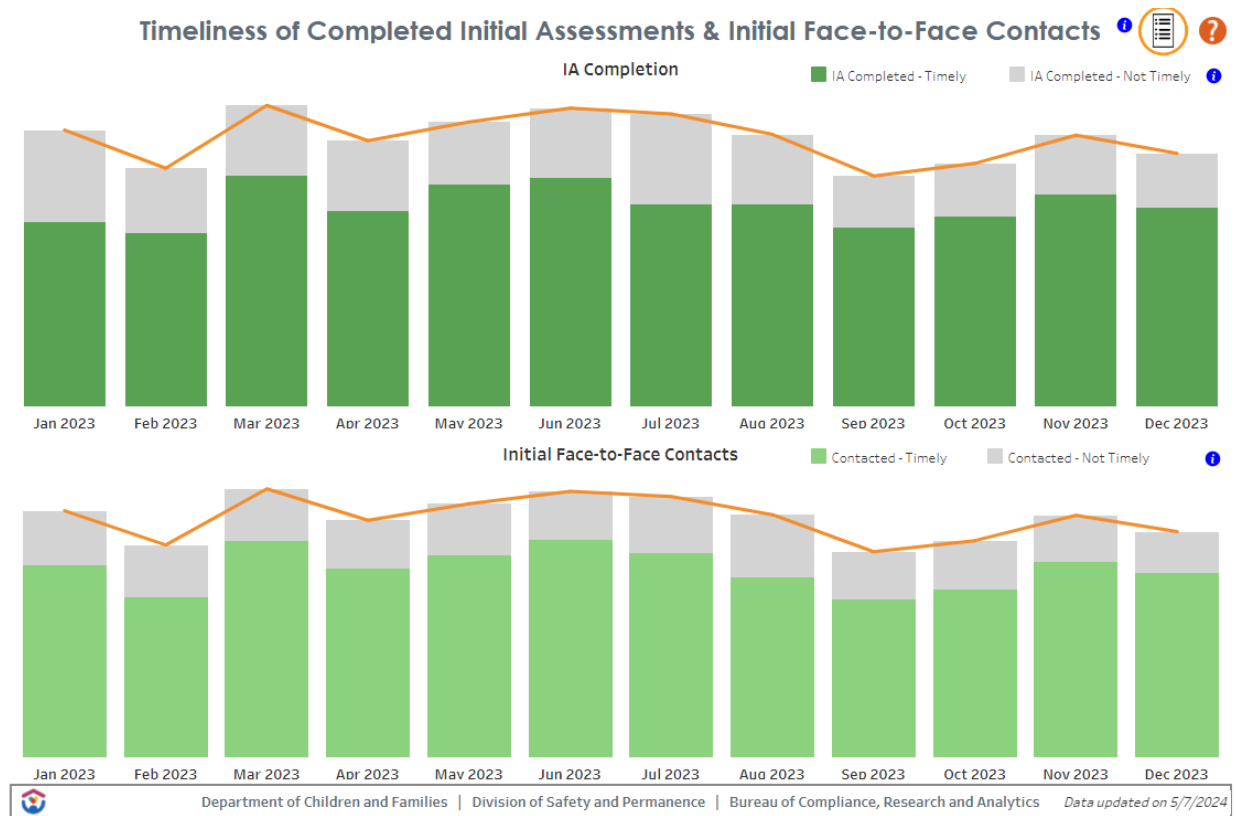
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Timely Face-to-Face Contact	80.0%	80.4%	79.6%	79.6%	79.2%	78.8%
Total IAs Completed	27,148	25,352	22,684	22,180	21,893	20,554



	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
On Time IAs	69.2%	68.1%	72.80%	75.1%	72.6%	74.9%
Total IAs Completed	27,148	25,352	22,684	22,180	21,893	20,554

The timely completion of Initial Assessments is an important safety measure to protect children and DCF plans to continue working with local agencies over the next five years to ensure the upward trend reflected in the data above continues.

Initial Assessment Dashboard



In CFSR Round 3, Wisconsin failed to achieve the required level of improvement for Item 1. It will remain an area of focus throughout the next five years as Wisconsin approaches its CFSR Round 4 review in 2026.

Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

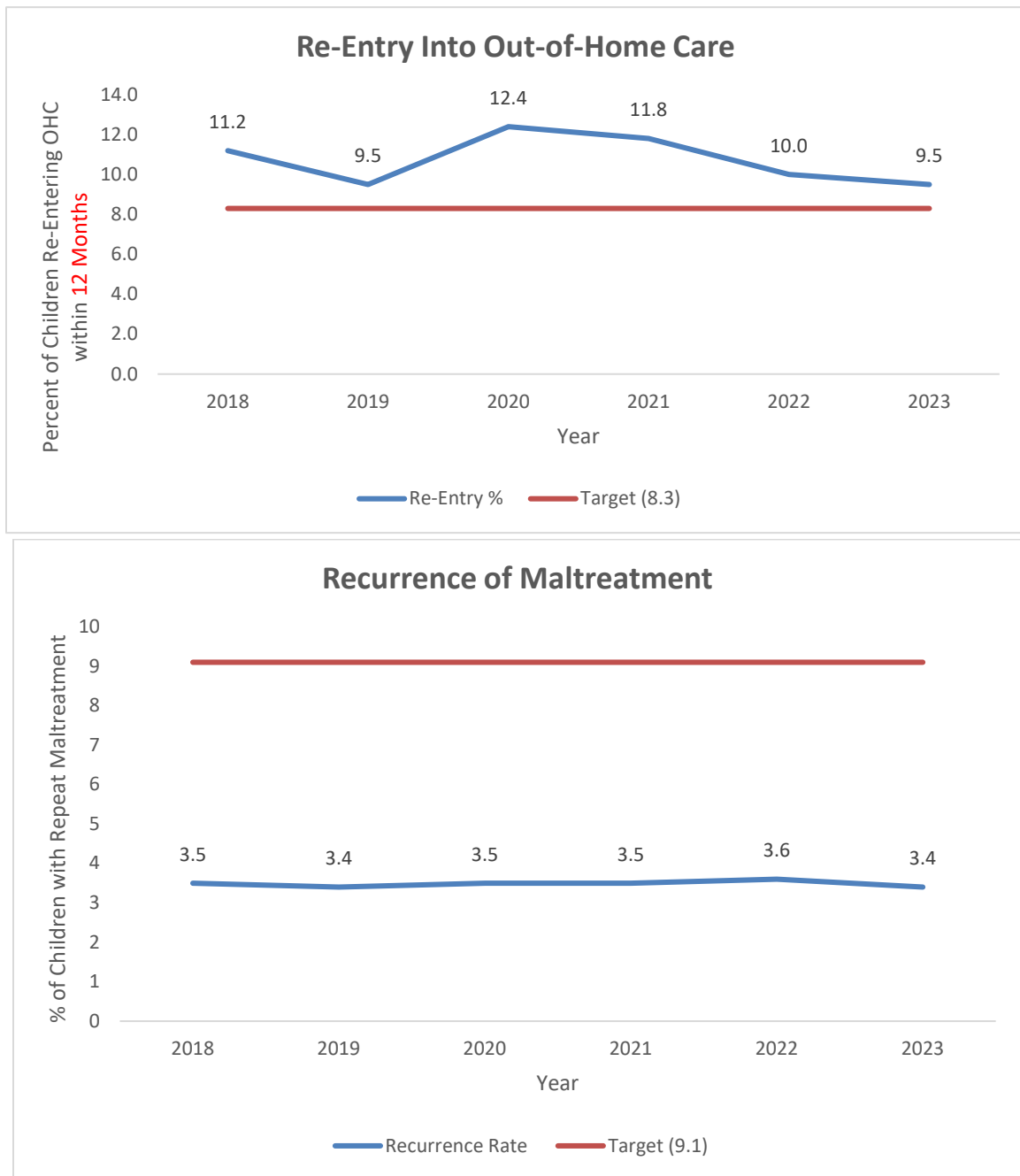
Item 2: Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in the Home and Prevent Removal or Re-Entry into Foster Care.

Did the agency make concerted efforts to provide services to the family to **prevent** children's **entry into foster care or re-entry** after reunification?

	2018 CFSR (65)	2019 -2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020 -2021 PIP YR 1 (80)	2021 -2022 PIP YR 2 (77)	2022 - 2023 PIP YR 3 & NOP* (111)
Item 2	58%	82%	82%	85%	77%

*Wisconsin Non-Overlapping Period (NOP) ran from 6/1/22 through 11/30/23.

National Performance Data-CFSR 3 Measures*



*Note, the X axis for both CFSR3 measures above notes performance during the CY Outcome Window.

Recent data shows that Wisconsin is approaching the national benchmark for Re-Entry into OHC and remains consistently well below on Recurrence of Maltreatment.

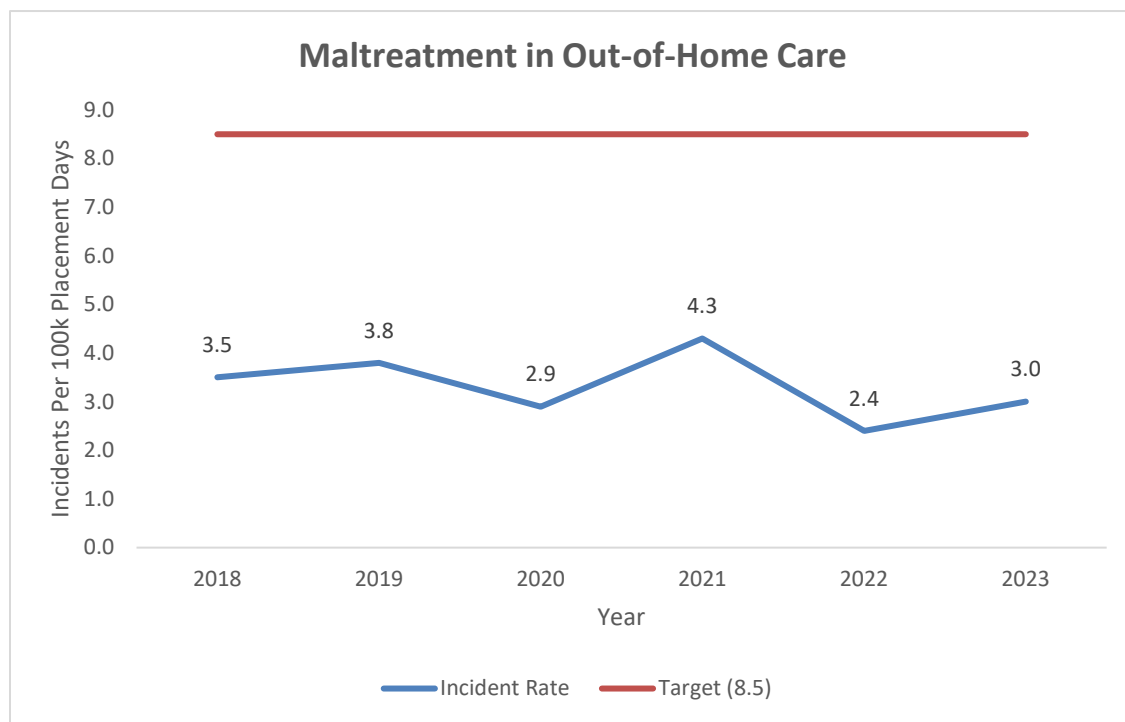
Item 3: Risk and Safety Assessment and Management.

Did the agency make concerted efforts to **assess and address the risk and safety** concerns related to the child(ren) in their own homes or while in foster care?

	2018 CFSR (65)	2019 -2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020 -2021 PIP YR 1 (80)	2021 -2022 PIP YR 2 (77)	2022 - 2023 PIP YR 3 & NOP* (111)
Item 3	35%	75%	78%	66%	50%

**Wisconsin Non-Overlapping Period (NOP) ran from 6/1/22 through 11/30/23.*

National Performance Data-CFSR 3 Measures*



**Note, the X axis for the measures above notes performance during the CY Outcome Window.*

Recent data shows that Wisconsin remains consistently well below the national benchmark for Maltreatment in OHC.

Administrative Initial Assessment Data

Safety Decision by Initial Assessment (IA) Disposition for Primary Caregiver CPS Initial Assessments: Calendar Year (CY) 2023

Initial Assessment Disposition	Safe		Unsafe		No Safety Decision		Total	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Case Closed	13,899	73.4%	123	0.6%	253	0.5%	14,275	75.4%
Case Closed – Child Safe and Referred to Community Services	1,634	8.6%	36	0.2%	130	0.3%	1,800	9.5%
Case Opened – Ongoing CPS Services: Petition	161	0.9%	1,413	7.5%	70	0.1%	1,644	8.7%
Case Already Opened – Ongoing CPS Services	165	0.9%	172	0.9%	12	0.0%	349	1.8%
Case Closed – Child Safe and Referred to Community Response Program	260	1.4%	2	0.0%	21	0.0%	283	1.5%
Case Opened – Ongoing CPS Services: Voluntary	159	0.8%	294	1.6%	3	0.0%	456	2.4%
Case Opened – Non-CPS Services	103	0.5%	12	0.1%	6	0.0%	121	0.6%
Case Opened – DMCPs Safety Services	12	0.1%	20	1.1%	0	0.0%	32	0.2%
Total	16,393	86.6%	2,072	12.0%	495	0.9%	18,960	100.0%

This chart demonstrates that in Wisconsin, when an IA safety decision is safe, the case has a high percentage chance of being closed, and when the decision is unsafe, the case was either opened or already open for ongoing CPS services.

Confirming a Safe Environment

Confirming Safe Environment (CSE) is an assessment used to confirm the home environment is safe prior to placing a child in OHC. If there is a pre-existing approved CSE, a Reconfirming Safe Environment (RCSE) is completed. CSEs are due ten calendar days after the placement begin date, and RCSEs are due 180 calendar days after the previous RCSE or CSE approval date.

CY 2023 Data:

	CSE	RCSE
Amount Due:	2,315	2,015
Completed:	1,752	2,015
Completed Timely:	510	1,094

Risk Management Services by Child/Provider Match Category

When a risk is identified during a CSE/RCSE, a risk management plan must be created to mitigate the risk and ensure the environment is safe for the child. Considerations for a risk management plan include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Additional or special training for placement providers.
- Additional contact by agency or other providers.
- Re-arranging the living environment.

The table below shows the number of risk management services provided to each child/provider match category determined by a child's approved CSE/RCSE. The table also shows what percentage of the service was received by each match category.

The definition of Child/Provider match category is whether the child's level of need (LON) matches the provider's level of care (LOC). These data include the most recently completed CSE/RCSE for each child's placement with identified risk assessment and management from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023.

Risk Management Services	Child/Provider Match Category							
	LOC Exceeds LON (n= 262)		LOC matches LON (n=471)		LON exceeds LOC (n=334)		N/A (n=446)	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Special Training	112	42.7%	122	25.9%	56	16.8%	94	21.1%
Additional Contact	82	31.3%	123	26.1%	99	29.6%	116	26.0%
Rearrange Living	43	16.4%	73	15.5%	46	13.8%	45	10.1%
Closer Supervision	160	61.1%	270	57.3%	188	56.3%	248	55.6%
Additional Rules	39	14.9%	53	11.3%	42	12.6%	44	9.9%
Special Equipment	21	8.0%	33	7.0%	34	10.2%	25	5.6%

In CFSR Round 3, Wisconsin failed to achieve the required level of improvement for Item 3. It will remain an area of focus throughout the next five years as Wisconsin approaches its CFSR Round 4 review in 2026.

Safety Outcomes Strengths and Challenges

Over the past five years, DCF has continued to orient the child welfare system toward the goal of keeping children with their families and supported in their homes and communities. The safety data captured throughout this section provides a way of looking at Wisconsin's child welfare system's ability to maintain children safely in their home. Wisconsin's ability to assess and address safety concerns are measured using the Onsite Review Instrument (OSRI) for the 333 applicable cases reviewed over Wisconsin's CFSR Round 3 PIP period. Administrative data shows performance holding relatively steady over the last five years and Wisconsin continues to

exceed federal standards by limiting the recurrence of maltreatment and the incidents of reported maltreatment in out-of-home care.

Over this time period, challenges pertaining to timely Initial Assessments came up infrequently and sporadically. Regional BRO coordinators continued to follow-up with counties when timely completion numbers dipped abnormally low to discover the cause and offer support. Common reasons for Initial Assessments not being completed in a timely manner were directly related to staff turnover and high caseloads. Safety of children always takes priority; therefore, when caseloads are high and staff numbers are low, documentation detail and timeliness are more likely to be negatively affected as staff prioritize safety related responsibilities in the field.

Initiatives to Address Safety Over the Next Five Years

- The state will update its Initial Assessment Standards to streamline practice and documentation requirements, elevate family voice, and to support better engagement.
- The Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System will continue to support Applied Learning Communities (ALC) and Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) projects that attend to safety assessment and planning practices, family engagement skill development, and other critical teaming and professional collaboration responsibilities for child welfare staff and their supervisors.
- The provision of required Initial and Ongoing training in safety decision making is another professional development resource that will continue to focus on safety practices.
- DSP will work with the National Partnership for Child Safety and the University of Kentucky to develop and implement a series of multi-modal, self-directed, learning tools related to safety work that can be accessed by local staff and used by supervisors to enhance staff knowledge, skills, and abilities related to safety assessment and planning practices.
- Reporting tools and dashboards will continue to be available to the state and local agencies to track and monitor safety outcomes and patterns to identify areas where performance is strong, or improvements are needed.
- DSP will continue to coordinate with the Bureau of Regional Operations (BRO) to assess initial face-to-face contact timeliness during the CPS process. Monthly reports are gathered, documented, and sent by BRO to the DSP lead for further analysis. In addition, DSP is working with BRO to establish a new metric that will allow local agencies to better understand how the use of in-home planning versus child removal relates to child safety.
- DSP will continue to allocate flexible Targeted Safety Support Funds (TSSF) to local county and tribal child welfare agencies to prevent removal and re-entry into the child welfare system by keeping children safely in home. Ongoing technical assistance will serve as an important venue for peer support and shared learning to best support local agencies in meeting safety needs of families.

Permanency Outcomes 1 and 2

Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

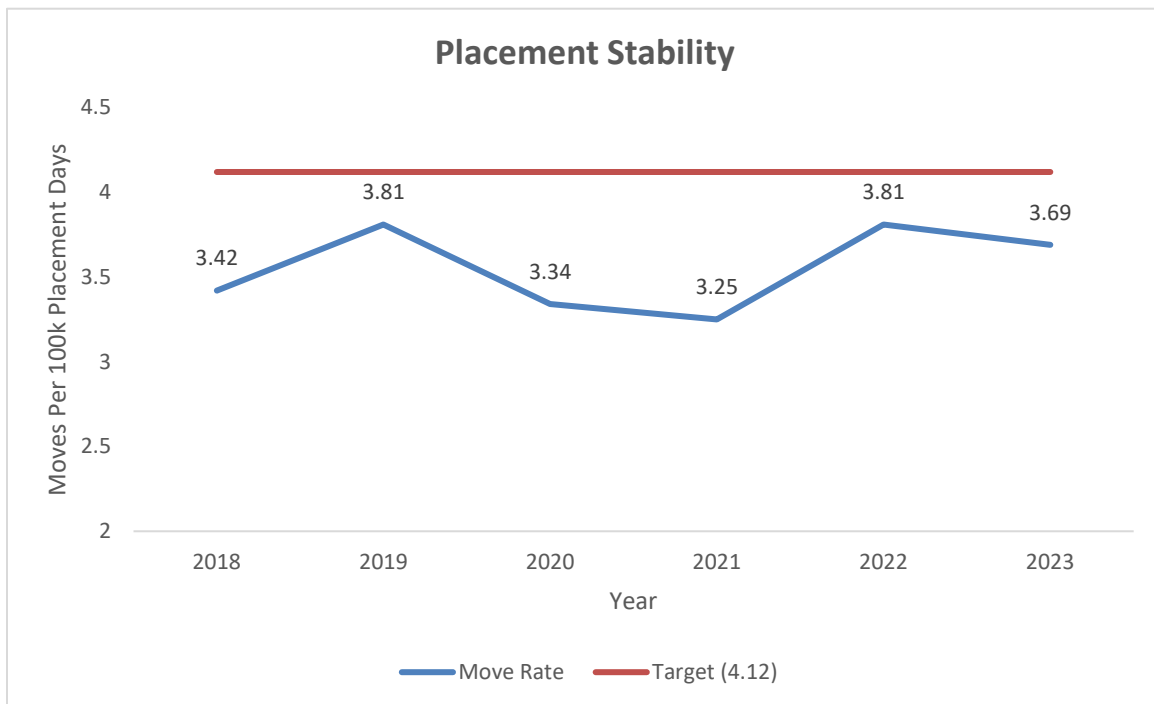
Item 4: Stability of Foster Care Placement.

Is the child in foster care in a **stable placement** and were any changes in the child's placement in the best interests of the child and consistent with achieving the child's permanency goal(s)?

	2018 CFSR (65)	2019 -2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020 -2021 PIP YR 1 (80)	2021 -2022 PIP YR 2 (77)	2022 - 2023 PIP YR 3 & NOP* (111)
Item 4	88%	73%	73%	51%	63%

*Wisconsin Non-Overlapping Period (NOP) ran from 6/1/22 through 11/30/23.

National Performance Data-CFSR 3 Measures



Recent data shows that Wisconsin remains consistently well below the national benchmark for Placement Stability, though Wisconsin failed to achieve the required level of improvement for Item 4 in CFSR Round 3. It will remain an area of focus throughout the next five years as Wisconsin approaches its CFSR Round 4 review in 2026.

Item 5: Permanency Goal for Child Case Record Review Results.

Did the agency establish **appropriate permanency goals** for the child in a **timely manner**?

	2018 CFSR (65)	2019 -2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020 -2021 PIP YR 1 (80)	2021 -2022 PIP YR 2 (77)	2022-2023 PIP YR 3 & NOP* (111)
Item 5	59%	38%	50%	40%	35%

**Wisconsin Non-Overlapping Period (NOP) ran from 6/1/22 through 11/30/23.*

Administrative Data**Permanency Plan Goals**

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Adoption	1,674	1,759	1,737	1,595	1,673	1,464
Reunification	5,862	5,660	5,271	4,962	4,692	4,620
Guardianship	1,095	1,055	1,079	1,003	989	836
Permanent Placement with a Fit and Willing Relative	152	135	93	85	91	74
OPPLA	332	301	320	312	273	274
No Permanency Plan Goal Listed	1,725	1,603	1,388	1,227	1,283	1,176
Total	10,840	10,513	9,888	9,184	9,001	8,444

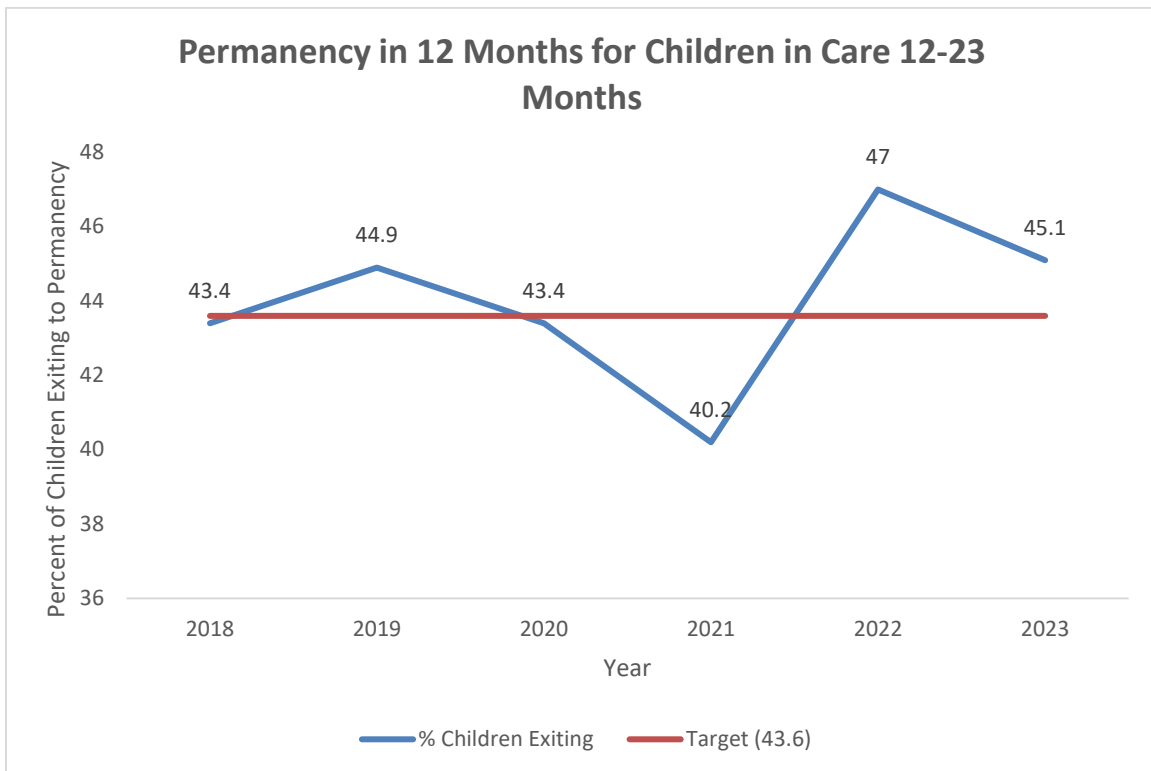
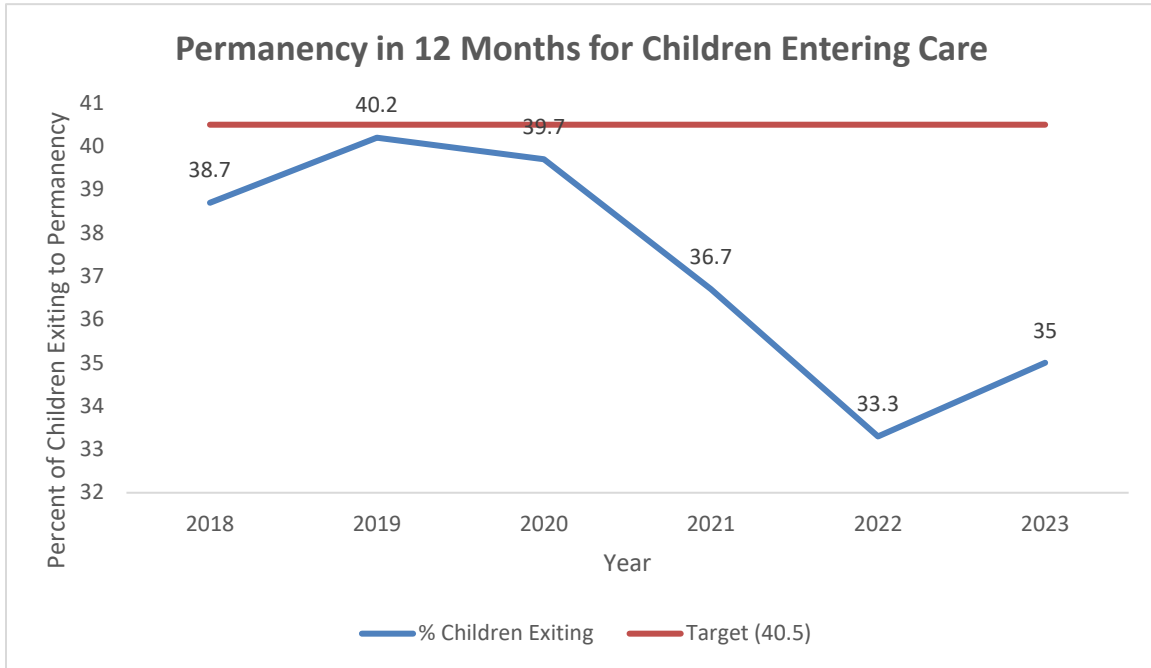
Item 6: Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement. Case Record Review Results.

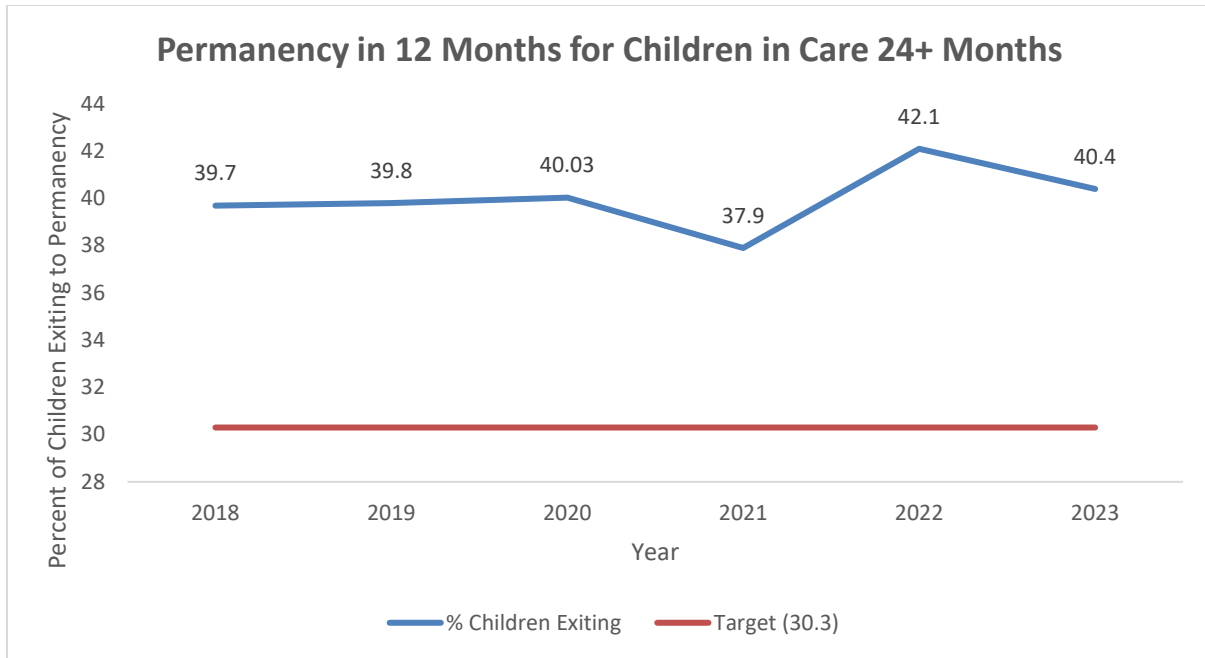
Did the Agency make concerted efforts to **achieve reunification, guardianship, adoption, or other planned permanent living arrangement** for the child?

	2018 CFSR (65)	2019 -2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020 -2021 PIP YR 1 (80)	2021 -2022 PIP YR 2 (77)	2022 - 2023 PIP YR 3 & NOP* (111)
Item 6	48%	30%	29%	33%	27%

**Wisconsin Non-Overlapping Period (NOP) ran from 6/1/22 through 11/30/23.*

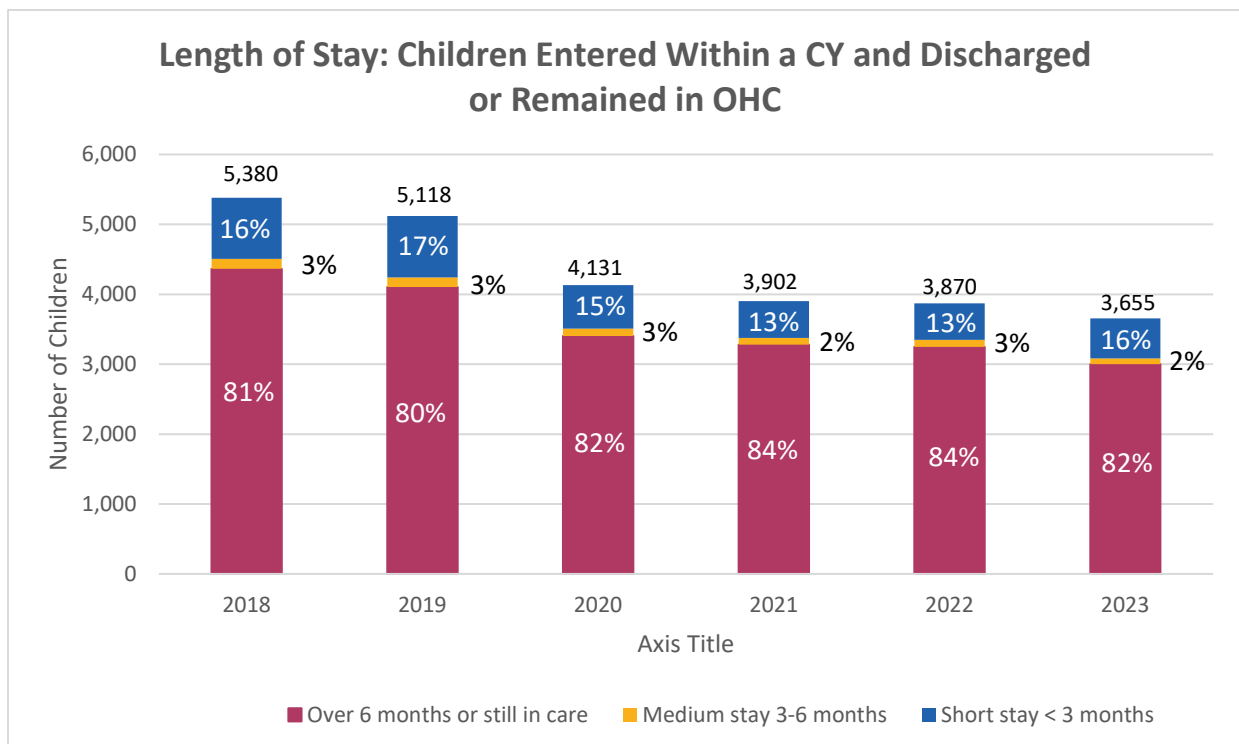
National Performance Data-CFSR 3 Measures* and Administrative Data



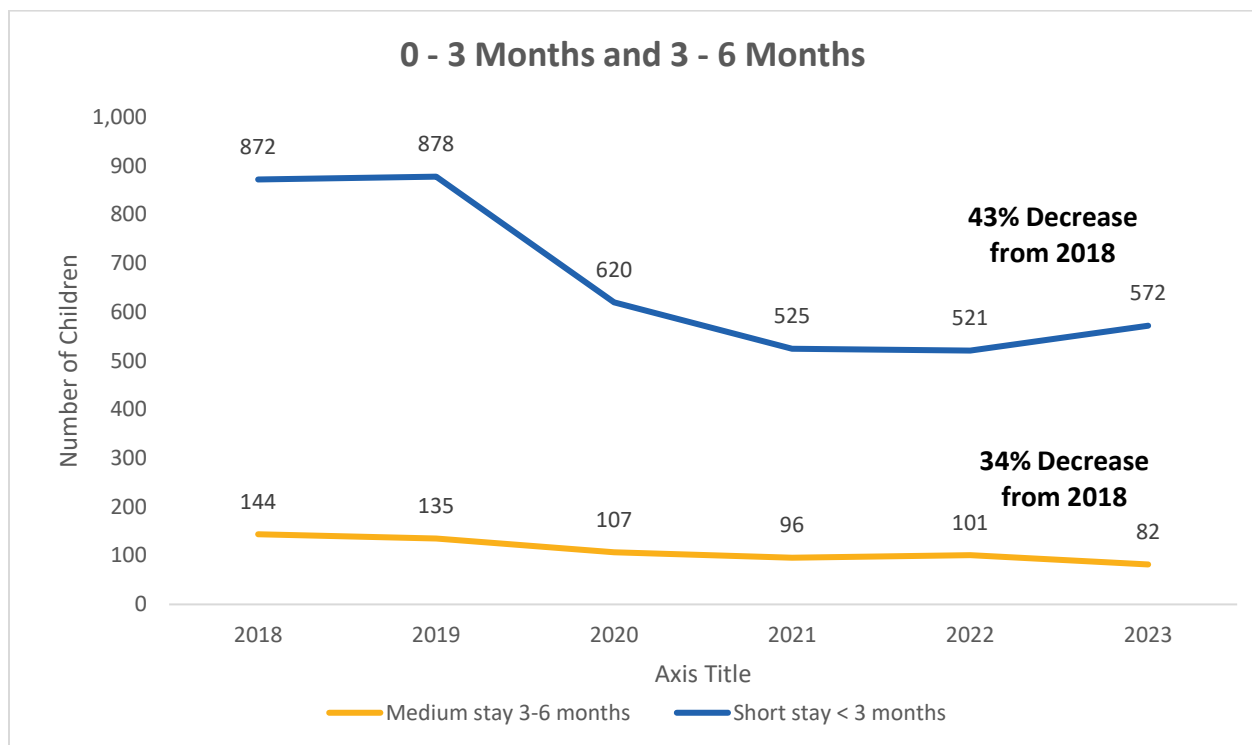
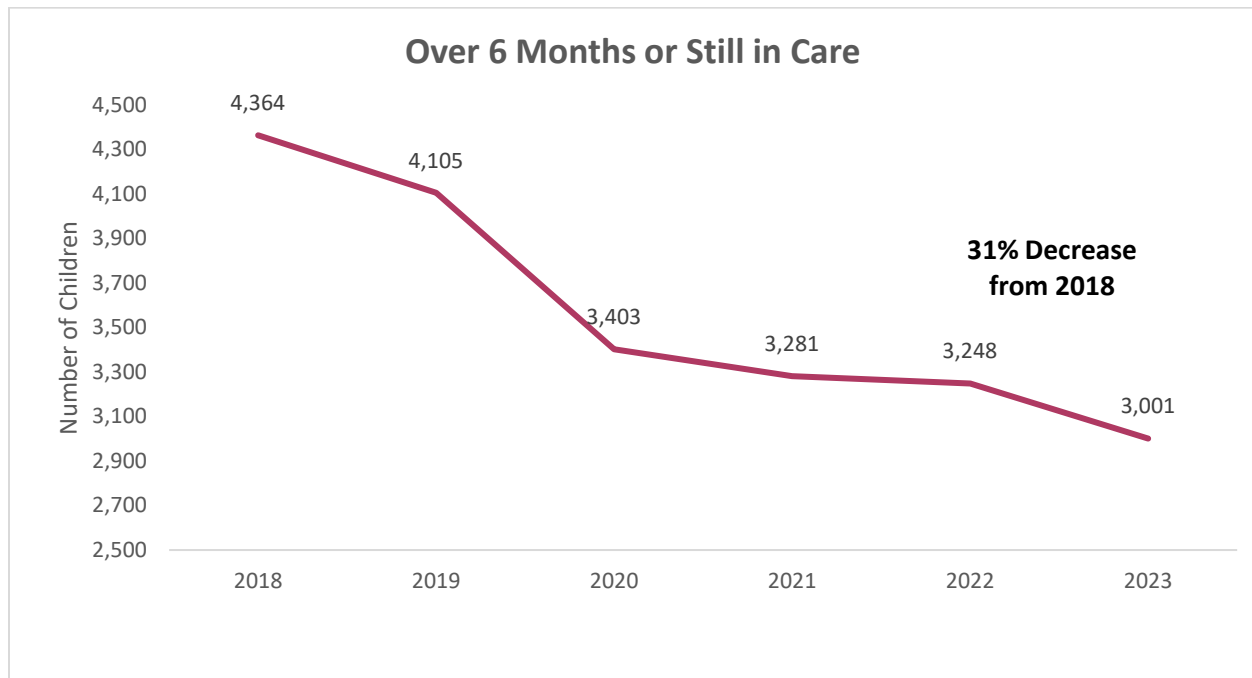


**Note, the X axis for the CFSR3 measures above notes performance during the CY Outcome Window.*

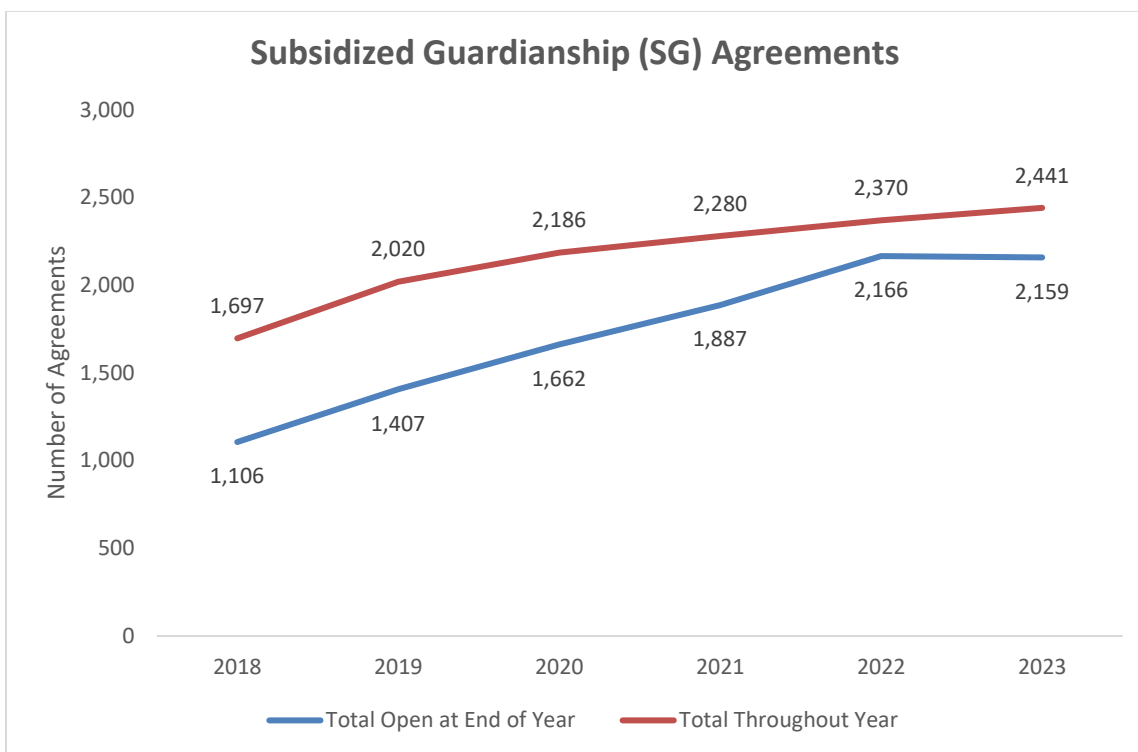
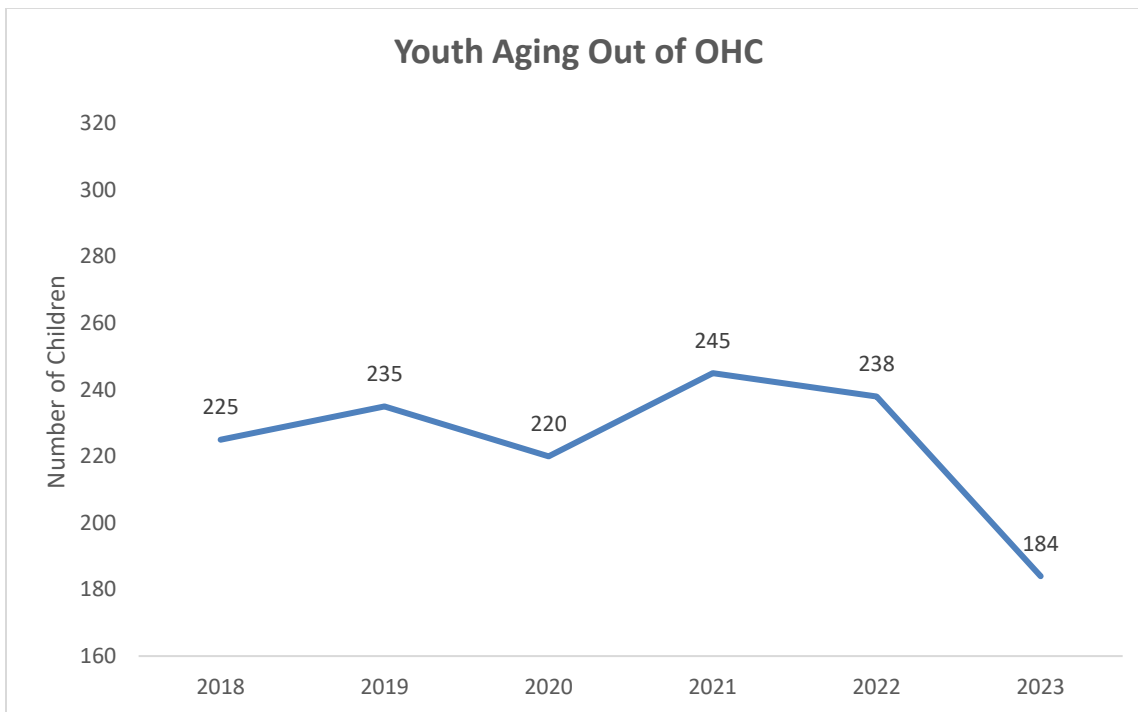
Over the past five years, Wisconsin saw its overall discharges from out-of-home care decrease, due to a drop in total youth in care, with a proportionally higher rate of decline for children discharged within 3-6 months. In other words, Wisconsin is decreasing the overall rate of children entering out-of-home care and returning children sooner (3-6 months). The remaining children and families, who may have more complex needs, inflate Wisconsin's overall median length of stay.



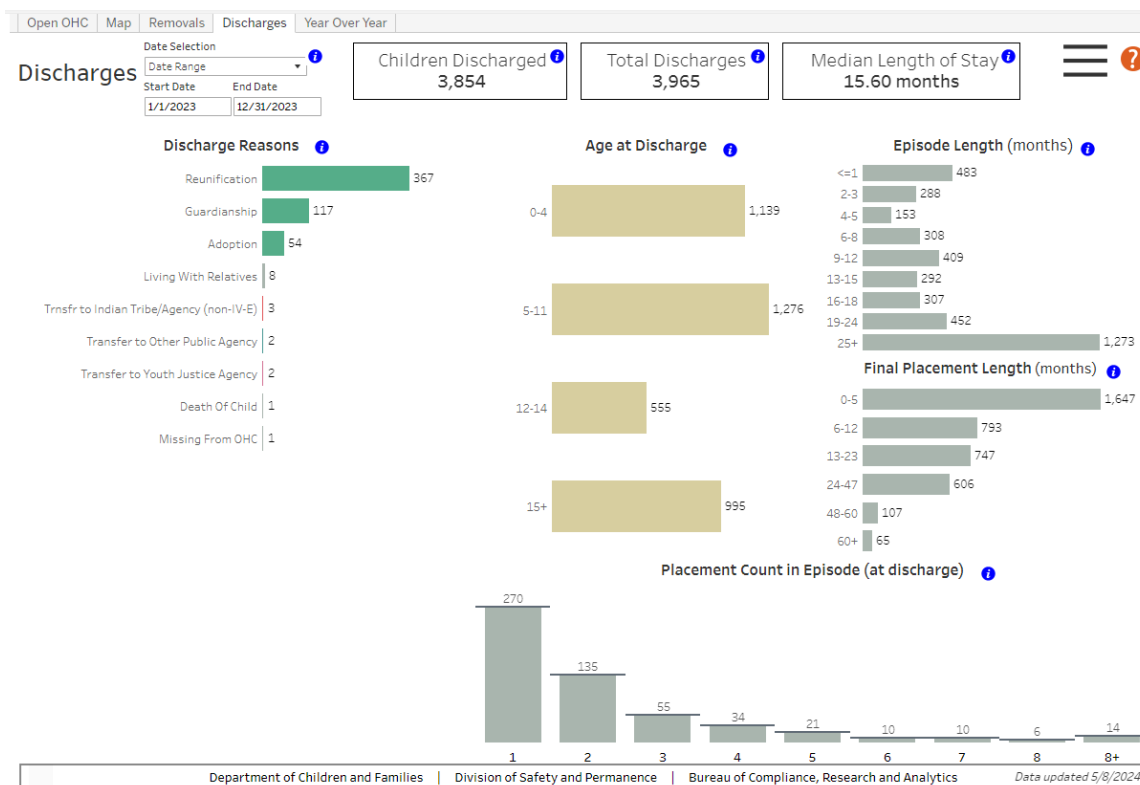
Length of Stay: Children Entered within CY and Discharged or Remain in OHC at the end of the Year.



Over that same time period, Wisconsin has seen a steady decline in the number of youth that age out-of-home care (OHC) accompanied by an increase in the utilization of Subsidized Guardianship as a permanency option.

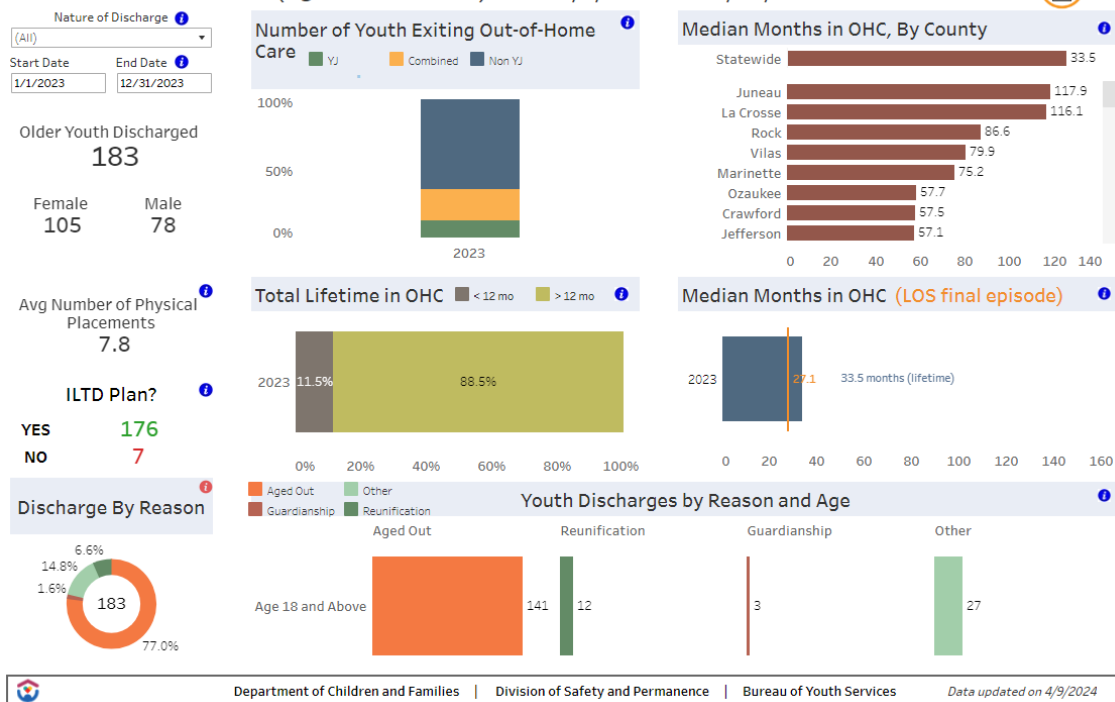


OHC Discharge Dashboard



Older Youth Outcomes Dashboard

Older Youth Outcomes (Age 15 and Older) from 1/1/2023 to 12/31/2023



Youth Discharge Comparison

	Youth Discharge Reason by Calendar Year					
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Age Out	225	235	220	245	238	184
SG	874	927	802	708	786	762
Total	5,344	5,383	4,590	4,117	4,305	3,937

	Youth Discharge Reason Percentage by Calendar Year					
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Age Out	4.21%	4.37%	4.79%	5.95%	5.53%	4.67%
SG	16.35%	17.22%	17.47%	17.20%	18.26%	19.35%

In CFSR Round 3, Wisconsin failed to achieve the required level of improvement for Item 6. It will remain an area of focus throughout the next five years as Wisconsin approaches its CFSR Round 4 review in 2026.

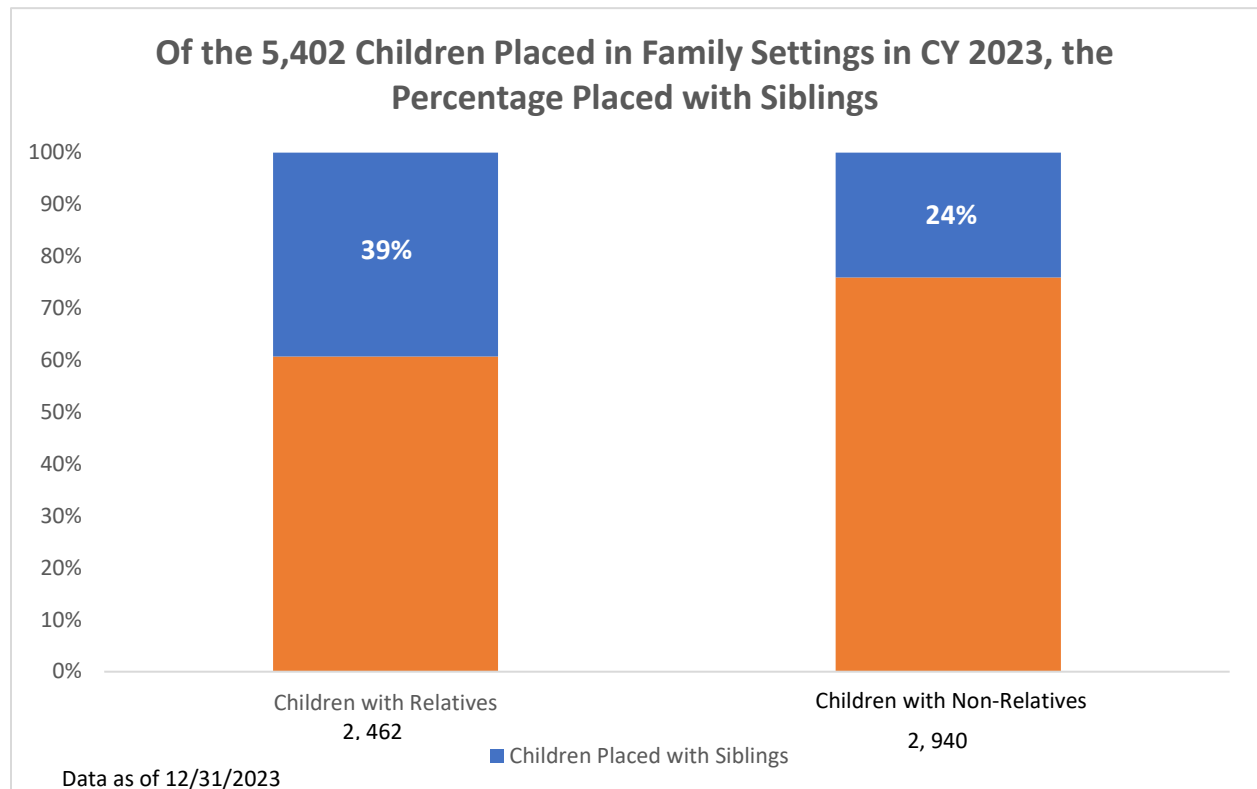
Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

Item 7: Placement with Siblings.

Did the agency make concerted efforts to ensure that **siblings in foster care are placed together** unless separation was necessary to meet the needs of one of the siblings?

	2018 CFSR (65)	2019 -2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020 -2021 PIP YR 1 (80)	2021 -2022 PIP YR 2 (77)	2022 - 2023 PIP YR 3 & NOP* (111)
Item 7	83%	96%	90%	88%	83%

**Wisconsin Non-Overlapping Period (NOP) ran from 6/1/22 through 11/30/23.*



Recent data shows that Wisconsin is more successful keeping siblings together when a relative placement option is used. DCF expects this trend to continue as Wisconsin continues to focus on Putting Families First initiatives over the next five years.

Item 8: Visiting with Parents and Siblings in Foster Care.

Did the agency make concerted efforts to ensure that **visitation between a child in foster care and his or her mother, father, and siblings** was of sufficient frequency and quality to promote continuity in the child's relationships with these close family members?

	2018 CFSR (65)	2019 -2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020 -2021 PIP YR 1 (80)	2021 -2022 PIP YR 2 (77)	2022 - 2023 PIP YR 3 & NOP* (111)
Item 8	66%	63%	73%	70%	63%

**Wisconsin Non-Overlapping Period (NOP) ran from 6/1/22 through 11/30/23.*

Item 9: Preserving Connections.

Did the agency make concerted efforts to **preserve the child's connections** to his or her neighborhood, community, faith, extended family, Tribe, school, and friends?

	2018 CFSR (65)	2019 -2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020 -2021 PIP YR 1 (80)	2021 -2022 PIP Year 2 (77)	2022 - 2023 PIP YR 3 & NOP* (111)
Item 9	65%	73%	73%	71%%	69%

**Wisconsin Non-Overlapping Period (NOP) ran from 6/1/22 through 11/30/23.*

Administrative Data

	Number of Children Placed in Homes (at Removal) Within 60 Miles of Home					
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Children Removed	4,229	4,098	3,225	3,114	3,149	3,486
Total Removals	4,439	4,303	3,349	3,223	3,257	3,668
Percentage	95%	95%	96%	97%	97%	95%
Median Distance (miles) from Home	6.82	6.41	7.13	7.14	6.41	6.77

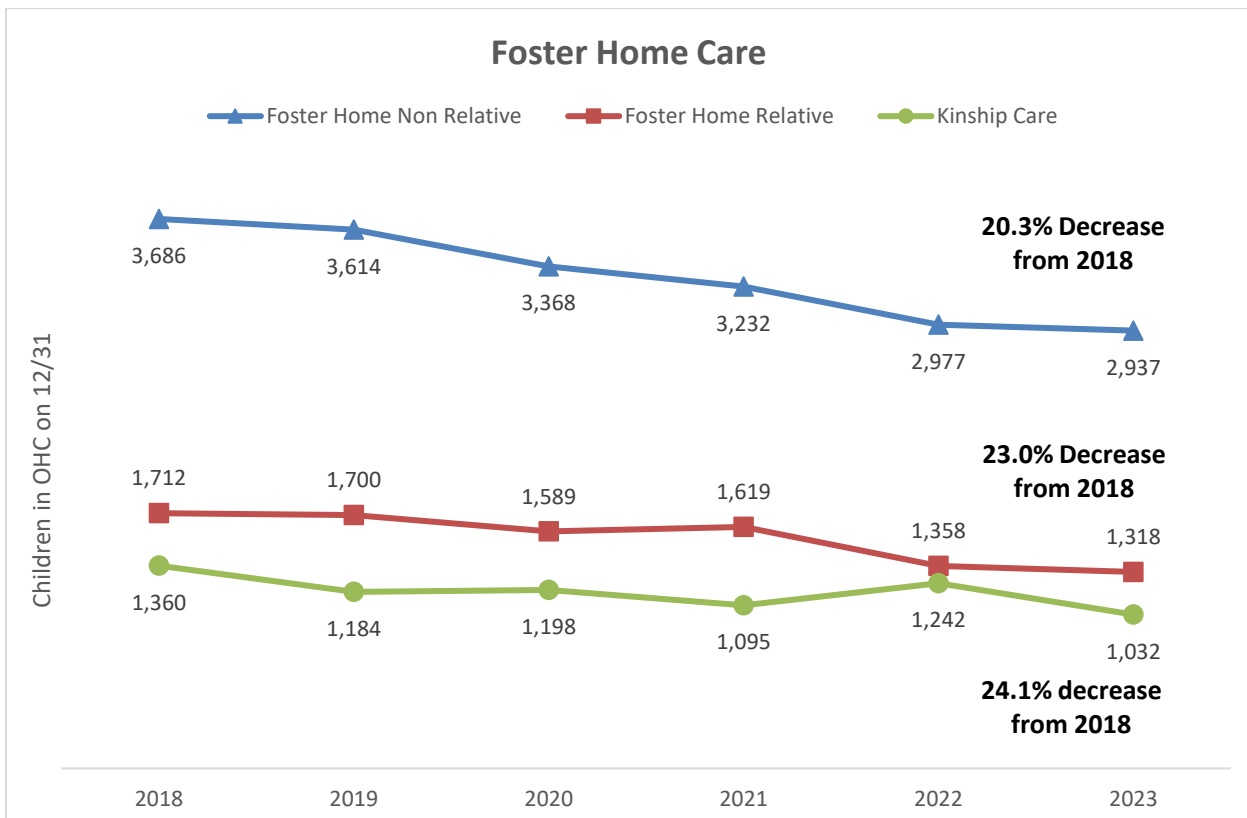
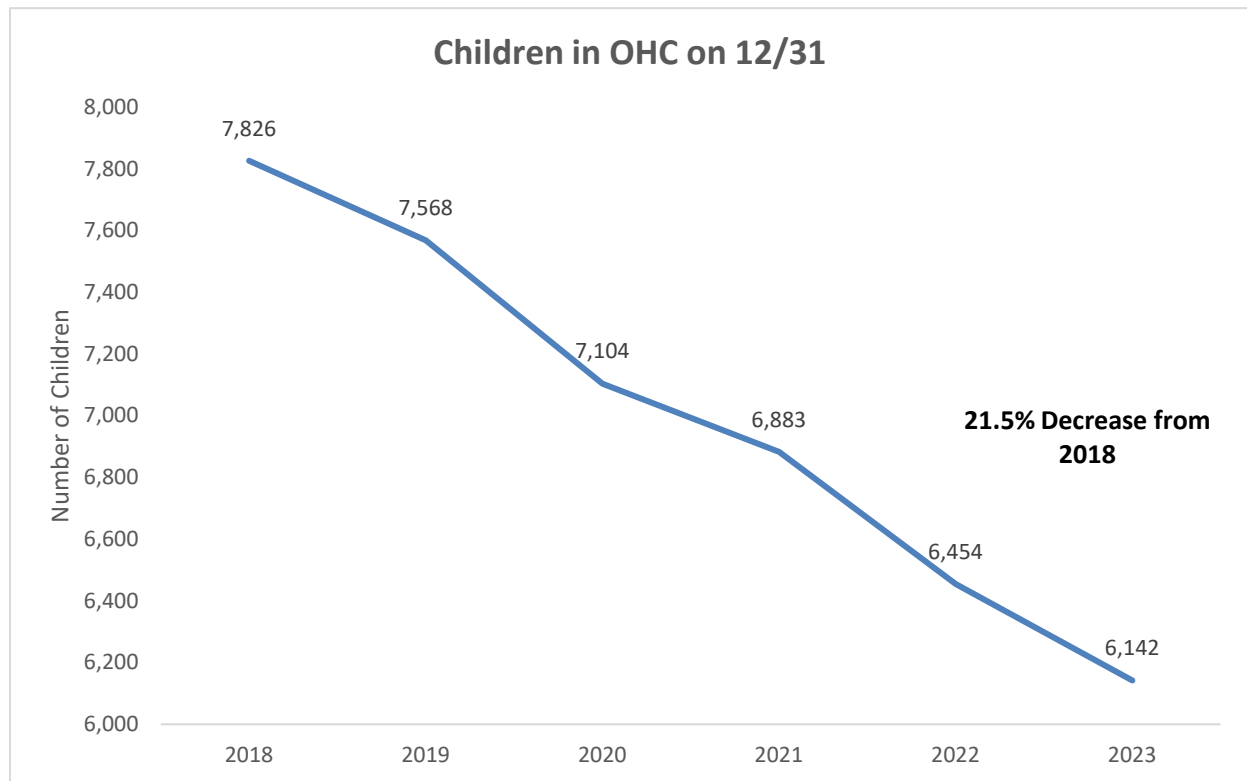
Item 10: Relative Placement.

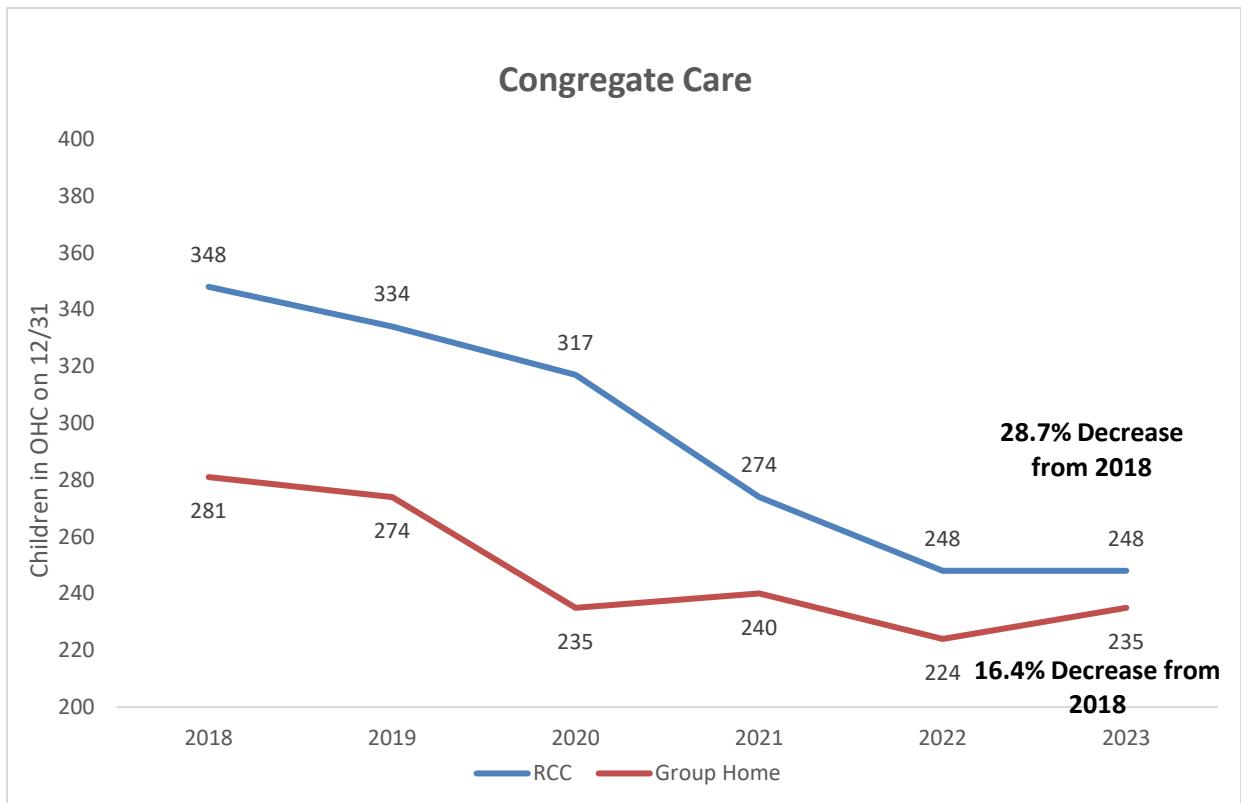
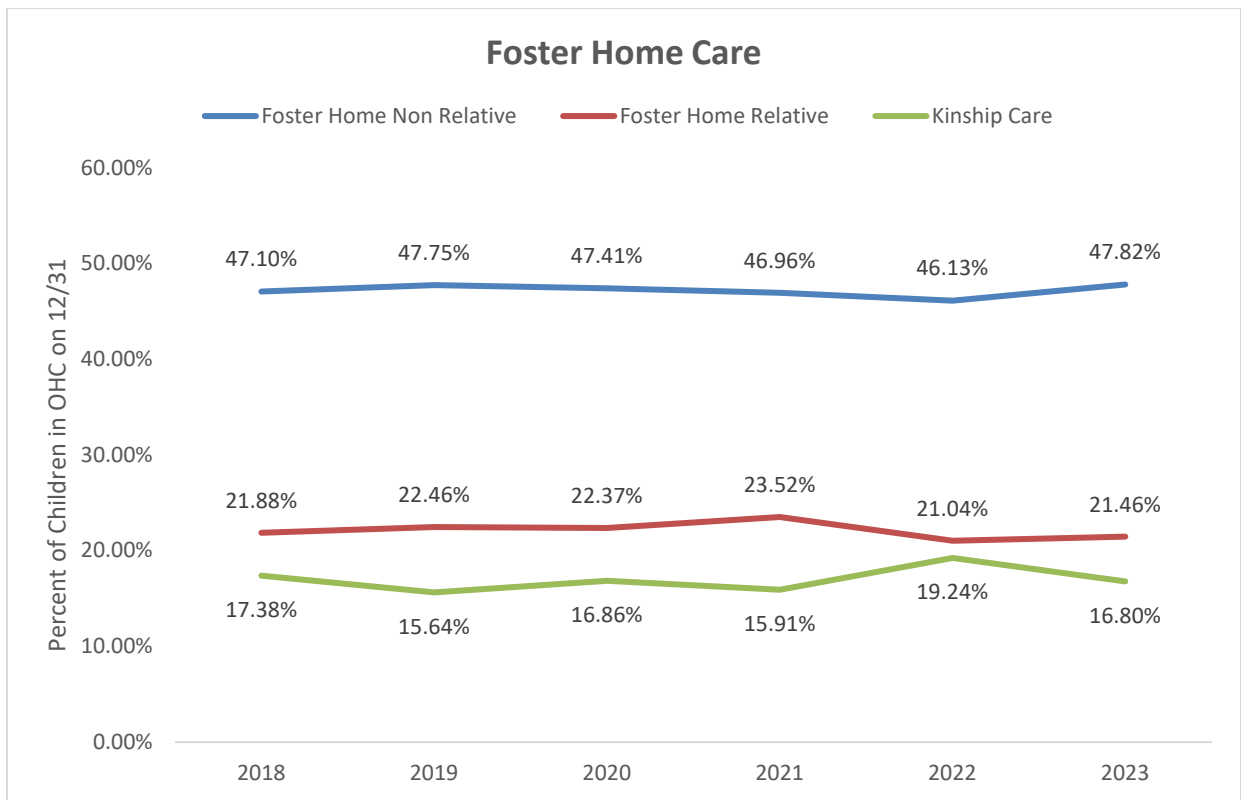
Did the agency make concerted efforts to **place the child with relatives** when appropriate?

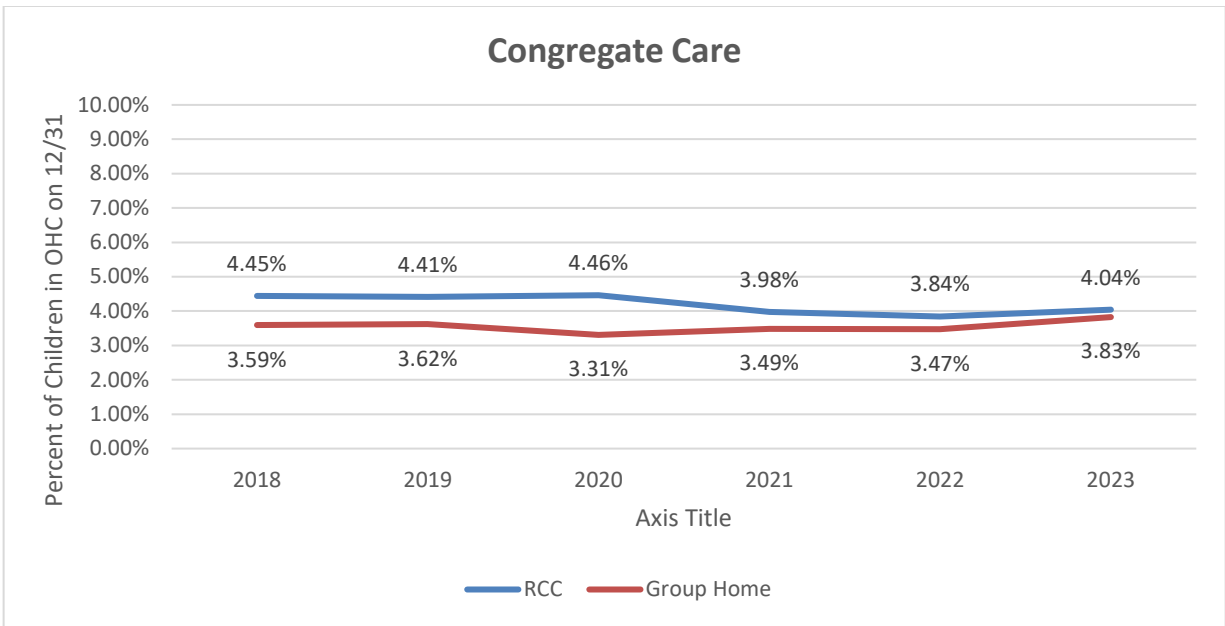
	2018 CFSR (65)	2019 -2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020 -2021 PIP YR 1 (80)	2021 -2022 PIP YR 2 (77)	2022 - 2023 PIP YR 3 & NOP* (111)
Item 10	68%	74%	79%	83%	80%

**Wisconsin Non-Overlapping Period (NOP) ran from 6/1/22 through 11/30/23.*

OHC Trends by Placement Type







The reduction of children placed in group settings is a key part of DCF’s Putting Families First Initiative and DCF plans to continue working with local agencies over the next five years to ensure the downward trends reflected in the data above continues.

Item 11: Relationship of Child in Care with Parents.

Did the agency make concerted efforts to promote, support, and/or maintain **positive relationships between the child in foster care and his or her mother and father** or other primary caregivers from whom the child had been removed through activities other than just arranging for visitation?

	2018 CFSR (65)	2019 -2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020 -2021 PIP YR 1 (80)	2021 -2022 PIP YR 2 (77)	2022 - 2023 PIP YR 3 & NOP* (111)
Item 11	65%	67%	80%	80%	61%

**Wisconsin Non-Overlapping Period (NOP) ran from 6/1/22 through 11/30/23.*

Summary of Performance Outcomes 1 and 2

Over the past five years, Wisconsin’s vision for child welfare strongly emphasized the role of relatives and like-kin in caring for all children and youth who are unable to remain safely in their home. This focus was reflected in the substantial decrease in the number of children placed in congregate care settings during this period.

Initiatives to Address Permanency Over the Next Five Years

- DCF will implement recent state legislation to include “like-kin” within the definition of a “relative.” This initiative supports Wisconsin’s ongoing Putting Families First approach to place children more easily with those who already know and love them, and ensures those caregivers can receive financial support.

- Streamline Wisconsin Chapter 56 Licensing Standards to eliminate non-safety related barriers to relative and non-relative foster care approvals to provide more placement options in a child's community.
- Adopt separate licensing standards for relative or kinship foster family homes to support relative caregivers, preserve cultural identities, reduce the administrative burden on local agencies, and lower congregate care placements.

Well-Being Outcomes 1, 2, and 3

Well-Being 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

Item 12: Needs and Services of Child, Parents, and Foster Parents.

Did the agency make concerted efforts to **assess the needs** of and **provide services** to **children, parents, and foster parents** to identify the services necessary to achieve case goals and adequately address the issues relevant to the agency's involvement with the family?

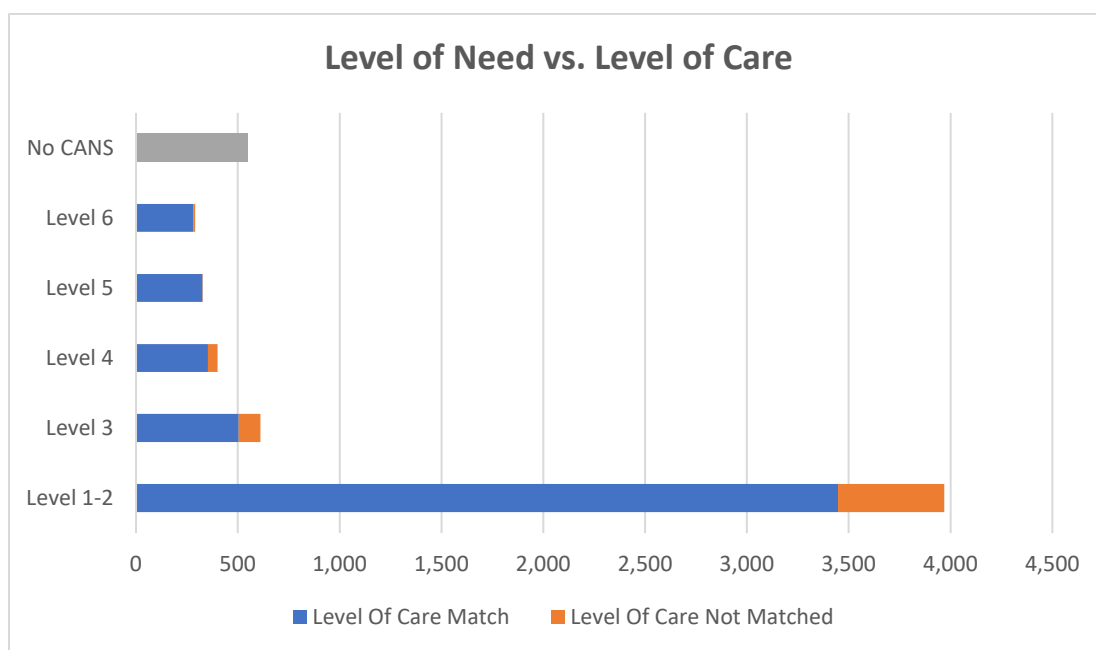
	2018 CFSR (65)	2019 -2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020 -2021 PIP YR 1 (80)	2021 -2022 PIP YR 2 (77)	2022 - 2023 PIP YR 3 & NOP* (111)
Item 12	43%	31%	43%	40%	37%

*Wisconsin Non-Overlapping Period (NOP) ran from 6/1/22 through 11/30/23.

Administrative Data

Child Level of Need vs. Level of Care

A match constitutes a child with an "X" Child Level of Need (LON) placed with a placement provider with a Level of Care (LOC) equal to "X". A Mismatch means a provider's LOC is either above or below the child's assessed LON.



*Data includes all children in OHC as of 12/31/23 by their Match/Mismatch of CANS LON and LOC.

Item 13: Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning.

Did the agency make concerted efforts to **assess the needs** of and **provide services** to **children, parents, and foster parents** to identify the services necessary to achieve case goals and adequately address the issues relevant to the agency's involvement with the family?

	2018 CFSR (65)	2019 -2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020 -2021 PIP YR 1 (80)	2021 -2022 PIP YR 2 (77)	2022 - 2023 PIP YR 3 & NOP* (111)
Item 13	42%	29%	59%	51%	45%

**Wisconsin Non-Overlapping Period (NOP) ran from 6/1/22 through 11/30/23.*

Item 14: Caseworker Visits with Child.

Were the **frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and child(ren)** sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child(ren) and promote achievement of case goals?

	2018 CFSR (65)	2019 -2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020 -2021 PIP YR 1 (80)	2021 -2022 PIP YR 2 (77)	2022-2023 PIP YR 3 & NOP* (111)
Item 14	55%	66%	81%	71%	67%

**Wisconsin Non-Overlapping Period (NOP) ran from 6/1/22 through 11/30/23.*

Administrative Data

Monthly Caseworker Visits with Children in Foster Care; October 1, 2022 - September 30, 2023:

	Cumulative Number of Children in Foster Care	Number of Required Visits	Number of Successful Contacts	Percent	Number of Visits in Child's Residence	Percent
State Total	8,990	73,214	70,791	96.7%	61,590	87.0%

Item 15: Caseworker Visits with Parents.

Were the **frequency and quality of visits between caseworkers and the mothers and fathers** of the child(ren) sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child(ren) and promote achievement of case goals?

	2018 CFSR (65)	2019 -2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020 -2021 PIP YR 1 (80)	2021 -2022 PIP YR 2 (77)	2022 - 2023 PIP YR 3 & NOP* (111)
Item 15	41%	27%	56%	42%	34%

**Wisconsin Non-Overlapping Period (NOP) ran from 6/1/22 through 11/30/23.*

Well-Being 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.**Item 16: Educational Needs of the Child.**

Did the agency make concerted efforts to assess **children's educational needs**, and appropriately address identified needs in case planning and case management services?

	2018 CFSR (65)	2019 -2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020 -2021 PIP YR 1 (80)	2021 -2022 PIP YR 2 (77)	2022-2023 PIP YR 3 & NOP* (37)
Item 16	87%	82%	86%	85%	84%

**Wisconsin Non-Overlapping Period (NOP) ran from 6/1/22 through 11/30/23.*

Case review data demonstrates that Wisconsin's performance is strong with regards to child educational needs.

Well-Being 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.**Item 17: Physical Health of the Child.**

Did the agency address the **physical health needs** of children, including dental health needs?

	2018 CFSR (65)	2019 -2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020 -2021 PIP YR 1 (80)	2021 -2022 PIP YR 2 (77)	2022 - 2023 PIP YR 3 & NOP* (111)
Item 17	72%	77%	74%	69%	66%

**Wisconsin Non-Overlapping Period (NOP) ran from 6/1/22 through 11/30/23.*

Item 18: Mental/Behavioral Health of the Child.

Did the agency address the **mental/behavioral health needs** of children?

	2018 CFSR (65)	2019 -2020 PIP Baseline (65)	2020 -2021 PIP YR 1 (80)	2021-2022 PIP YR 2 (77)	2022-2023 PIP YR 3 & NOP* (111)
Item 18	55%	65%	58%	73%	46%

**Wisconsin Non-Overlapping Period (NOP) ran from 6/1/22 through 11/30/23.*

Summary of Well-Being Performance

Over the past five years, DCF continued to consult with key external partner groups, including parents and youth served by Wisconsin's child welfare system, relative caregivers, service providers, tribal members, and child welfare agency staff regarding factors that affect the state's performance related to child and family well-being. These discussions identified the need for a greater feedback loop and led to the creation of the Parent Information Project to elevate case practice system wide through the incorporation of ongoing external partner input. A recent example of this work was the project's guidance on the Initial Assessment Improvement Project to streamline workflows and center family engagement:

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/newsletter/12-27-improving-child-welfare-initial-assessment>.

Over the next five years, Wisconsin will continue to build its Lived Experience Academy and manage the lived experience contract, covered in greater detail in Wisconsin's State Plan Objective 1.3. These efforts will expand engagement with external partners through multiple pathways, support local county lived experience efforts with existing DCF efforts, and advance the overall goal of connecting families with supports to empower them to support themselves.

Initiatives to Address Well-Being Over the Next Five Years

- The CANS assessment tool continues to provide a comprehensive assessment of youth and parent needs and helps identify services and resources that will meet the level of need for children and families in the system.
- Based on ongoing feedback from external partners and community supports, in 2024 DCF convened a cross-agency effort with DHS, DPI, and the Office of Children's Mental health with the goal of ensuring children and youth with complex, multi-system needs and their families have access to needed mental health services in their communities.
 - The newly launched Children's Behavioral Health project strives to address the children and youth mental health crisis by reviewing and revising systems of care, with a focus on children and youth with complex, multi-system needs and their families. The project will also include strategies to improve Medicaid models of care.
 - To achieve this goal, DHS and DCF convened a Steering Committee and workgroup of state program and policy staff, which will submit final recommendations and proposals to leadership.
 - The workgroup will also engage with partners – such as the Children Come First Advisory Committee, Wisconsin County Human Services Association (WCHSA),

Wisconsin Association of Family and Children Agencies (WAFCA), Child Welfare Parent Leaders Stakeholder Group, Tribal Leaders, and others – to ensure that local units of government, children and youth, caregivers, and external partners are included in the development of mental health programs and policies.

- The workgroup will also engage other states and national partners to learn about best practices.
- DCF will continue to collaborate with DHS and support the possibility of Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTFs) in Wisconsin to establish additional inpatient service options to benefit Medicaid-eligible youth.
- Services funded with federal title IV-B dollars will continue to provide supports to runaway and homeless youth to address educational and well-being needs.
- The Chafee program will continue to support the Transitional Regional Agency structure to offer a range of educational, social, and well-being initiatives designed to assist youth in successfully transitioning to adulthood across the state. See the Chafee Section of this plan for more information regarding these efforts.

Systemic Factors

This section addresses Wisconsin's plan to address the seven systemic factors that promote positive child safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes over the next five years. For each factor, there is a description of what the factor is, the provision of available and current data to demonstrate routine functioning and a summary of planned initiatives. Some of the systemic factors are described as individual items while others are combined, such as the service array systemic factor.

Management Information System (Item 19)

How well is the **statewide information system** functioning to ensure that, at a minimum, the state can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months has been) in foster care?

The Wisconsin SACWIS system, known as eWiSACWIS, is a comprehensive, mature, and well-functioning system that captures the status, demographics, and goals for children in out-of-home care (OHC) placements including foster care, and provides child welfare case management functionality for statewide OHC, guardianship, and adoption services. In alignment with DCF's vision to keep kids safely in-home with their families whenever possible, eWiSACWIS is also used to document programs and services designed to keep children safe, strengthen families, and provide a permanent and nurturing family home. All 72 Wisconsin counties, selected state agencies, and other external partners use eWiSACWIS.

Over the next five years, DCF will continue transitioning eWiSACWIS to become a Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) in accordance with its CCWIS roadmap and Annual Planning Document. Wisconsin's eWiSACWIS is a robust SACWIS Management Information System (MIS) upon which to build the CCWIS system.

According to established policy and practice, every family and child involved with DCF has detailed case information captured in Wisconsin's eWiSACWIS system. Wisconsin's public-

facing out-of-home care dashboard displays this information, which is available at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/dashboard/ohc>. County staff and supervisors have access to more detailed pages in eWiSACWIS, as well as reports and dashboards to monitor OHC placements in their jurisdictions.

Standards for data entry are articulated throughout DCF's practice standards on the Wisconsin Child Welfare Worker Portal (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal>). For example, the Wisconsin's Ongoing Services Standards (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/ongoing-services-standards.pdf>) reference the specific OHC placement documentation required in eWiSACWIS including the specific fields, pages, requirements, and timelines where applicable.

The state ensures quality data entry through several complementary mechanisms. At the county agency level, key documents and decisions require a supervisor's approval directly in eWiSACWIS. This requires supervisors to review and sign off on their staff's data entry on a day-to-day basis. The state then conducts continuous quality improvement (CQI - <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cqi>) and monitors performance with both internal and publicly available reports and dashboards to ensure complete and timely documentation. The Bureau of Regional Operations within DCF's Division of Management Services has regional child welfare coordinators who regularly monitor county agency performance and metrics. They liaise with supervisors in each county to support and improve practice. Finally, the eWiSACWIS Data Super Users' Group (formerly referred to as the Data Quality Committee), comprised of county child welfare professionals, supervisors, and DCF staff facilitates sharing best practices across agencies. The group also gives input on DCF's ongoing enhancements to improve data entry and quality in eWiSACWIS, as well as data products available to county agencies, such as the Wisconsin Child Welfare and Youth Justice Report and Dashboard Guide available at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/ewisacwis/cw-yj-reports-guide.pdf>.

Available Data or Information that Demonstrates System Functioning

DCF captures the timeliness of intervention and documentation through the use of the Access and IA Case Review dashboards (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/reports>) that speak to whether certain decisions in Access (screening, response time, danger threats) and Initial Assessment (danger threat identification, safety assessment, maltreatment decision, case disposition) were consistent with standards.

Through the eWiSACWIS system, Wisconsin adheres to CPS practice standards for data entry timeliness and casework requirements. The system has built-in reminders and other validations throughout the application's various pages and through follow-up reminders within and outside the application to maintain data quality and support case practice. Child welfare professionals and their supervisors are reminded of work that needs to be documented or approved leading up to, at, and if necessary, after a deadline. DCF has developed many such reminders and tools to improve child welfare system functioning. The eWiSACWIS KnowledgeWeb has documentation on how these work (e.g. <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/ewisacwis-knowledge-web/quick-reference-guides/workload-management/workload-management-task-list.pdf>).

The eWiSACWIS application includes a reporting platform called eWReports, in which analytics staff create a wide variety of reports regarding child welfare and youth justice activity. An issue tracker function allows for local users to continually identify issues requiring attention that are

then addressed by the analytics team. Over 200 operational level reports support the monitoring of state and local program, fiscal, and management activities. These reports include summary and detailed information related to critical child welfare service activity and practice requirements, such as CPS referrals, CPS initial assessment decisions, and OHC placement, including client characteristics and location of services/placement. Other reports in development track certain child well-being data, such as medical and dental information, education data, and mental health screenings. Additional reports are used to support local and state level fiscal management and payment activities and to manage provider-related responsibilities such as licensing and foster home rate setting. For more information about eWReports, please visit <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/knowledgeweb/reports>.

Additionally analytical reports and dashboards are built on DCF's data warehouse, dWiSACWIS, which complements eWReports. The data warehouse includes data related to CPS Access and Initial Assessment casework, caseload demographic and case history information, OHC placements, pre-finalized adoptions, OHC providers, Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Round 3 outcome measures, Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment information, and title IV-E eligibility and claiming data and reports.

Studying Wisconsin's Child Welfare Data in New Ways

Data in eWiSACWIS, as well as several multi-year research data sets from eWReports, is available to DCF's research and policy analysts using Tableau, a visual analytics platform, which has allowed DCF to supplement its reporting capabilities with new visualizations and insights, and to investigate and support aspects of child welfare practice that were previously unavailable. One example is the recent publication of DCF's Putting Families First Data Dashboard (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/family-first/data-dashboard>), which break down key metrics on DCF's strategic transformation. In particular, DCF is studying and sharing data about racial disproportionality and visualizing the race of children and youth in progressively deeper stages of involvement in the child welfare and/or youth justice systems to encourage county agencies and other external partners to engage with DCF on issues of racial disparity.

Current Priorities and Initiatives

DCF's over-arching strategic vision, Putting Families First, permeates all priorities over the next five years, including the ongoing enhancement of eWiSACWIS as a modern CCWIS compliant system. Putting Families First means keeping children safely in-home with their families whenever possible. To support that vision in eWiSACWIS, DCF continues to prioritize system enhancements that support family-centered supportive services and programs, reduce the disproportionate impact of child welfare on communities of color, and support the child welfare workforce.

Ongoing external partner engagement continues to be a strong focus area for DCF. Across all program areas and projects, DCF staff consistently prioritize engagement with frontline county and tribal child welfare professionals, families and youth with lived experience, as well as partners in adjacent state and county agencies:

- The Wisconsin County Human Services Association (WCHSA) through monthly meetings and several ongoing workgroups.

- The Intertribal Child Welfare Committee through bi-monthly meetings and the ongoing liaison work of DSP's tribal affairs specialist with state program staff and the eWiSACWIS team.
- DCF's Bureau of Regional Operations provides a regional forum where child welfare policies and supports are discussed at least quarterly with child welfare directors.
- The eWiSACWIS Focus Group is another venue for DCF to solicit feature design input as well as holistic system optimization needs from county partners.
- Project workgroups are formed with state and county staff to lead eWiSACWIS enhancements on a rolling basis. These workgroups focus on human-centered design and business process re-engineering, including input from families with lived experience, Wisconsin's Youth Advisory Council, judicial and law enforcement partners, and tribes.
- DCF recruited staff from across Wisconsin based on data usage of eWiSACWIS reporting tools to ensure the most avid data consumers were represented in the formation of the Data Super Users' Group. This group is both a decision-making and advisory body to support CCWIS data quality requirements under 45 C.F.R. § 1355.52 (d)(5) and designed as a round table where county staff can exchange best practices for data-driven decision making and learn from each other.

Collaboration with Tribes

Each of the eleven federally recognized tribes in Wisconsin have read-only access to eWiSACWIS and the ability to write case notes granted via state-tribal contracts. This mostly read-only access allows tribal child welfare professionals to search for cases in the state-wide system that involve tribal children and read case information such as permanency plans, placement information, safety plans, and case notes.

Over the next five years, DCF will continue to explore the best way to support tribal child welfare professionals' access to eWiSACWIS, understanding tribes will have two separate sets of needs. One for monitoring WICWA/ICWA cases, and the other for managing casework under tribal court jurisdiction. Discussions with the Intertribal Child Welfare Committee have explored what aspects of the system could best support their monitoring of Circuit Court cases where ICWA and WICWA apply. For tribal court cases, tribes may have their own electronic case management system while others may choose to utilize the state system. As sovereign nations, each tribe will make their own decision on whether to access a state-run system while considering the best way to protect confidentiality and their data sovereignty. DCF will continue discussions with the ICW Committee, focusing on how to best support their needs and reduce duplication and inefficiency throughout this period.

Data Quality Plan

Additional activities to implement and comply with CCWIS are continuing. In addition to the feedback described above, DCF has developed and submitted a comprehensive Data Quality Plan to continue to improve data quality on both the input/entry side as well as on the output/report side. Recommendations in the Data Quality Plan include policy, practice, and software changes to improve the efficient entry, consistency, and analysis of data in eWiSACWIS.

Investment in the Child Welfare Workforce

Workforce support is one of the four pillars of DCF's strategic Putting Families First transformation, and as such, has driven several key projects over the last few years. DCF has prioritized providing more and better training, particularly to new child welfare professionals joining the workforce, and asynchronous training to support self-paced learners and new hybrid workplace norms. Through its contract with the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS), DCF redesigned its new worker training program, WiLearn, which went live in January 2023. DCF has also worked with WCWPDS and its technical contractor CGI to produce web-based video learning modules, of which there are now several, detailing how to efficiently use eWiSACWIS for day-to-day work in several core program areas.

Several major software enhancement projects have been undertaken with a specific mandate: reduce the administrative burden of manual data entry in eWiSACWIS. Using a human-centered design approach that includes multiple rounds of user and external partner input, DCF has streamlined the Permanency Plan (June 2022), a youth-centric court report (February 2023), Kinship Care eligibility (February 2023), congregate care referrals (June 2023), and streamlining of the Initial Assessment pages and out-of-home care information (June 2024). In upcoming releases over the next five years, eWiSACWIS will continue to support the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families' efforts around Putting Families First through projects to revise safety analysis and planning, case planning, independent living transition to discharge, and a youth portal.

Finally, as a result of a multi-year modernization effort to support modern web standards that was completed in February 2024, Wisconsin's workforce is now able to use eWiSACWIS on modern browsers and document case notes on mobile devices. This further enables professionals to practice in the field with more mobile tools to meet their needs. Enhancing the system's support for mobility will reduce travel time between offices and meetings and reduce duplicative and low-value data entry. Ultimately, DCF believes supporting modern ways of working will allow professionals to spend more time with children and families.

Case Review System (Items 20-24)

WRITTEN CASE PLAN (ITEM 20)

How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that each child has a **written case plan** that is developed jointly with the child's parent and includes the required provisions?

Available Data or Information that Demonstrates System Functioning

Wisconsin has a robust and comprehensive process in place for developing a case plan for families in the child welfare system who have a child placed in out-of-home care. In Wisconsin, this case plan is called a Permanency Plan. Specific details of this process can be found in Wisconsin's Ongoing Standards at

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/ongoing-services-standards.pdf>.

CPS intervention standards are also used to assess safety and in-home case planning. These standards are available at:

- <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/safety-intervention-standards.pdf>
- <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/access-ia-standards.pdf>

Detailed guidance has been developed for assuring that written case plans for tribal children meet Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA) guidelines. To view the WICWA desk aid, please visit <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/2536.pdf>.

The Foster Parent Handbook provides critical information on how foster parents are engaged in developing the case plan. The handbook is available at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/fostercare/handbook>.

Wisconsin's Performance

The following list provides information regarding how the state tracks that Case Plans, which include Permanency Plans, are developed jointly with parents and include certain provisions:

- 1) The child is placed in the least restrictive setting—in a placement that is in close proximity to the parents' home when it is in their best interest.
 - a. This is documented within the Permanency Plan component of the case plan and is updated every six months.
 - b. Available data is provided under Item 9: Preserving Connections in Section 2 of this plan.
- 2) Monthly face-to-face contacts* with the child(ren) and individuals in a caretaking role unless there is an in-home safety plan.
 - a. This data can be collected from the Caseworker Contacts Dashboard within eWISACWIS: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/dashboard/cwcontacts>.
- 3) Documentation of the steps taken toward establishing other forms of permanency when the child is unable to be reunified.
 - a. This information is documented in the Permanency Plan within eWISACWIS, which allows the state to produce the information on-demand. Annual data is provided under Item 5: Permanency Goal for Child Case Record Review Results in Section 2 of this plan.

Wisconsin standards stipulate that Case Plans must be completed no later than 60 days from a staff transition. The state tracks this provision through an eWISACWIS tickler indicating the date in which a case plan is due.

**Visits with children placed out of state are only required to be completed by the placing agency once every 12 months.*

External Partner Feedback

Feedback provided to DCF regarding the case plan has emphasized the need for clear goals to achieve timely permanence, process efficiency, and a desire to make the process more trauma-informed and user-friendly for all audiences.

Initiatives to Address

As a result of partner feedback, there will be a focus on increasing case plan process efficiencies over the next five years. This is in alignment with Wisconsin's Putting Families First approach to allow more time for child welfare professionals to spend time with families and less time documenting and completing necessary paperwork.

PERIODIC REVIEW (ITEM 21)

How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that a **periodic review** for each child occurs no less frequently than once every six months, either by a court or by administrative review?

DCF continues to work closely with CCIP to assess, measure and address Item 21 as it relates to processes that occur in the court system but impact child welfare families. Improvement efforts to better track and assess timeliness will continue over the next five years.

Available Data or Information That Demonstrates Functioning

In Wisconsin, over half of the jurisdictions utilized an administrative panel for some or all the six-month reviews. In the other jurisdictions, a court commissioner or a judge conducts the six-month review, without distinguishing between the periodic (six-month) review or an annual Permanency Hearing. If it is conducted by a judicial officer on the record, the court record event is a Permanency Hearing regardless of the time interval.

Tracking timeliness has been a focus of DCF and CCIP to continue to improve performance. To accomplish this, eWiSACWIS has automated reminder functions to help ensure that the required periodic reviews are completed on time. Additionally, child welfare professionals can enter ticklers into the system and set up reminders of upcoming due dates for permanency reviews. The information system can show child welfare professional tasks as a list or in calendar view. The system also color codes information by type of task, as well as reflecting whether the task was completed on time. Supervisors have an option to view their caseworkers' workloads as a tool for ensuring compliance.

CCIP and DCF have worked together to develop and promote the awareness of the following resources and policies to ensure that all case review standards are met:

- DCF provides child welfare professionals with the DCF Ongoing Services Standards, which provide extensive information regarding how an agency can conform to this requirement. Specifically, the Standards require caseworkers to participate in training on the permanency statutes under Section 48.38 of the Wisconsin Statutes.
- A training and guide for Permanency Plan Administrative Review Panel Members as a resource to the community members who sit on a county agency's administrative permanency panel review. These provide information about Permanency Planning, the Permanency Plan document, permanency goals, and a checklist regarding determinations that must be made by panel members.

Initiatives to Address

Over the next five years, DCF will continue monitoring six-month permanency review timeliness using the Permanency Plan Detail Report to continue guiding program initiatives and target local agency technical assistance efforts.

PERMANENCY HEARINGS (ITEM 22)

How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that, for each child, a **Permanency Hearing** in a qualified court or administrative body occurs no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter?

Available Data or Information That Demonstrates Functioning

Practice varies around the state as to whether the court or an administrative panel conduct the six-month permanency review, while the court always hears the 12-month review. It is important to note that when the court reviews the Permanency Plan, the court record event reflects that a Permanency Hearing occurred without distinguishing whether it was a six-month review or a 12-month hearing.

Table: DCF Performance Measures by Thresholds

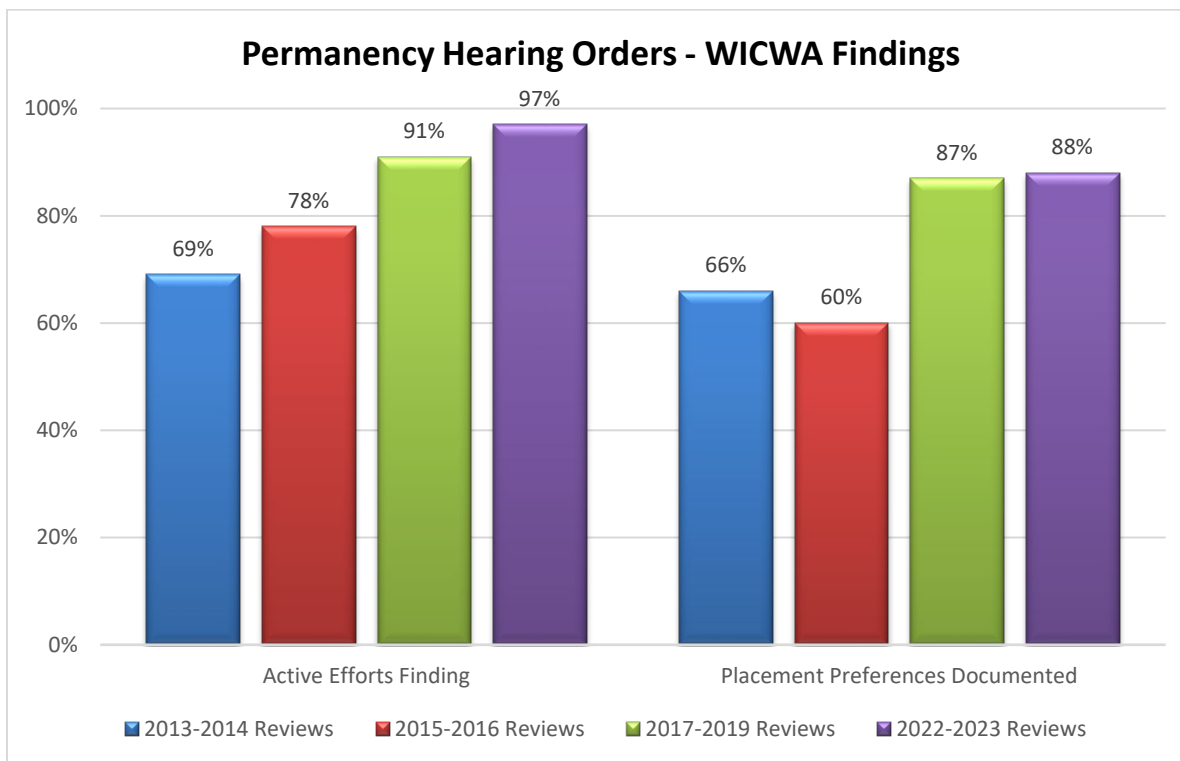
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Children having timely annual permanency review hearing	48.88%	50.92%	52.69%	54.27%	53.29%	55.09%
Children having timely six-month permanency reviews	66.86%	67.86%	67.36%	68.9%	66.98%	68.89%

**Data reflects all hearings and reviews due for child in out-of-home care within a calendar year.*

CCIP has shared DCF permanency hearing timeliness data with Judicial Engagement Team (JET) counties, juvenile clerks, and judges at various trainings and meetings. In addition, the CCIP reports prepared by the University of Wisconsin – Madison’s Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP) related to permanency, including timeliness of permanency hearings, will contain ethnic and racial demographic information.

Data on whether the required WICWA findings (i.e., active efforts and placement preferences) are made on Permanency Hearing Orders is captured as part of the WICWA CQI reviews conducted in 2013-2023.

As illustrated in the graph below, there has been an increase in the documentation of the WICWA findings on the Permanency Hearing Orders over the past several years.



**CCIP/DCF did not conduct reviews in 2020-2021 due to the COVID impacts.*

TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS (ITEM 23)

How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that the filing of **termination of parental rights (TPR)** proceedings occurs in accordance with required provisions?

Available Data or Information That Demonstrates Functioning

The following statewide data is from a variety of sources, including the University of Wisconsin – Madison’s Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP), Consolidated Court Automation Programs (CCAP) statistical reports, and DCF.

TPR Timeliness from Most Recent Removal (mean number of days)*

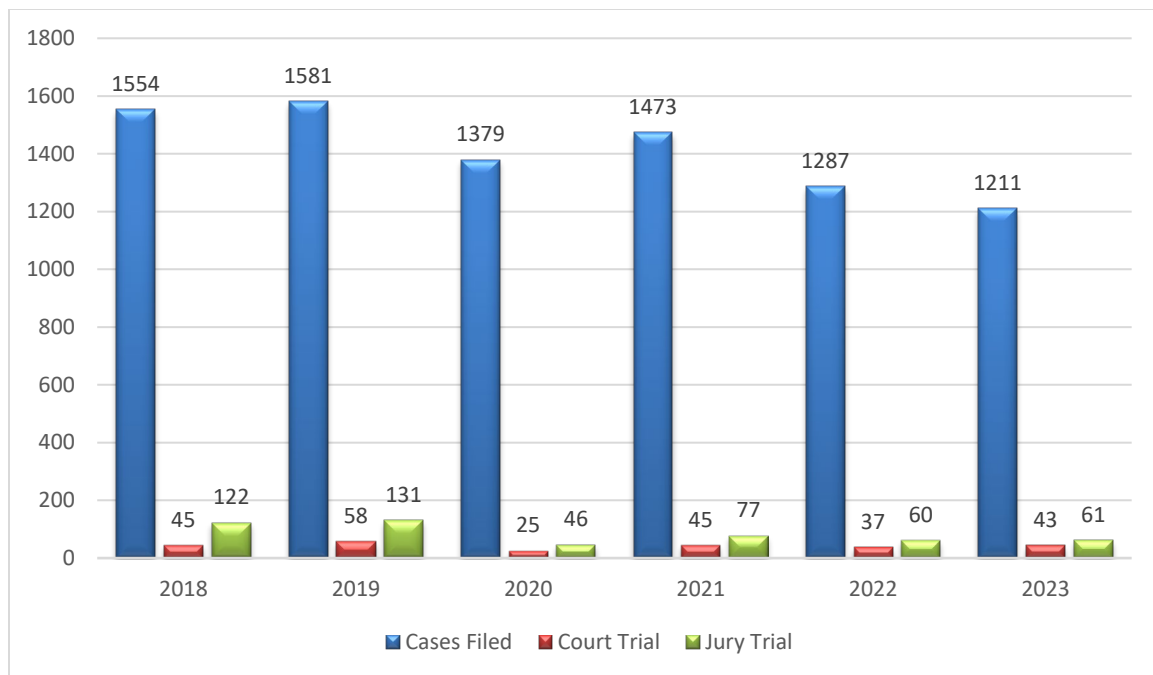
	Time to TPR Petition Filing	Time to TPR Order
2018	682	877
2019	711	899
2020	763	956
2021	784	986
2022	808	1,011

*The data sample includes children who were identified in eWISACWIS as achieving a permanent placement in each calendar year who had a TPR petition and/or order. Note: The federal standard of 15 months for TPR filing is equivalent to 450 days from removal.

TPR Timeliness from Most Recent Removal by Threshold

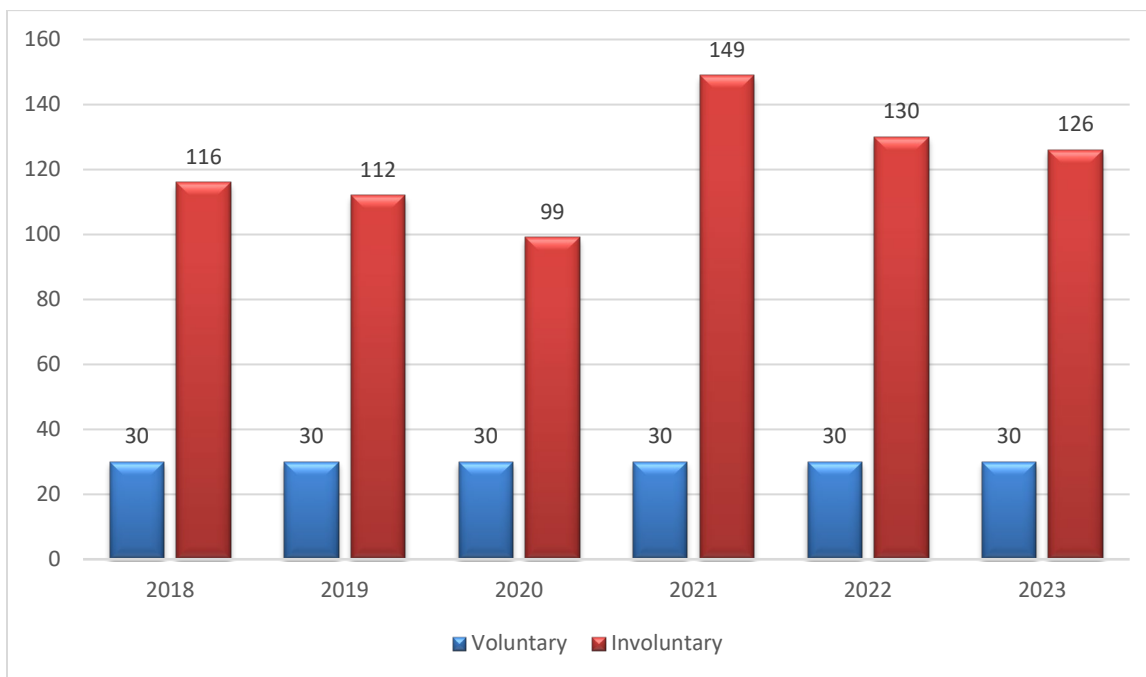
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
1. Time to TPR petition					
Children with TPR petition filed within 15 months of removal	26%	23%	20%	20%	18%
Children with TPR petition filed within 24 months of removal	55%	47%	45%	43%	49%
2. Time to TPR order					
Children with TPR order within 15 months of removal	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%
Children with TPR order within 24 months of removal	29%	25%	22%	21%	31%

TPR Caseload Summary Statewide (CCAP Statistical Reports)*



*Includes both child welfare and private TPR cases filed on voluntary and involuntary grounds.

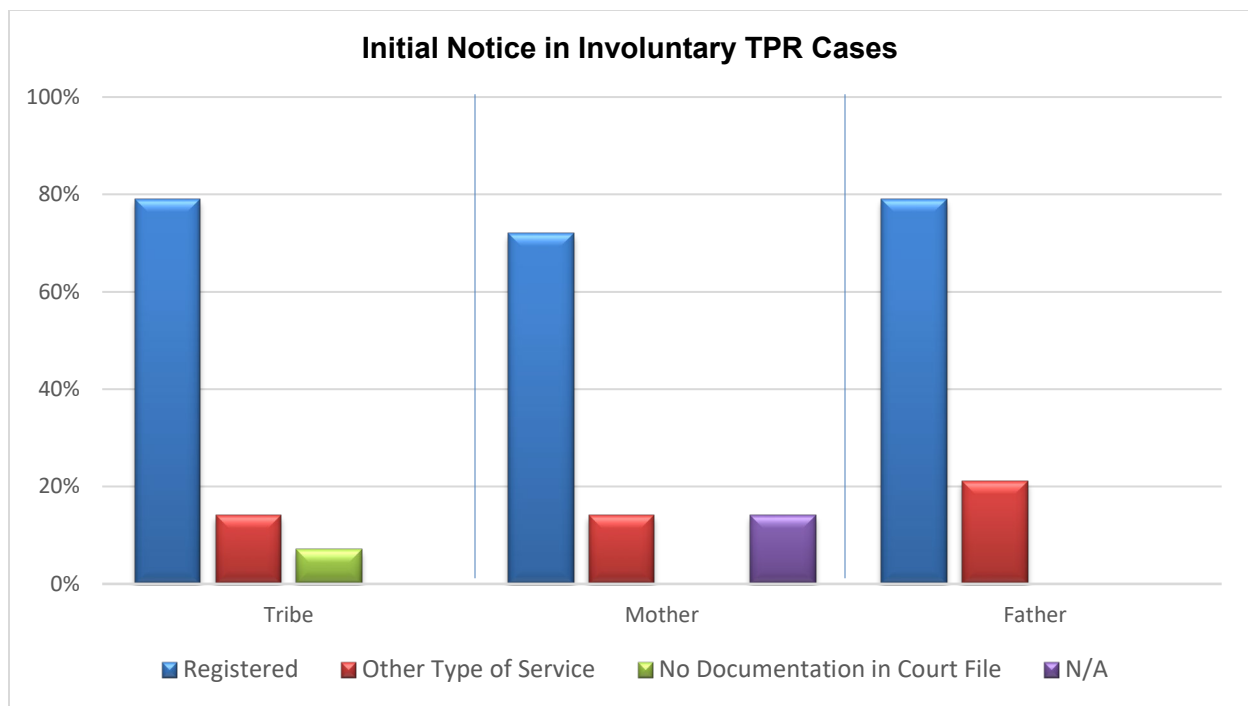
Median Days from TPR Petition Filing to Disposition (CCAP Statistical Reports)*



Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA) Data

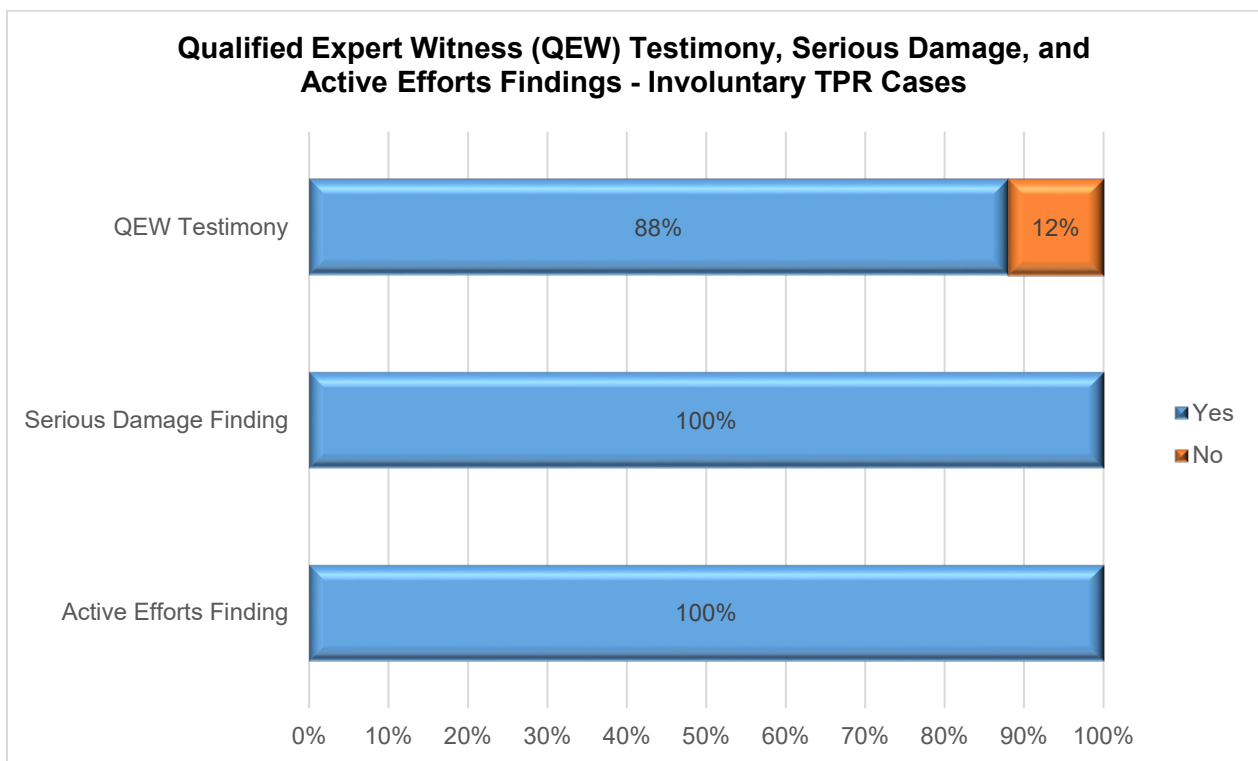
An additional source of data is the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA) Continuous Quality Improvement Project through CCIP. This project measures compliance with key WICWA requirements in CHIPS, JIPS, TPR, Adoption, and Guardianship cases. In 2024, CCIP and DCF staff will conduct onsite reviews for the WICWA Continuous Quality Improvement project in the counties with the highest number of circuit court cases subject to WICWA: Ashland, Brown, Forest, Jackson, Milwaukee, Outagamie, Sawyer, and Shawano.

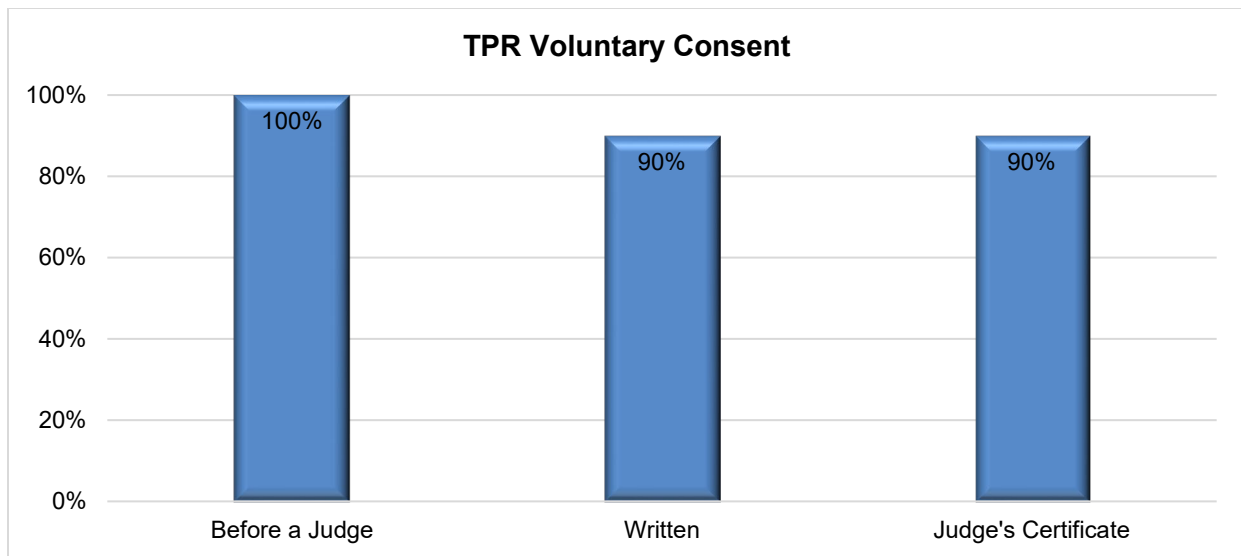
Compliance with WICWA prevents case delays, appeals, and invalidation of TPR proceedings. Some of the TPR data from the WICWA reviews that occurred in 2023-2024 are as follows:



**Registered means that notice was sent by registered mail with return receipt requested.*

*** N/A is used when a parent is deceased or previously had their rights terminated.*





Training and Technical Assistance

CCIP and DCF will continue to provide training and technical assistance related to TPR proceedings over the next five years. Some historical and ongoing examples include:

- The September 2023 Conference on Child Welfare and the Courts featured an advanced TPR seminar day that was attended by over 150 judges, attorneys, and child welfare professionals.
- Annually, CCIP hosts a two-and-a-half-day Child Welfare Law Orientation for judicial officers that features a two-and-a-half-hour TPR session. Circuit court judge attendance is required once during each six-year term.
- CCIP and DCF's Office of Legal Counsel consult with county prosecutors when there is a legal error in a TPR proceeding that must be resolved prior to the child being adopted. This includes technical assistance and education on TPR legal processes and procedures.

NOTICE OF HEARINGS AND REVIEWS TO CAREGIVERS (ITEM 24)

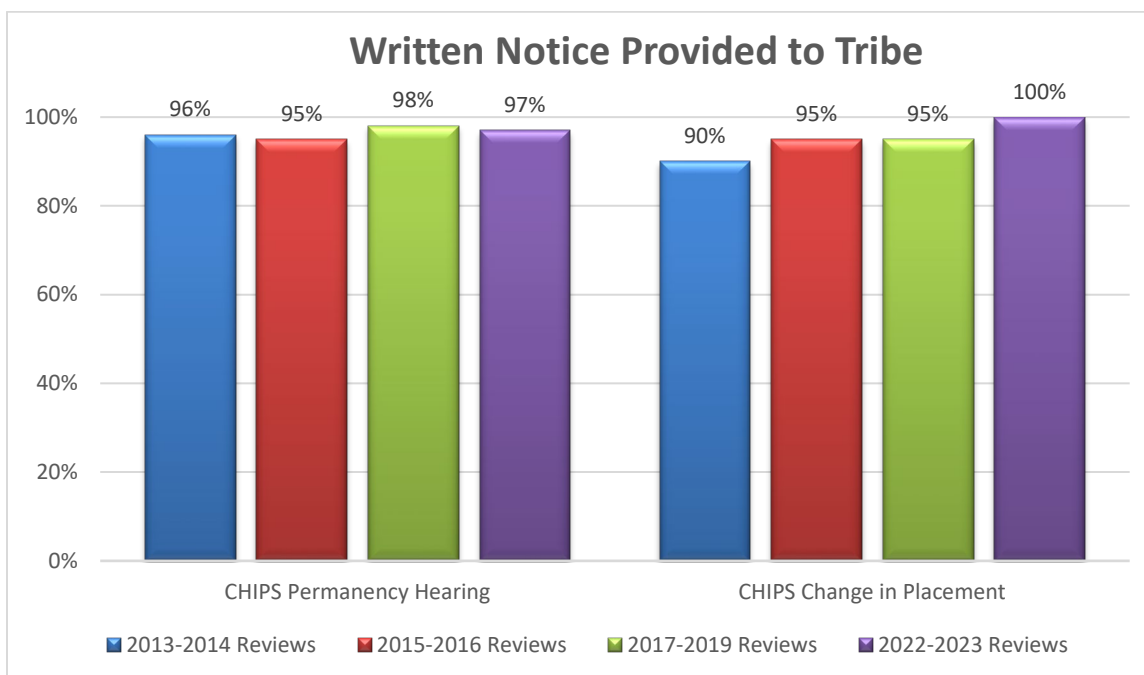
How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care are **notified of, and have a right to be heard** in, any review or hearing with respect to the child?

Available Data or Information That Demonstrates Functioning

DCF tracks data in coordination with CCIP and is focused on joint efforts to address this systemic factor. Notice of hearings to caregivers is documented for individual cases in the Consolidated Court Automation Programs (CCAP) but is not available in the aggregate.

In addition, data related to notice to parents and tribes are available based on file reviews conducted as part of the WICWA CQI project. Under WICWA, notice of subsequent hearings in a case must be provided to the parents and tribe in writing through mail, personal delivery, or fax. As illustrated in the following chart, providing notice of hearing in writing is an area that continues to be a strength for permanency hearings and change in placement hearings.

Notice of Post Disposition Proceedings for WICWA



Training and Resources

CCIP developed tools and training through their E-Learning website (<https://www.wicciptraining.com/>) related to the importance of parent and caregiver engagement in court proceedings and presents at the annual Families Like Mine conference (Wisconsin's annual Relative Caregiver Conference).

DCF has assembled the Relative Caregiver Stakeholder Group, which offers recommendations, feedback, and guidance on developing resources, support, and education for relative caregivers in Wisconsin. The group created the impactful Kinship Navigator Portal to connect caregivers to local resources within their area.

DCF also developed a number of informational resources for parents and caregivers regarding the child welfare and court process; they are available on their Lived Experience webpage at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/family-first/lived-experience>.

Case Review System (Items 20–24) Brief Assessment on Progress to Date

DCF has worked extensively with CCIP, judicial and legal partners, and other external partners to identify strengths and weaknesses in the case review system. This ongoing collaboration, the existing feedback loops with local attorneys and judges to drive policy development, and county engagement with parents and caregivers were three of the key identified strengths. While it was determined that Wisconsin possesses a robust training system and offers targeted technical assistance through DCF's partnership with CCIP, an area identified for improvement was working with external partners to increase training participation. The focus being, meeting the training needs of partners where they are through increased accessibility and virtual training options. Other identified areas for improvement include permanency hearing timeliness, local

agency Termination of Parental Rights backlogs, attorney shortages, and child welfare professional understanding of statutory requirements and court process experience.

Additional efforts DCF and CCIP will seek to support moving forward are continued integration of lived experience experts and the expansion of high-quality legal representation for parents, children, and local child welfare agencies through all stages of child welfare proceedings, including civil legal proceedings necessary to prevent children from entering foster care.

This collaboration between DCF and CCIP will continue to focus on collecting data on processes and external partner feedback to help identify and improve future areas of practice. This feedback over the next five years will shape future initiatives and supports for the case review system identified in Wisconsin's CFSP and in future DCF Putting Families First efforts.

Initiatives to Address Case Review Systemic Factors Over the Next Five Years

There are several ongoing initiatives in place to address this area of practice including collaborative efforts, specific projects, resources, and training.

Ongoing Collaborations

- DCF will continue to work with CCIP through regular communication regarding legislative committees and proposals to determine potential impacts on the child welfare system and provide information or update Ongoing Standards as necessary.
- The long-standing Judicial Engagement Team (JET) initiative focuses on supporting children to remain safely in their homes, timely exits to permanency, full consideration of well-being, and compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). CCIP provides court-focused resources that support best practice implementation with the goal of safe reduction of the number of children in OHC.
- The Juvenile Clerks Workgroup, composed of experienced juvenile clerks throughout the state, CCIP staff, a CCAP representative, and an Office of Court Operations representative, assists in the oversight involved with providing notice to case participants, including foster parents and relative caregivers. This includes the distribution of court documents (Permanency Plans, orders, motions, etc.), documenting required title IV-E findings, managing court calendars, appointing attorneys and CASA volunteers, and conducting permanency reviews/hearing timely.
- Additional efforts are described under Court System Collaboration in Section 1 of this plan.

Training

- The CCIP E-Learning Project (<https://wicciptraining.com/>) is a web-based, self-directed training program that addresses Wisconsin Statutes, case law, and best practices. It is a tool judges, court commissioners, attorneys, caseworkers/social workers, and other individuals can access at any time to obtain information on conducting key court hearings in child welfare cases, including statutory requirements, applicable case law, and recommended best practices.
- CCIP will continue to provide free webinars to judicial officers, attorneys, child welfare professionals, CASA, and other external partners on topics intended to improve child and family outcomes.

- Court judges are required to attend the Child Welfare Law Orientation to assist the conduction of hearings in, and improve the daily case management of, child welfare proceedings. Topics include case timelines and findings, using data for continuous quality improvement efforts, parent and caregiver participation, tailored conditions for return, child safety, TPR, and permanency planning/hearings.

Quality Assurance System (Item 25)

How well is **the quality assurance system** functioning statewide to ensure that it is (1) operating in the jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided, (2) has standards to evaluate the quality of services (including standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect their health and safety), (3) identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, (4) provides relevant reports, and (5) evaluates implemented program improvement measures?

[Available Data or Information that Demonstrates System Functioning](#)

Wisconsin's approach to Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is articulated in the following mission statement.

Wisconsin is committed to a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) system that supports the assessment and improvement of child welfare practice, processes, and outcomes at the state and local level. Wisconsin DCF fulfills this mission by providing resources, tools, and processes to build and sustain CQI at the state and local level.

[Available Data or Information that Demonstrates System Functioning](#)

DCF will continue to use data from multiple sources to inform its quality improvement process as it transitions to CFSR Round 4.

There are two key pieces to this transition:

- A robust analysis of case review results (333 cases) from CFSR Round 3 to identify themes in practice and identify program considerations/recommendations.
- Update existing case review processes to conform with Round 4 requirements. This includes reviewing and updating supplements, reviewing survey responses from PIP Measurement cases (obtained from workers who had cases reviewed), and incorporating changes to the Onsite Review Instrument (OSRI) instructions related to item ratings, applicability, and rationale statements. These updated policies, written materials, and instructions will ensure standardized completion of case reviews in an effort to promote inter-rater reliability.

The Quality Review Unit is DCF's dedicated case review body, and organizationally it is independent of program and policy staff to promote objectivity and the unbiased review of cases. The team consists of a supervisor, three full-time staff, one part-time staff, and two additional full-time contracted staff.

All staff who conduct reviews have relevant direct practice experience. In preparation for Round 4, DCF will take advantage of the E-Learning Academy (ELA) and re-train all existing reviewers to ensure all staff using the OSRI complete a uniform and consistent training process.

The unit adopted the OSRI in 2015 and is well versed in the instrument instructions and applicability. To date, the team has conducted over one thousand reviews with the OSRI. After a pause in 2024 to transition to CFSR Round 4, DCF will resume conducting ongoing case reviews using the OSRI in 2025. The goal is to replicate the case review process used for Wisconsin's Round 3 PIP-monitored cases and apply it to CFSR Round 4 (with the improvements noted above). These reviews collect specific case-level data that provide child welfare system context and monitor agency performance. They include interviews with key case participants including those with family voice and lived experience. Due to these factors, DCF is well positioned to conduct a state-led review in 2026.

In addition to the ongoing case reviews, DCF also conducts Targeted Case Reviews (TCRs). TCRs launched in 2022 to conduct ad hoc/special case reviews targeting specific domains when analysis of other data or feedback warranted such a review. TCRs are time-limited and focus on a specific practice area that is tied to Putting Families First, Wisconsin's child welfare transformation efforts. The first TCR, completed in 2022, focused on understanding how concrete services support keeping families together. The second TCR, completed in 2023, focused on initial assessment and the length of time from case opening to case completion. The third TCR, scheduled for 2024, will focus on quality case planning on in-home services cases.

In addition to the use of case reviews as a mechanism to understand and address program and practice improvements over the next five years, DCF has several additional tools to measure, assure, and identify ways to improve the child welfare system.

How CQI Supports Feedback Loops and is Used to Revise Approaches and Measure Progress in Achieving Goals

The purpose of Wisconsin's child welfare system is to keep children safe and to support families to provide safe, permanent, and nurturing homes for their children. DCF views data quality as fundamental to fulfilling this purpose: on the front end, in supporting Wisconsin's child welfare workforce through efficient, consistent, and de-duplicated data entry and, on the back end, reporting and analytics that inform best practice and support DCF's strategic goal of keeping families safely together whenever possible.

DCF's CQI system has initiatives that systemically and comprehensively support a feedback loop with counties and other external partners. Efforts described in this section include using performance data to identify trends and consider how to adjust policies, programs, and services.

CQI Advisory Committee

This committee is comprised of DCF staff and county leaders with the purpose of continual information sharing about all aspects of the child welfare service delivery system and working towards an overarching goal of gathering continual feedback to inform improved practices. This committee is used to formulate CQI guidance related to data analysis and key takeaways. For example, the CQI Advisory Committee provided feedback on the initial assessment case review process and assisted in determining which key outcomes to review.

This committee is routinely brought into discussions about areas of DCF practice to ensure a strong feedback loop with counties and over the next five years, it will continue to provide feedback on the Wisconsin initiatives described in Section 3 of this plan.

eWiSACWIS Data Quality Committee

Established in the winter of 2019, Wisconsin's eWiSACWIS Data Quality Committee (eWDQC) provides input on data quality requirements and eWiSACWIS child welfare information system data. The eWDQC serves as the advising body to DCF in addressing data quality plan requirements of 45 CFR § 1355.52 (d)(5) and is a partnership between the Title IV-E State Agency (DCF) and the Wisconsin County Human Services Association (WCHSA).

Additional System Quality Improvement Initiatives

In addition to the case review system, DCF uses data on a regular basis to assess, inform, request feedback, and analyze for implications to policy and practice to improve the child welfare system. This is consistent with an overall data-driven decision-making process for child welfare programs and policies. Additional mechanisms used to support feedback loops in achieving goals include the following examples:

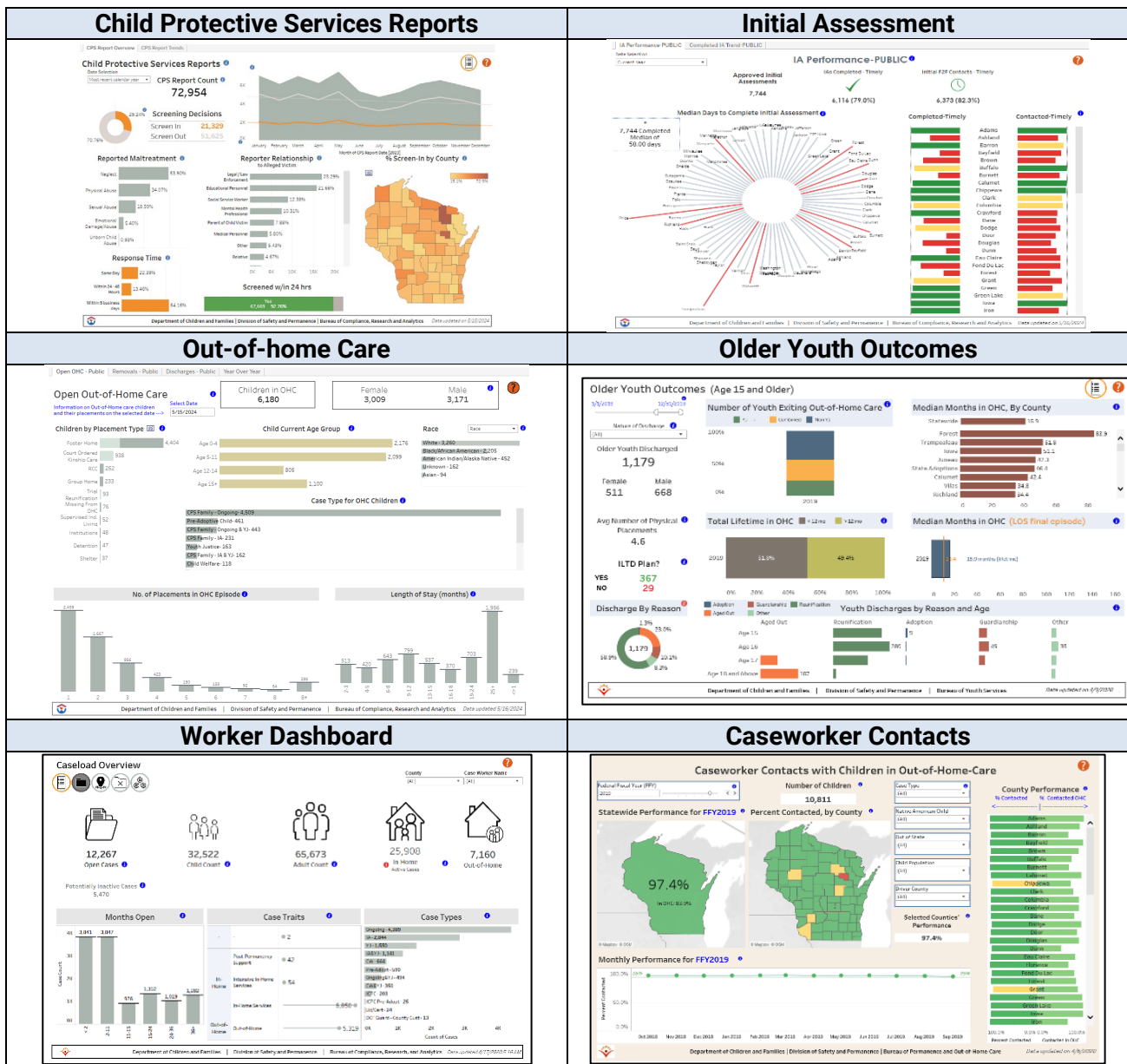
Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act Continuous Quality Improvement Project

The Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA) Continuous Quality Improvement project, through the Children's Court Improvement Program (CCIP), is designed to improve adherence to WICWA requirements in the circuit court system, including use of qualified expert witnesses, providing notice, documentation of active efforts, and compliance with placement preferences in CHIPS, JIPS, TPR, guardianship, and adoption cases. In addition, the project aims to increase collaboration and cooperation among the circuit courts, tribes, county child welfare agencies, attorneys, and other external partners.

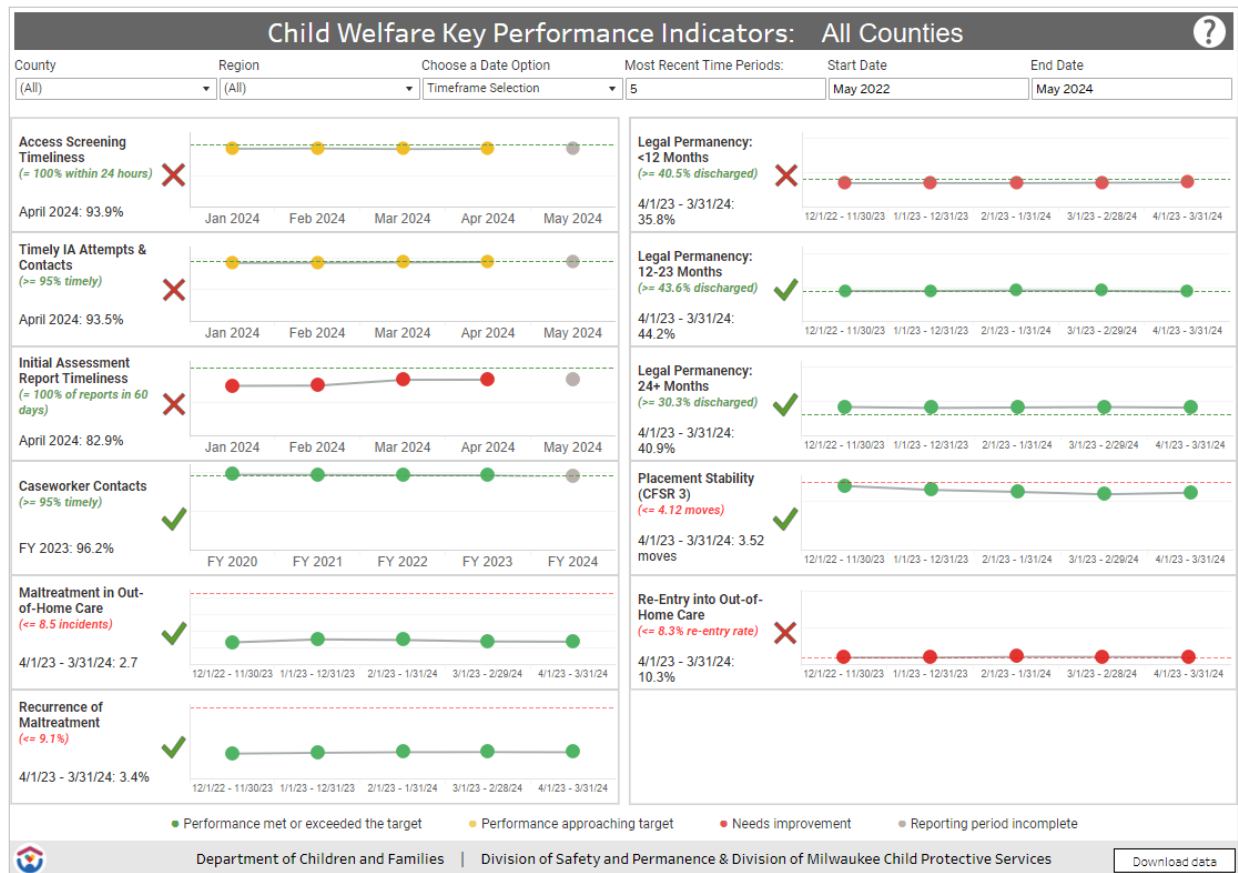
The following data collection methods are used as part of the WICWA Continuous Quality Improvement project: court file review, focus groups, and surveys.

Performance Dashboards

In addition to qualitative, and output/operational reporting data that are available, a wide range of child welfare dashboards provide information as a key component of DCF's child welfare CQI system. They are visual reports showing statewide and local agency child welfare performance summary data. DCF continues to enhance these dashboards based on input from internal and external partners; these dashboards are updated daily and allow for nimble, real-time reporting. County staff are encouraged to regularly review performance in all areas of child welfare practice. Examples of the breadth of data available in our dashboards are shown on the following page. For links to all dashboards, please visit <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/reports>.



The Bureau of Performance Management (BPM) supports and manages Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) on behalf of the department. These KPIs are a set of metrics used to measure performance over time and help gauge if the department is meeting its strategic goals and mission. Through the use of data-driven dashboards and reports, KPIs are designed to provide information for strategic decision-making and results-oriented improvement efforts. To view the child welfare specific KPIs, please visit <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cw/all>



In January of 2023, DCF rolled out the Putting Families First Data Dashboard in response to county and tribal feedback requesting a publicly accessible, transparent, and aesthetically pleasing source of county specific digestible data. Its intended purpose is to share with local external partners, to identify trends, and to inform decisions. This dashboard highlights data relevant to Putting Families First, particularly data regarding keeping children in-home or placed in family settings and transparently represents the racial/ethnic disproportionality of Wisconsin's child welfare system. To access the dashboard, please visit <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/family-first/data-dashboard>.

DCF also created an internal Child Welfare Strategic Metrics Dashboard to support conversations about the Family First system change in Wisconsin. It can be used to track and assess progress of our strategic plan the following areas:

- **Correcting the racial disparity** experienced by child and families across our system
- Dramatically increasing the number of children and families **served in-home**
- Building **services to support families** in their homes
- **Supporting partners** in thinking differently about safety analysis and in-home planning
- Dramatically **reducing** the number of children and families served in **Out-of-Home Care (OHC)**
- Shifting children in OHC toward more **home-like placements**

Disparity

We seek to **reduce the racial disparity** experienced by children and families across our system.

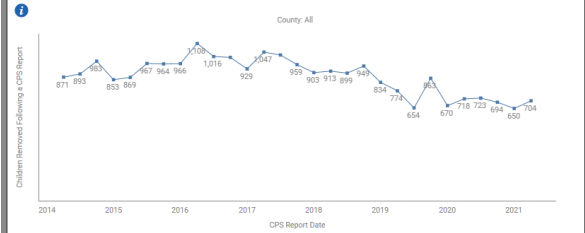
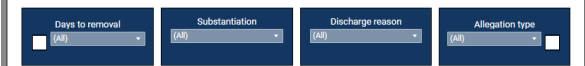
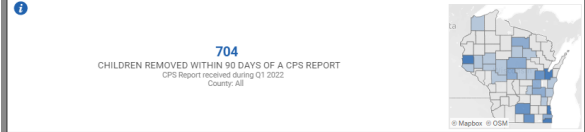
Racial Disproportionality - Racial/ethnic disparity of programs system-wide compared to the total census child population



In-Home

We aim to dramatically increase the number of children and families served in-home...

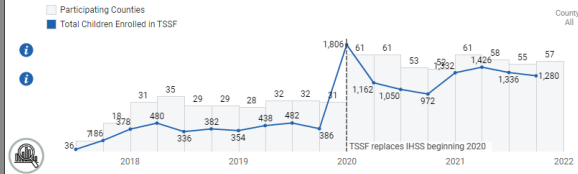
Removed within 90 Days - Children removed within 90 days of a screened-in CPS report received in prior quarter



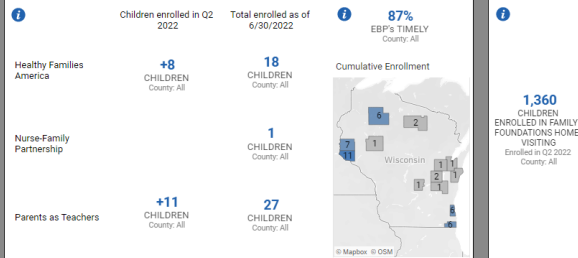
Services

... by building **services** to support families in their homes

TSSF - Children enrolled in TSSF (line) and the number of counties with new enrollments in the quarter (bars)



EBP Prevention Clearinghouse - Children enrolled in Evidence Based Programs (EBP) during quarter

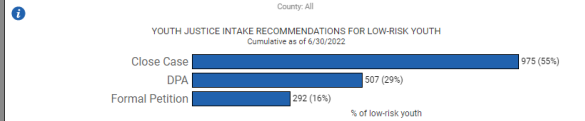


FFHV - Home Visiting

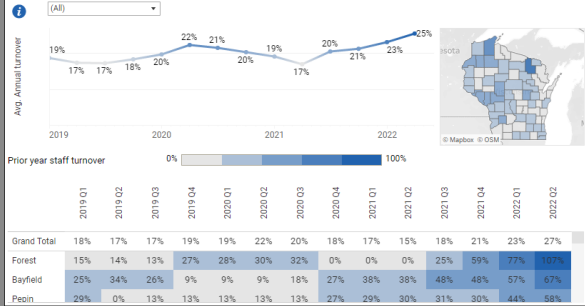
Partners

... by supporting **partners** in thinking differently about safety analysis and in-home planning

Low Risk Youth Justice - Supporting case planning using the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI)



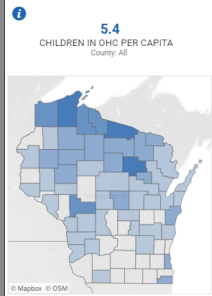
Turnover - Proportion of workers that turned over during the prior year



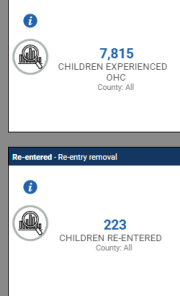
In OHC

We aim to dramatically reduce the number of children served in **Out-of-Home Care (OHC)**.

Per capita - Children in OHC per 1,000 in pop.



Total children served - OHC placement



Open placements - OHC placement



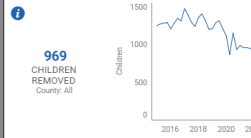
Length of placement episode - For children discharged during the quarter, the median months in care / length of stay



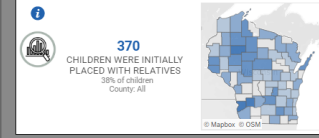
Home-Like

... and shift children in OHC toward more **home-like** placements.

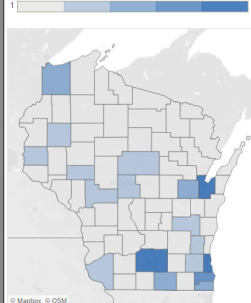
Children removed - Children entering OHC during quarter



Relative placements - Children initially placed with relatives



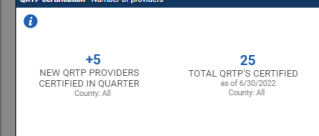
Children removed in quarter



Congregate care - Placement in a group home, RCC, or shelter



QRTP certification - Number of providers



Training System (Initial, Ongoing and Foster Parent Training, Items 26-28)

The following section describes the state's overall training system and is broken into the state response for initial (Item 26), ongoing (Item 27) and foster and adoptive training (Item 28).

DCF has a robust child welfare training system that provides high quality, uniform training statewide. DCF contracts with the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS), which is housed in the University of Wisconsin-Madison's School of Social Work, to provide job-specific professional development opportunities for over 12,525 state, county, tribal, and private agency child welfare professionals and over 7,374 foster parents throughout the state of Wisconsin. The contract is primarily funded by DCF with some funding provided by county child and tribal welfare agencies. WCWPDS subcontracts with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee to develop, deliver, and support all required foundational and special topics training for child welfare professionals and supervisors in Milwaukee, and for foster parents statewide. The WCWPDS delivers training virtually and in-person throughout the state to ensure training is accessible to child welfare professionals and foster parents.

The WCWPDS provides a continuum of services intended to facilitate and sustain positive change and support improved outcomes within Wisconsin's child welfare system. Those services include education, training, transfer of learning, technical assistance, coaching, project management, organizational effectiveness and development, research and evaluation, parent voice, and research to practice.

Data or Information to Demonstrate Overall System Functioning (Items 26-28)

This report uses data from the training system's Learning Management System, PDS Online, with crossover data collected through the State of Wisconsin's eWiSACWIS database. PDS Online is based in Cornerstone's proprietary Learning Management System, which tracks certifications and compliance for state of Wisconsin child welfare professionals. The report includes data collected from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023 (SFY 2023). Additional data is provided with respect to areas of training described under initiatives.

SFY 2023 Data:

Total Trainees	20,366
Case-worker trainees	13,729
Foster-parent trainees	6,637
Total Professional Development Opportunities Provided	1,036
Case-Worker professional-development opportunities provided	618
Foster-Parent professional-development opportunities provided	418

Initiatives to Address Overall Training System Functioning

- DCF contracts with the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System to assure that it is responsive and provides access to training needs throughout the state.
- Over the next five years, it is anticipated that WCWPDS will continue work on enhancing its evaluation process for the initial in-service training program. This includes measures to quantify worker knowledge gain with pre- and post-test components, participant interviews to determine fidelity to the WiLearn model, and surveys to determine fulfillment of local agency responsibilities to both the participants and supervisory staff. Results from this process will determine future modifications and enhancements to worker training.

WiLearn System Enhancements

- Dedicated staff to organizational development and statewide process improvement projects including evaluation components.
- Quarterly compliance reports to counties and private providers to inform them of staff compliance with DCF foundation and ongoing training requirements.
- Development of compliance reporting for foster parent licensure and provision of those reports to DCF staff to address with providers.
- Initiation of cohorts of Applied Learning Communities (ALC's) to support local implementation of policy and practice.
- Development and roll out of data in supervision training to encourage child welfare supervisors to utilize data as part of their staff development and system enhancement processes.
- Continued enhancement of the statewide calendaring system.
- Development of more flexible learning alternatives including synchronous and asynchronous learning modality platforms with a focus on virtual delivery options.
- Enhanced coordination of Organizational Development activities with CQI processes.
- Continued support and infrastructure to elevate lived experience through professional development of Parent Partners and county coordinators through the Parents Supporting Initiative.
- Development of a Plan Do Study Act process to assist counties with improving the quality of caseworker visits. This effort is being coordinated by the CQI Advisory Committee.

INITIAL TRAINING INITIATIVES (ITEM 26)

How well is the staff and provider training system functioning statewide to ensure that **initial training** is provided to all staff who deliver services pursuant to the CFSP that includes the basic skills and knowledge required for their positions?

Wisconsin's initial training system has several components to meet the needs of new child welfare professionals including pre-service training, basic intake, and foundation training. These areas of focus are described throughout this section and compliance information is provided where available.

Per-Service Training

Administrative rules require new child protective services caseworkers and supervisors to complete the caseworker pre-service training as part of their initial development. The web-based pre-service training offered by WCWPDS, combined with the agency-specific orientation

plan that may include job shadowing, agency orientation and other related activities, introduces new caseworkers to the basic skills and knowledge they need to carry out their child protective services responsibilities. Because the pre-service training is web-based, all new caseworkers can begin the training immediately upon hire and the system tracks their completion.

To assure that the modules are consistent with state policies, initiatives, and standards, DCF staff review and update the modules as new state policies, initiatives, and standards are released. Additionally, staff review each module on a three-year cycle to include updated research and best practice guidance.

Prior to being assigned as a primary worker in the statewide automated child welfare system, eWiSACWIS, caseworkers must complete, or be exempted from, the 14 pre-service training modules:

- Introduction to Child Protective Services
- Engaging in Child Protective Services
- Safety
- Co-occurring Considerations
- Child Abuse and Neglect
- Access
- Court
- Initial Assessment
- Ongoing Services
- Trauma
- Placement
- Confirming Safe Environments
- Permanence
- Guide to Standards

These modules can be viewed at <https://wcwpds.wisc.edu/case-worker-pre-service-web-based-modules-on-the-job-application-activity-workbook/>.

Pre-Service Compliance and Data

To support supervisors and agencies with onboarding their new Access, Initial Assessment, and Ongoing child welfare professionals and ensure those staff meet their training requirements, WCWPDS reaches out to new caseworkers through existing WiLearn communication to share the Welcome Packet and Professional Development Plan. The Welcome Packet identifies the pre-service, foundation, and ongoing training requirements and provides information on training policies, procedures, registration, and the Learning Management System (WCWPDS Online). Since the inception of the WiLearn initial in-service training program in January of 2023, pre-service requirements have been built into program structure and compliance with pre-service requirements has increased to 100% statewide.

Initial Inservice Training - WiLearn

WiLearn is an initial training program, required by DCF 43, for new child protective services (CPS) professionals in Wisconsin and is required for all new employees whose primary functions include access, initial assessment, ongoing services, or a mixture of those practice

areas. The WiLearn training program utilizes the cohort model, which offers a uniform experience for learners as new CPS professionals receive the same information in the same order across the state. WiLearn takes advantage of enhanced technologies to allow new CPS professionals to complete all the training program virtually, with much of it on their own time. Much of a learner's time will be spent on nine Foundational Elements which are comprised of synchronous classroom-style learning paired with asynchronous learning activities and courses learners will complete on their own. Foundational Elements have been organized into a sequential order with each element building off the one before. DCF and WCWPDS collaborated to make updates to this content to reflect current and future revisions to standards, policies, and language.

Aside from the Foundational Elements, WiLearn also includes agency-specific trainings and onboarding activities, including structured supervisory coaching and mentoring opportunities, Case Worker Pre-Service, and eWiSACWIS web-based modules. All of these requirements must be completed within the first six months of employment. DCF consulted with local CPS agency leadership and prioritized participation in the current safety foundation trainings in addition to the Foundational Elements. Those who qualify for the WiLearn Program are automatically enrolled into it and will receive detailed information via email about WiLearn and how to access the training components. During these first six months of employment, CPS professionals enrolled in WiLearn are expected to be assigned up to a 50% primary caseload, which DCF defines as seven.

WiLearn Components

- Agency orientation and onboarding.
- Completion of the Case Worker Pre-Service Web-Based Modules.
 - Each Pre-Service Web-Based module includes a workbook to be completed jointly by the new worker and their supervisor to prepare them for the foundational element trainings and activity resources.
- Pre-Service transfer of learning, job shadowing, and on-the-job training completed in tandem with the web-based preservice modules.
- Completion of the Introduction to eWiSACWIS web-based modules.
- Completion of the nine Foundational Elements, which includes web-based training and facilitated Community Huddles held via Zoom.
 - Each foundational element includes a workbook that is intended to support the learner through their training and provide updates to supervisors/coaches.
- Completion of the Safety in Child Protective Services-Present Danger Course.
- Transfer of learning, job shadowing, on-the-job training, and learning evaluation completed in tandem with the Foundational Elements.
 - A Learning Promotion Tool was developed using items from the Wisconsin Child Welfare Model for Practice, which correlates with the overall purpose of new worker training:
 - To prepare new staff to demonstrate basic proficiency in the key skill domains defined in the Wisconsin Child Welfare Model for Practice.
 - This tool is utilized by supervisors/coaches throughout their staff's involvement in the Foundational Elements in order to provide an assessment of their progress and aptitude related to the learning objectives and behavioral indicators.
- Enhanced supervisory oversight and coaching.

- Local agency trainings.
- A reduced/50% primary case assignment for the duration of the program's length (roughly six months).

Foundational Elements

1. Culturally Responsible Practice
2. Trauma Informed Practice
3. Understanding Child Protective Services Case Process
4. Engaging Families
5. Case Practice with American Indian Tribes
6. Areas of Assessment in Child Protective Services
7. Critical Thinking in Child Protective Services
8. Family Centered Decision Making
9. Safety in CPS – Present Danger

Local Agency Work

WiLearn emphasizes the supervisor's role in supporting new child welfare professionals' professional development. The model includes activities that enhance learning, structure on-the-job application, and build the professional/supervisor relationship. These activities include:

- Transfer of Learning/Training Follow-up
- Job Shadowing
- Enhanced Supervisor Oversight
- Learning Assessment
- Local Trainings

Benefits of WiLearn

WiLearn prepares the state's child welfare workforce to work with families to make decisions that support child safety through the provision of additional resources. It also leverages the important role supervisors and a new child welfare professional's team play in on-boarding new staff. The key training enhancements include:

- Universally Relevant and Immersive Training Experience
- Accessibility
- Timeliness
- Consistency
- Focused Training
- Administrative Ease

WiLearn Compliance

In 2023, of the 15 WiLearn cohorts, four represented cohorts of workers hired in the Milwaukee region, and eleven in the balance of the state. The table below represents the workers compliance with the WiLearn components for workers at the end of the six-month time frame allocated for program completion.

	CPS Professionals who Completed WiLearn (active and employed in CPS role at the end of the cohort)	CPS Professionals who did not Complete the WiLearn Capstone but were Required to (active and employed in a CPS role at the end of the cohort)	CPS Professionals who did not Complete the WiLearn Capstone but were no longer Required to (no longer employed in a CPS role at the end of the cohort)
BOS	137 / 137 (100%)	0	21
Milwaukee	72 / 72 (100%)	0	22
Total	209 / 209 (100%)	0	43

Over the next five years, it is anticipated that the evaluation results, learner feedback, and anecdotal information will allow the training system to continue to modify and enhance the WiLearn program in the areas of content and delivery.

Additional Foundation Training

In addition to the WiLearn requirements, DCF 43 requires new child protective services caseworkers who have Access, Initial Assessment, and Ongoing child protective services responsibilities to complete, unless exempted with county approval, two additional trainings within their initial two years of employment. Dependent upon job function, new caseworkers are required to complete Safety in Child Protective Services – Impending Danger for Initial Assessment and Ongoing workers and Case Practice with American Indian Tribes.

Basic Intake Training

DCF and WCWPDS continue to take on a significantly larger role in the youth justice arena since oversight of the community-based youth justice system transferred from the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) to DCF in 2016.

Wisconsin Admin. Code 43 requires that any county staff that provides intake services must successfully complete thirty hours of Basic Intake Training. The training includes an eighteen-hour face-to-face training in which participants learn about relevant statutes, court processes, youth engagement, adolescent brain development, trauma, and family dynamics. The initial 18 hours are followed up approximately six weeks later with a 12-hour practical application component. Participants involved in this interactive component learn and practice service matching. The new philosophy for this training is to help learners understand not only what they *can* do but also what *should* they do and *how* should they do it.

In Wisconsin, county on-call child welfare professionals perform custody intake as part of their intake services, so most child welfare professionals in the state are required to complete this training. The child welfare professional must achieve a score of 70% percent or higher on an exam taken at the end of the thirty hours to receive a certificate of completion. Between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023, 311 individuals completed the Basic Intake Worker Training.

ONGOING TRAINING (ITEM 27)

How well is the staff and provider training system functioning statewide to ensure that **ongoing training** is provided for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP?

Available Data or Information that Demonstrates System Functioning

The ongoing training system builds upon the knowledge, awareness, skill development, and values included in foundation training by providing in-depth knowledge, awareness, values, and skill development training around a specific child welfare topic. Different forms of input gathering help shape the suite of special skills and training topics available to child welfare professionals statewide. These include direct feedback from training participants by way of course evaluations, the statewide training needs flash survey, DCF defined priorities, and feedback provided at regional supervisor meetings. Trainers with specific expertise in the specialized topic areas facilitate many of the ongoing training courses.

In addition to the ongoing training opportunities provided for Access, Initial Assessment, and Ongoing child protectives services staff, courses specifically designed for foster care coordinators are offered regularly. These include DCF 56 Training: New Licensors (DCF 56 outlines the licensing requirements for foster homes), SAFE Structured Analysis Family Evaluation Training, and Foster Parent Foundation Training.

In addition to the training requirements already listed, state licensing rules require licensed social workers to complete four hours of Ethics and Boundaries training during each two-year licensing period. WCWPDS delivers a new Ethics and Boundaries training topic to child welfare professionals and supervisors every two years and provides over sixty sessions of Ethics and Boundaries training to child welfare professionals and supervisors around the state each licensing period.

To meet the in-time learning needs of child welfare professionals and decrease workers' time outside of the office, WCWPDS and DCF developed the following web-based learning courses: Understanding Child Sex Trafficking in Wisconsin, Transition to Adulthood, Safety Overview for Non-CPS Staff, Confirming Safe Environments, and CANS Tool Training and Certification. Child welfare professionals can complete these web-based courses via WCWPDS Online to allow ease of access and tracking on their training transcripts. The collection of available online trainings continues to grow with new web-based courses developed each year. Descriptions about the web-based courses are available via <https://wcwpds.wisc.edu/web-based-courses/>.

In addition to the training provided by the WCWPDS, child welfare professionals and supervisors can attend training offered by other organizations and apply it to their ongoing training requirements. As part of this process, child welfare professionals and supervisors are required to enter these sessions into WCWPDS Online as an external training so that their PDS Online transcript captures all their completed training hours. In-service/ongoing training hour requirements cannot be exempted by a county agency, so these outside trainings cannot supersede those training requirements.

Training Compliance and Data

WCWPDS sends quarterly reports to each county human services supervisor in Wisconsin outlining worker compliance with ongoing training requirements and what courses the worker needs to complete to comply with requirements.

The most recent compliance data for the ongoing training component indicates that of the 838 workers who were required to complete the 30 hours of ongoing training, 512 completed (61%)

and 326 did not complete (39%). The next two-year timeframe for workers to complete their ongoing requirements ends on February 28, 2025. DCF and WCWPDS will collect and review this data to determine if efforts to improve compliance have been effective.

Over the next five years, WCWPDS will focus on improving foundation training compliance documentation.

Tribal Training

Wisconsin is committed to ensuring that it meets the training needs of Indian Child Welfare (ICW) child welfare professionals in the state's eleven federally recognized Tribes. As sovereign nations, each tribe is responsible for establishing training requirements for its staff. As a result, there are no state training requirements for ICW child welfare professionals unless the child welfare professional is a social worker certified by the state of Wisconsin. However, ICW child welfare professionals have job responsibilities or training needs that can be addressed through WCWPDS. To identify these training needs, the Intertribal Child Welfare Steering Committee, composed of all eleven ICW directors, meets with a representative of WCWPDS every other month. Together, the group develops a list of training topics to focus on each year. There are typically three identified training topics offered to tribal staff each year.

Over the next five years, to address disproportionality and support equity within the CW system, WCWPDS will develop additional trainings to support county supervisor and staff engagement with tribes and ensure WICWA. This initiative is the result of collaboration between the Intertribal Child Welfare Steering Committee, the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System, and the Department of Children and Families.

Supervisor Training

Administrative rule requires that new child protective services supervisors, unless exempted, complete the child welfare professional pre-service and foundation training as part of their initial training. The child welfare professional pre-service training must be completed before providing direct supervision to a child protective services child. The Supervisor has twelve months to complete all of the WiLearn components and the two additional required trainings. In addition, child protective services supervisors, like their staff, are required to complete thirty-hours of in-service (special skills and topics/ongoing) training related to their professional responsibilities during each two-year state licensing period.

WCWPDS also offers annual supervisor foundation and supervisor-specific ongoing training topics. The supervisor foundation training focuses on both child welfare specific supervision issues and basic elements of effective supervision. While new supervisors are required to complete the child welfare professional foundation training, they are not required to complete supervisor foundation training.

The supervisor foundation training is continually developed and is offered statewide on a regular basis. The supervisor foundation training series includes:

- Stepping Up to Supervision: Supervisor Orientation (one day) – pre-requisite to attend any of the foundation courses (offered monthly).
- Supervisor Foundation - Administrative Supervision: Supervisor as Manager (two days).
- Supervisor Foundation - Educational Supervision: Supervisor as Coach (two days).

- Supervisor Foundation - Supportive Supervision: Supervisor as Team Leader (two days).
- Supervisor Foundation - Clinical Supervision: Supervisor as Critical Thinker (two days).

Other Initiatives

Critical Incident Review

The *Developing Champions for Change: A Scientific Approach to the Review of Critical Incidents Training Institute* is a four-day training designed to provide a formal skill set to professionals in organizational safety and quality assurance in child welfare. It is comprised of four courses:

- *Introduction to Human Factors and Systems Safety (Day One).*
- *Human Factors Debriefing (Day Two).*
- *Accident Analysis (Day Three)*
- *Implementation and System Change (Day Four)*

Conferences

DCF works collaboratively with the WCWPDS and the University of Wisconsin-Madison to plan, deliver, and support several conferences. These include the:

Public Child Welfare Conference

The Public Child Welfare Conference targets agency directors, managers, and supervisors and is held every other year. Themes vary for each conference, but have the common thread of supporting statewide initiatives, county needs, and state/national trends. The conference historically reaches 500 Wisconsin child welfare leaders. The next event is scheduled for September 2024.

Statewide Conference on Child Welfare and the Courts

The Statewide Conference on Child Welfare and the Courts targets circuit court and tribal court judges, tribal chairpersons, circuit court commissioners that hear juvenile cases, district attorneys, corporate counsels, tribal attorneys, private bar attorneys and public defenders that represent parents and youth, and guardians ad litem. Participant composition is designed to bring together county, state, and tribal leaders from multidisciplinary backgrounds to contribute to a dialogue and develop pragmatic approaches to their work serving youth. Presentations and workshops are subsequently aimed at solutions-based approaches for serving youth in the child welfare and youth justice systems. The conference provides substantive training in a multi-disciplinary setting on topics that impact child welfare, legal and judicial practice to improve safety, permanence, and well-being outcomes for Wisconsin's children and families. Conference capacity is generally 500 participants, though recent hybrid formats have allowed for over 800 participants. The next event is scheduled for September 2025.

Youth Services Conference

The Youth Services Conference targets independent living coordinators, child welfare professional working with older youth and youth as they age out of care, Bureau of Youth Services grantees, congregate care providers, youth justice professionals, and providers. The conference addresses issues relevant to the wide range of youth currently or formerly served in OHC, with topics focusing on supporting youth while they are in care, as well as

in their transition to independence. The last event occurred in May 2024, and the next one is scheduled for the summer of 2026.

Adoption Professionals Conference

Wisconsin's Adoption Conference targets social workers from public and private agencies, adoption professionals, public adoption program professionals, and private child placement agencies. The focus of this conference is to improve services and supports for Wisconsin adoption professionals. Capacity for this event is generally 250 participants. The next event is scheduled for October 2024.

Applications for Continuing Education and Judicial Education credits are available. Social workers can also receive Continuing Education Hours. The UW-Madison Division of Continuing Studies is an approved continuing education provider through the Association of Social Work Boards.

FOSTER PARENT TRAINING (ITEM 28)

How well is the staff and provider training system functioning to ensure that **training** is occurring statewide for current or prospective **foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff** of state licensed or approved facilities (that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under title IV-E) that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children?

Available Data or Information that Demonstrates System Functioning

Training Compliance and Curriculums

Over the next five years, DCF will improve tracking of foster parent training through utilization of automated training registration and reporting systems. DCF will work collaboratively with WCWPDS to evaluate and revise foster parent trainings (pre-placement, initial and ongoing) to best target the training needs of relative foster parents, non-relative foster parents, and adoptive families. Provision of a variety of training modalities, course structure, course length, and training topics should enhance training compliance.

Required Training by Level of Care Certification

		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Pre-Placement Curriculum	Foster Care Overview	Pre-Placement: 6 hours	Pre-Placement: 6 hours		
	Expectations of Foster Care				
	Caring for Children in Foster Care				
	Developing and Maintaining Family Connections				
	Foster Family Self-Care				
Foundation Curriculum	Permanency	Initial Licensing: Not Required	Initial Licensing: 30 hours (to be done in first licensing period)	Pre-Placement: 36 hours	Pre-Placement: 36 hours
	Cultural Dynamics				
	Child Abuse and Neglect				
	Effects of Maltreatment on Development				
	Attachment				
	Separation and Placement				
	Importance of Family Connections				
	Guidance and Positive Discipline				
	Access to Resources				
					Plus 4 hours of Child-Specific Training
Various curriculums	Crisis Management	Not Required	Topics Not Required	Initial Licensing: 24 hours	Initial Licensing: 24 hours
	Sexuality and Sexual Development				
	Sexual Abuse				
	Effects of Maltreatment and Trauma on Child Development				
	Building Life Skills				
	Building Birth Family Connections				
	Other Topics Required by Licensing Agency				
		Ongoing: Not Required	Ongoing: 10 hours each year of licensure beyond the initial licensing period	Ongoing: 18 hours each year of licensure beyond the initial licensing period	Ongoing: 24 hours each year of licensure beyond the initial licensing period

Foster Parent Training

DCF contracts with WCWPDS-Madison, who subcontract with WCWPDS-Milwaukee, for the curriculum development and maintenance of Pre-Placement training, the Foundation Curriculum, and other various ongoing trainings. Additionally, WCWPDS-Milwaukee conducts Train the Trainer sessions of the Foundation Curriculum for foster care coordinators from county and private child placing agencies. Private child placing agencies generally license foster homes with a Level of Care of 3 or 4 and conduct their own training of the required curriculum for their licensed foster homes. Private child placing agencies receive financial support to implement training as an included item in their administrative rates for foster care placements.

In addition to the trainings conducted through WCWPDS-Milwaukee, DCF provides other resources to support foster parent training. Per the contract with DCF, the Wisconsin Family Connections Center (WiFCC) is required to provide two trainings per month free of charge (one interactive and one webinar). The interactive trainings give foster parents an opportunity to ask questions and provide input during the training.

A twelve-part Transracial Parenting Series is offered to foster parents through the WiFCC champions classroom. This series of webinars is intended to bring greater awareness of the importance of racial and ethnic identity to a child's health development. It also includes a transracial adoptee panel. Parents and caregivers learn the crucial role they play in raising a child of a different race to feel connected to their culture and who grows to develop a positive self-identity.

A webinar on supporting LGBTQ+ foster youth is offered regularly to help foster parents understand the culture and history of the LGBTQ+ community. Foster parents explore what youth are experiencing in today's environment and learn about current terminology to help increase their knowledge of a youth's personal identity development.

Additionally, WiFCC is contracted to provide an annual conference for relative caregivers and caregivers with children who are post-permanency (reunification, guardianship, adoption).

County agencies also provide foster parent training that is financially supported using title IV-E pass-through funding. Fifty-one counties utilized pass-through funding in CY2023 to support additional foster parent training through funding for mileage reimbursement, child care, material costs, and other allowable costs related to the provision of foster parent training. This can be used for pre-placement, if provided face-to-face, and foundation training sessions.

Training Compliance

The foster care licensing agency reviews foster care providers' training compliance throughout their licensing period and at time of license renewal. If a foster parent has not completed the required training for their level of certification, the licensing agency may request an exception. Pre-placement and initial licensing training exceptions may be granted by the DCF Exceptions Panel

for all Levels of Care when there is a plan in place to complete the required training. However, the licensing agency may grant an exception for ongoing training at any level.

The table below lists the exceptions the DCF Exceptions Panel and licensing agencies granted for foster parent training since 2018. Exceptions are time-limited and may include additional conditions.

Waiver/Exception Information

WAIVER/EXCEPTION DESCRIPTION	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
56.13(4)(a) 2. LEVEL 2 Initial Licensing	79	71	135	129	81	75
56.13(4)(a) 3. LEVEL 2 Ongoing	22	37	43	33	40	32
56.13(4)(b) LEVEL 2 Child-Specific Pre-Placement	0	0	2	3	1	1
56.13(5)(b) 1. LEVEL 3 Pre-Placement	0	0	0	0	0	0
56.13(5)(b) 2. LEVEL 3 Initial Licensing	0	2	0	0	4	0
56.13(5)(b) 3. LEVEL 3 Ongoing	5	6	7	6	6	13
56.13(6)(b) 3. LEVEL 4 Ongoing	0	0	0	3	0	0

There was an increase in training exceptions approved in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, though now that all trainings are offered virtually, the numbers of training exceptions more closely align pre-pandemic levels.

Pre-Placement

Foster parents can complete all pre-placement requirements for Levels 1 and 2 and the six hours of pre-placement training requirements for Levels 3 and 4 by completing the online course at <https://care.wcwpds.wisc.edu/foster-parent-pre-placement/>. Efforts continue to make this training more accessible through printed transcripts, phone participation, and Spanish accessibility.

Initial Licensing

Foster parents licensed at Level 2 and above must complete initial licensing training. DCF 56 specifies the topics that must be covered, all of which are covered by the “Wisconsin Foundation Training for Foster Parents” curriculum that WCWPDS-Milwaukee offers throughout the state. The Foundation Curriculum, which is the approved initial licensing training, is offered through WCWPDS-Milwaukee approximately 38 times per year virtually with in-person sessions available by request in locations throughout the state. Local public and private licensing agencies also have the option to train their staff to train the curriculum, which provides additional opportunities for agencies to offer additional training sessions for foster parents with their agencies.

The training curriculum has been translated into Spanish and given by Spanish-speaking trainers at least twice per year.

Foster Parent Foundation Training

Numbers reported are for the number of instructor-led training seats taken between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023. In-person training opportunities are offered as needed to accommodate families without internet access, however most foster parents have chosen to complete the training requirements through the virtual format.

Foster Parent Foundation Training	Total Participants in SFY 23
Foster Parent Foundation Module 1: Partners in Permanency	705
Foster Parent Foundation Module 2: Healthy Identity Development	574
Foster Parent Foundation Module 3: Maintaining Family Connectedness	679
Foster Parent Foundation Module 4a: Dynamics of Abuse and Neglect Part 1	636
Foster Parent Foundation Module 4b: Dynamics of Abuse and Neglect Part 2	645
Foster Parent Foundation Module 5: Impact of Maltreatment on Child Development	603
Foster Parent Foundation Module 6: Attachment	588
Foster Parent Foundation Module 7: Separation and Placement	512
Foster Parent Foundation Module 8: Guidance and Positive Discipline	635
Foster Parent Foundation Module 9: Effects of Fostering on the Family	584

WCWPDS-Milwaukee, in close collaboration with DCF, also develops and delivers “Training of Content” (TOC) sessions to prepare trainers offering the Initial Licensing/Foundation modules through county, Child Placing Agencies (CPAs), or tribes. TOC sessions are offered at least annually and more often after curriculum revisions.

Ongoing Foster Parent Training Requirements

Foster parents are required to complete ongoing training in each licensing period that follows the initial period based on a plan created for each family that reflects its needs and the needs of the children in their care. Ongoing training requirements vary by Level of Care certification and can be satisfied in several ways through WCWPDS - Madison and WCWPDS - Milwaukee, community agencies, educational institutions, and web-based sources. Options for ongoing training include face-to-face consultation with professionals with expertise about specific topics; video; audio; web-based presentations and resources; support groups; adult education courses; books and periodicals; television and radio presentations; mentor family consultations; and conferences, workshops, seminars, and webinars. Books, periodicals, web-based, and broadcast materials can only account for a maximum of 20% of the total required hours.

More detailed descriptions of all foster parent trainings can be found at <https://wcwpds.wisc.edu/>.

Assessing Foster Parent Training Needs

Foster parents are provided an opportunity at the end of each training to complete an evaluation.

Over the next five years, DCF and WCWPDS will continue to solicit regular feedback to plan future training topics and decide which modalities will be offered. Trainings are then scheduled through WCWPDS- Milwaukee or feedback is communicated to the Wisconsin Family Connection Center (WiFCC).

Training System (Items 26–28) Brief Assessment on Progress to Date

DCF will continue to work WCWPDS to address issues related to compliance with training requirements and tracking. In addition, the new worker training model, and other areas of focus described throughout this section, will continue to improve training options in the future.

Service Array Systemic Factor (Items 29-30)

How well is the service array and resource development system functioning to ensure that a comprehensive array of services is **accessible** in all jurisdictions throughout the state (Item 29) and that services are **individualized** to meet the unique needs of children and families (Item 30)?

Child Welfare System Overview

Wisconsin has a state-supervised, county-administered service delivery system; the exception is Milwaukee County, which is state-administered through DCF's Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services. The state-supervised, county-administered structure offers many benefits, including the ability for local jurisdictions to develop and deliver services tailored to meet the needs of children and families. This includes, but is not limited to, tailoring culturally specific services and supports for non-English speaking populations, tribal populations, and different races and ethnicities represented in the state.

The Wisconsin Child Welfare Model for Practice is the compass which guides the state's child welfare work and decision-making. Its vision for quality service provision is possible through a collaborative partnership with county and tribal agencies, other state agencies, and external partners.

The goals of Wisconsin's service model are:

- Supporting families in home.
- Keeping children in family settings.
- Supporting youth in their communities.
- Supporting the Wisconsin workforce.

Services and supports are designed to work with children, youth, and families to expand healthy connections within in their communities and tribes.

Available Data or Information that Demonstrates System Functioning

Case and administrative data related to the service array systemic factor is found in the Child and Family Outcomes section, specifically Items 3 and 12. This data analyzes Wisconsin's use of the Child Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Assessment Tool.

In Wisconsin, children in OHC receive a CANS evaluation that requires goals be developed for any identified need(s). Progress on and/or completion of these goals must be tracked as part of the case planning and service provision processes. A child welfare professional must complete the CANS within thirty days of an out-of-home placement and every six months thereafter while the child remains in OHC. Re-assessment is required sooner if the child's placement changes.

The CANS is a valuable tool to customize services for all families and is used to:

- Identify the needs and strengths of the child
- Determine the ability of the provider to meet the child's needs
- Evaluate the stability of the placement
- Individualize the needs of services for children in OHC (Item 30)

How DCF Supports Plan Development to Ensure Access to the Service Array

Over the next five years, DCF will provide ongoing training, technical assistance, and support to supervisors and caseworkers to ensure practice alignment with DCF standards.

Wisconsin's Ongoing Services Standards provide a framework for the ongoing case process and detail requirements related to assessing service needs, when services should be provided, and how services may address issues regarding a child's safety, permanence, and well-being. Specifically, that the child welfare caseworker gathers and documents information pertaining to child and caregiver needs and strengths, develop a case plan to identify goals and corresponding service needs that support safe case closure, and routinely monitor goal achievement to ensure adequate service provision and desired change. This must be done within six months after development of the initial case plan and every six months thereafter.

The CPS Safety Intervention Standards outline fundamental safety intervention agency responsibilities and provide guidance to child welfare professionals on how to assess the safety of children who are living in their familial homes or have been placed in OHC. The standards address situations where a child welfare caseworker must determine whether a child can safely remain in his or her familial home or must be removed from the home for safety reasons. They further provide guidance with respect to measures that may allow a child to remain in his or her familial home, such as developing a protective or in-home safety plan that identifies services that will control for or manage safety threats. Additional guidance includes how services may be used to manage impending danger threats as part of an in-home safety plan.

Required expectations spelled out in standards related to meeting the service needs of families include the following:

- Evaluating the existing safety plan developed during initial assessment/investigation.
- Ensuring child safety through continuous assessment, oversight, and adjustment of safety plans.
- Engaging families in the case planning process that identifies underlying needs and directs services to address threats to child safety.
- Measuring progress related to establishing parent/caregiver protective capacities and eliminating safety related issues.
- Achieving stability for all in-home child protective services cases.
- Promoting well-being of children in in-home and OHC cases.

DCF meets the service array needs of child welfare families through:

- Individualized case planning and case management.
- Direct service provision through DCF administered programs.
- Collaboration, referral, and follow-up with other state and local agencies to meet family service needs.

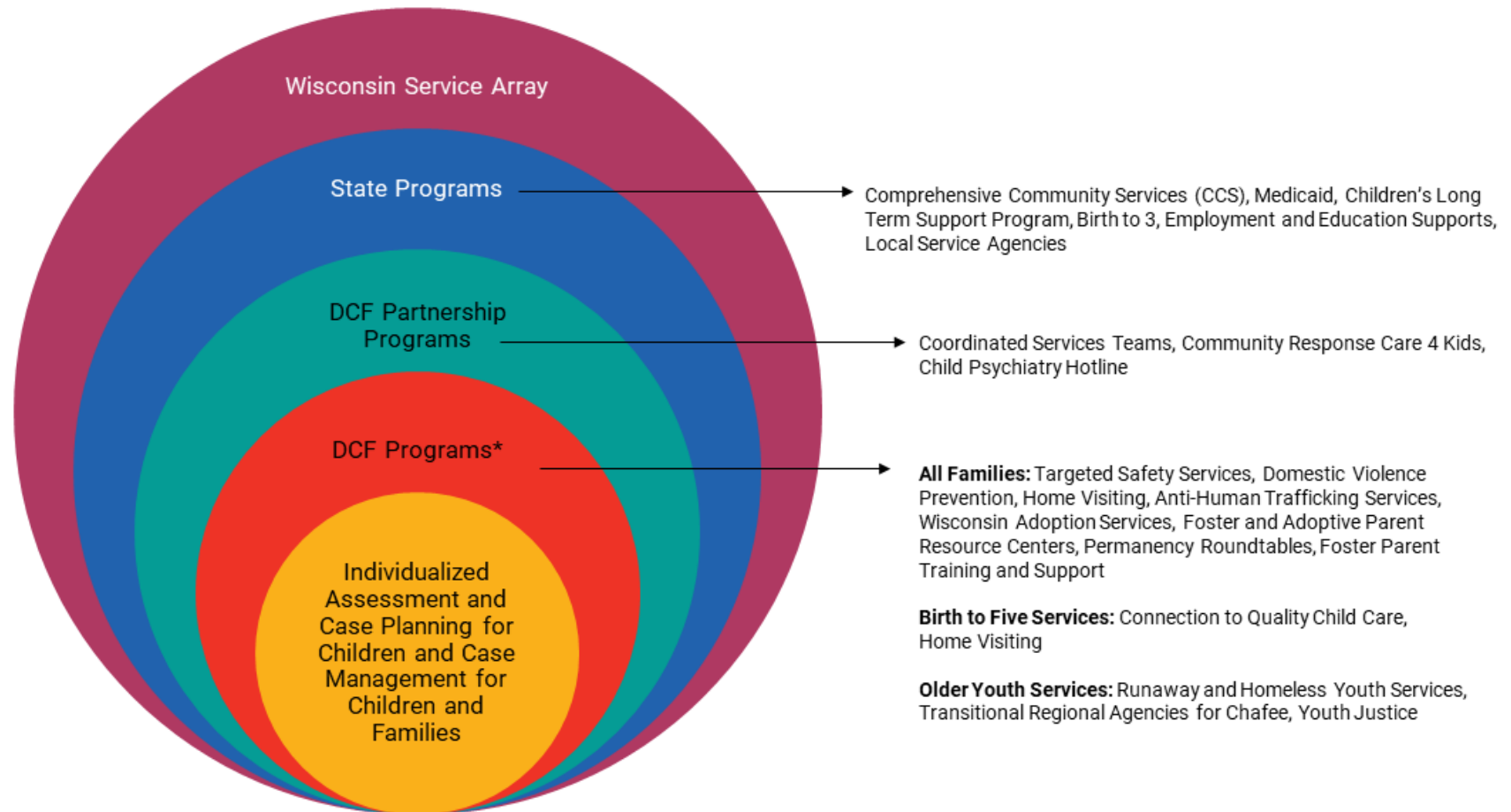
DCF's Ongoing Services and CPS Intervention Standards are available at:

- <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy>

DCF staff developed a Foster Parent Handbook to provide critical information to foster parents and children in care about training services and supports available at:

- <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/fostercare/handbook>,

The visual below depicts the current service array that is supervised by DCF and administered through county agencies and DMCPs. Some services are delivered in partnership with local private providers.



Service Array and Tribes in Wisconsin

There are 11 federally recognized tribes in Wisconsin. Wisconsin passed the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act Law (WICWA) in 2009 and developed specific local agency guidance on WICWA requirements, including “active efforts.” These documents are critical resources for counties and tribes in assuring culturally competent service delivery to Wisconsin’s tribal populations. Key resources include:

- WICWA Desk Aid - <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/2536.pdf>
- Active Effort guide - <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/464.pdf>
- WICWA eWiSACWIS Desk Aid - <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/423.pdf>
- WICWA Online Resource for Case Workers - https://media.wcwpds.wisc.edu/foundation/WICWA_Online_Resource/index.html

Service Array and the Wisconsin Prevention Plan

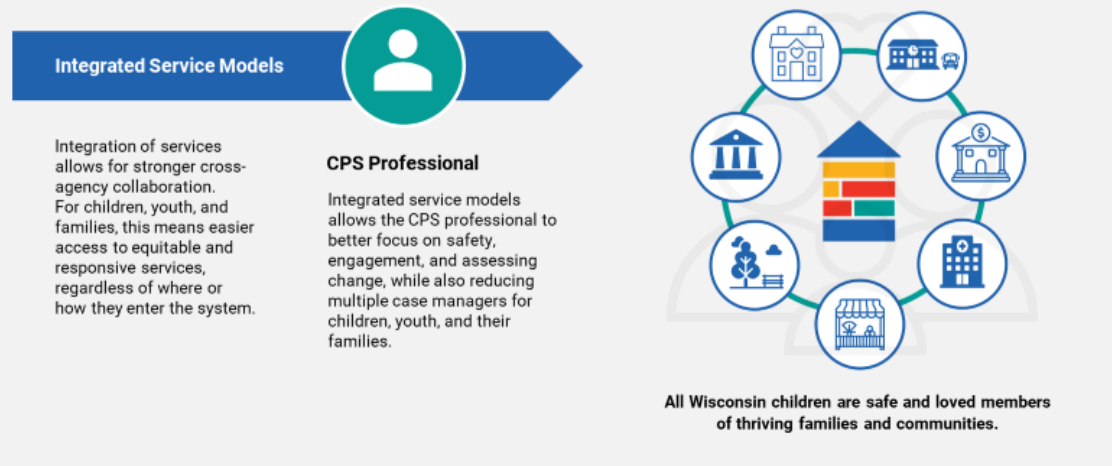
Historically, in the child welfare system, the perception of risk for children remaining in home has overshadowed the harm of removal. This fear of risk is often based on public or community reaction to tragedies and perceived ability to prevent them. However, research has shown that removing children from their family and culture also poses significant risk to children. Due to this, the child welfare system has a significant obligation to families to be sure that removal is only used when all other means are not possible or have been exhausted.

Wisconsin’s holistic in-home service delivery model provides a solid foundation to strengthen the state’s capacity to care for more children in their homes and develop a robust in-home service infrastructure. Through Family First Prevention and Services Act strategic planning efforts, DCF articulated its in-home services model in Wisconsin’s Five-Year Prevention Services Plan: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/familyfirst/title-iv-e-5-year-prevention-plan.pdf>.

This model built on the current service array and included a broader foundation of supports available to families through access to high quality early care and education, housing, employment, health care, and community resources and supports. Over this next five years, DCF will continue to evaluate this model to incorporate additional evidence-based services.

In-Home Service Model

Wisconsin's holistic in-home service model aims to keep children safely at home with their families in a manner that promotes equity and reduces disproportionality.



All families are unique and may include parents, children, extended family or like-kin family members.



Supportive Infrastructure, represented by the blue icons surrounding *all families*, includes, but is not limited to:

- Early Care and Education
- Health, Behavioral Health, and Substance Abuse Service
- Housing and Economic Support
- Caregiver Services and Parent Coaching
- Legal Services
- Relatives, Like-Kin, and Caregiver Support.

The Services for Children under the Age of 5 section of this plan also provides information on child abuse prevention grants, the Birth to 3 Program, and efforts to ensure family connections to quality child care and home visiting services.

Service Array (Items 29–30) Brief Assessment on Progress to Date

Over the next five years, DCF will continue to gather feedback to evaluate ongoing efforts and identify service array gaps, with a focus on access to mental health services, dental care, and alcohol and drug treatment. Targeted Safety Services Funding, the Kinship Navigator Program, and Family Foundations Home Visiting Services will remain cornerstones of Wisconsin's Putting Families First child welfare transformation as DCF defines a more comprehensive and systematic process for assessing and meeting the needs of families that are served in-home.

Other service array programs include automation of Foster Care State Medicaid certification for children in out-of-home care and the use of Coordinated Service Teams to coordinate care for children and youth in multiple systems of care.

Agency Responsiveness (Items 31-32)

How well is the agency responsiveness to the community system functioning statewide to ensure that in implementing the provisions of the CFSP and developing related APSRs, the state engages in ongoing consultation with tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care

providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals, objectives, and annual updates of the CFSP?

ITEM 31- STATE ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULATION WITH EXTERNAL PARTNERS

Over the next five years, extensive collaboration will remain a hallmark of DCF policymaking and program development. Wisconsin's Putting Families First approach also contributes to strong performance with agency responsiveness. Data or information regarding performance and initiatives that address Item 31 are described in detail in the Collaboration section of this plan.

ITEM 32 – COORDINATION OF CFSP SERVICES WITH OTHER FEDERAL PROGRAMS

Available Data or Information that Demonstrates System Functioning

In addition to child welfare, DCF administers key federal programs that serve children and families. These include the Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy, the Wisconsin Works (W-2) Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program, and child support. Co-location of these programs in one department promotes collaboration and alignment. In addition, DCF works closely with other state programs to ensure eligible individuals' access to key benefits such as Medicaid. To support collaborative efforts, DCF has spearheaded and launched data exchanges designed to improve information available about, and services provided to, families in the child welfare system and other state systems. The individualized planning for child welfare families and the use of the CANS for children in OHC (described in Item 29) are the primary way that families are identified as eligible for, and subsequently connected to, appropriate programs and services.

Access to Wisconsin Shares

The Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy program provides child care subsidies to low-income families. The Wisconsin Shares program is connected to YoungStar, the state's quality rating and improvement system. To further support the use of high-quality programs, DCF established a policy that requires foster parents to use child care rated as three stars or higher, as determined by a scale of 1-5, with 3-5 stars being established as high-quality. Exceptions to this policy include extenuating circumstances such as lack of availability or emergency child care needs that make such a choice impossible.

Access to Work Support Benefits

The Wisconsin Works (W-2) Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program provides support to working families and program information that a family may be eligible for are provided to if they receive in-home services. When a child is temporarily absent from the home due to being in an OHC placement, Wisconsin policy is that the family can secure a W-2 benefit for up to six months under the Temporary Absence Policy. For both in-home and OHC cases, DCF works with agencies administering services to ensure information is provided to families that are eligible.

Access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program

As part of a family's individualized case plan, if it is determined a family could benefit from access to SNAP or the WIC program, which are both administered at the state level by the Department of Human Services (DHS), the child welfare professional could refer the family.

Access to Birth to 3

As required by federal law, all children substantiated for child maltreatment who are age birth to three are referred to Wisconsin's program for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C. This program is called the Birth to 3 Program in Wisconsin. Local counties and tribes work with their local county-based Birth to 3 system to assure that children who are eligible for Birth to 3 have access to programs and services to meet their needs.

Access to Education

DCF works with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to implement key elements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

More information regarding DCF's ongoing Education efforts can be found in the collaboration section of this plan.

Access to Employment Services and Supports

DCF works regularly with the Department of Workforce Development (DWD), the state's administrative home for workforce initiatives and workforce development boards, on efforts related to youth employment initiatives.

DCF also redesigned the Independent Living Program, in part, to better connect youth in the Independent Living Program to regional employment services. As a result, three of the state's current regional contracts for Independent Living services are coordinated by workforce development board partners. This partnership strengthens young adults' connections to critical employment and skill building opportunities. For example, these agencies co-enroll young people, when possible, in employment programs like the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Although the other four regional IL providers are not workforce development board partners, they also prioritize employment services for the youth they serve. They network with job assistance and training programs, local employers, WIOA partners, and more to seek out opportunities for young people to access and retain sustainable employment.

Technological Connections to Promote Service Access

In addition to the education portal described earlier in the collaboration section, DCF continues to spearhead several data exchanges to better identify information about child welfare families and to improve services and coordination with other state systems. This includes established data sharing agreements with the Department of Health Services (DHS) to share data on immunizations and Medicaid certification and develop a joint data warehouse.

A significant investment of DCF technological resources allowed DCF to bring together data previously housed in “separate silos” in a DCF enterprise data warehouse called “LIFT,” which stands for Longitudinal Information of Family Touchpoints.

Over the next five years, DCF will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of LIFT’s work on several program views, a Distinct Count Dashboard, and the capability for overview reports. The Distinct Count Dashboard will allow viewers to look at participation information by one or more combinations of programs. For example, a researcher could look at how many children under the age of five are participating in two or more DCF programs. The programs included in LIFT are child welfare Initial Assessment, child welfare OHC, Wisconsin’s TANF program – Wisconsin Works (W-2), and Wisconsin’s CCDBG child care program – Wisconsin Shares. Having access to de-identified information about children receiving services from multiple DCF program areas will allow DCF program managers to make data-driven policy decisions. An automated link between child welfare and the Birth to 3 program providing information between the two programs is another example of using technology to improve performance.

DCF’s eWiSACWIS system also supports additional direct interfaces with other agencies to improve interoperability of service data for both operations and analytics. These include, but are not limited to, interfaces with the following organizations:

- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction – information regarding child/youth involvement in out of home care to inform free and reduced lunch program.
- National Center for Missing & Exploited Children – information regarding children who have gone missing.
- University of Wisconsin Institute for Research on Poverty – information to help inform research on poverty, inequality, and their effects in the United States.

Future interfaces in consideration include sending information regarding a youth’s participation in out of home care to help streamline eligibility determination for Department of Workforce Development programs and information regarding Kinship payments to the inform eligibility for tax credits with the Department of Revenue.

Brief Assessment of Progress Toward Outcomes

External partners note that DCF’s strong partnerships contribute to an inclusive and collaborative child welfare infrastructure that listens and incorporates the feedback through multiple avenues. DCF’s strong partnerships with other state agencies facilitates coordination around families’ access to benefits and services with the goal of serving more children in-home.

Foster and Adoptive Recruitment Systemic Factor (Items 33-36)

For this systemic factor, items 33, 34, and 36 are described. Item 35 is considered Wisconsin’s Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment Plan and is separately attached.

STANDARDS APPLIED EQUALLY (ITEM 33)

How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning statewide to ensure that state standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-B or IV-E funds?

Available Data or Information that Demonstrates System Functioning

Under Wisconsin Statutes, DCF is responsible for the development of administrative rules related to licensure of OHC placements for children. DCF currently licenses child placing agencies (DCF 54), group foster homes (DCF 57), shelter care (DCF 59), and residential care centers (DCF 52). DCF staff evaluate these agencies at least twice a year to ensure compliance with licensing rules and investigate all complaints of rule violations to take appropriate action as necessary. Additional visits are conducted based on complaints/other concerns, or technical assistance.

Foster homes are licensed and monitored by a county or private child placing agency according to Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter DCF 56. Individuals must pass background checks, physical checks of the home, and complete an assessment process with the licensing agency in order to become a licensed foster home. DCF OHC staff are responsible for training licensing staff across the state, providing technical assistance, and reviewing licensing situations as requested.

DCF developed Ch. DCF 56 using the national Child Welfare League of America standards, federal laws, state law, including Chapter 48 (regarding child protective services cases), external partner feedback, and legislative input. These administrative codes are minimum standards that each licensed facility must follow and DCF encourages providers to operate above them.

Foster home licensing standards promulgated under DCF 56 apply to all potential foster homes. DCF supports additional flexibility in granting any non-safety related exceptions or waivers that support the licensing of relatives or individuals that have a prior relationship with the child or their family. Issued foster home licenses have an expiration date of no later than two years from date of issuance.

Exceptions may be made to requirements in Ch. DCF 56 if there is a plan in place to meet the intent of the requirement or a plan to come into compliance with the code is made with the foster home. As an alternative to compliance, an agency may require the licensee to meet certain exception requirement conditions within a specified time period. No agency, including DCF, can grant an exception to a requirement in the rule that is also a statutory requirement. All exceptions, whether granted by the licensing agency or DCF, need to be documented on the license of the foster home. The exception shall remain in effect only if the conditions under which the exception was granted remain, but no longer than two years from the date on which the exception was granted. DCF has incorporated non-safety related waivers into Ch. DCF 56 for the relative of a child, without an alternative provision to meet the intent of the requirement. Non-safety related waivers, whether granted by the licensing agency or DCF, also need to be documented on the license of the foster home.

A county, private child placing agency, or the DCF Exceptions Panel may grant exceptions or waivers to certain aspects of the foster care licensing rules if the exception is not contrary to the health, safety, and welfare of a child. DCF issued an annotated version of the licensing rule that describes situations in which an exception or waiver may be appropriate to ensure uniform application of the licensing standards.

Under Wisconsin Stat. Ch. 48 and Wisconsin Admin. Code s. DCF 56.10, a foster parent may appeal the decision of a licensing agency to deny or revoke the foster home license to the State Division of Hearings and Appeals (a state agency external to DCF). This appeal process provides added accountability to ensure that a licensing agency appropriately applies licensing standards.

Once the base licensing standards are applied to an applicant for foster care, the foster home is designated a Level of Care Certification 1-5 during the foster care licensing process. This certification is based on meeting the following:

- Qualifications
- Training
- Foster parent references
- Foster parent experience

Each of the five Level of Care Certifications has a specified number of training hours, personal references, knowledge, and experience requirements. Foster parents must comply with the training requirements in accordance with their Level of Care certification. Training requirements fall into three categories: pre-placement, initial licensing, and ongoing. These requirements are explained in depth under Item 28 of this plan.

The five Levels of Care are:

Level of Care	Description
Level 1: Child-Specific Foster Home	Issued to a relative of a child or an individual who has a previous existing relationship with the child or the child's family; minimal training required.
Level 2: Basic Foster Home	Referred to as general foster care. Requires additional training and positive references.
Level 3: Moderate Treatment Foster Home	Treatment level foster care that can provide additional supervision and care to children with higher needs than those in basic foster care. Must meet additional training and experience requirements.
Level 4: Specialized Treatment Foster Home	Treatment level foster care to meet the higher needs of children and often addresses specific population needs. Must meet additional training and experience requirements.
Level 5: Exceptional Treatment Foster Home	Provides 24/7 skilled staffing in the foster home in addition to foster parents for children with significant needs (i.e. medically fragile or those who will continue into long-term adult services). Foster parent and staff must meet additional training and experience requirements.

The Level of Care certification does not necessarily need to match the Level of Need of a child placed in the home. The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool will help determine the type of service provision needed to support a placement at a lower assessed level for a child.

To ensure that all licensors receive adequate training and support on licensing requirements, DCF holds quarterly trainings pursuant to Ch. DCF 56, the administrative rule for foster homes. Attendance at the trainings is mandated for licensors in the State of Wisconsin. All training participants are provided a copy of Ch. DCF 56, as well as all the resources and forms required to license a home. The two-day trainings cover all aspects of rule, policy, and guidance, which ensures consistent application across counties and private child placing agencies. In addition to the Ch. DCF 56 training, the department has created, in partnership with WCWPDS, an online Foster Care Coordinator Pre-Service training. This training is a required pre-requisite to the Ch. DCF 56 training and foster care coordinators complete this training prior to licensing a foster home.

DCF requires the use of the Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE) home study as the standard assessment tool for all foster care licenses and adoption approvals. Use of the SAFE home study assessment requires that anyone who will administer, approve, and supervise the SAFE home study attend mandatory training. The required SAFE trainings include a two-day Initial SAFE Training and SAFE Supervisors Training. Additionally, child welfare professionals may attend an optional SAFE Booster Training. There are also quarterly SAFE Technical Assistance (TA) conference calls, which child welfare professionals may participate in if additional TA is needed. DCF has supported all costs of this training for all foster care and adoption staff statewide and will continue to do so as funds are available.

To monitor licensing agencies' processes and practices throughout the state, DCF holds regular meetings for foster care coordinators to provide updates, clarifications, and technical assistance from state policy staff. DCF also holds monthly Zoom meetings to keep child welfare professionals up to date on policies or guidance that impact all areas of out-of-home care and provide the opportunity for coordinators to request assistance on licensing scenarios or barriers that they are facing. These regional and statewide meetings ensure coordinators have face-to-face learning opportunities that provide a consistent message on rules, policies, and guidance.

DCF and local agencies use several reports to monitor licensing compliance:

- PM04A100 – Level of Care Monitoring: Provides information to manage the timely provision of conversions of court-ordered Kinship Care (COKC) providers to licensed foster parents.
- PM04A103 – Licensing Timeliness Report: Provides information related to licensing decisions and the timeliness of those decisions. Contains information regarding all decisions for initial and renewal license applications that are due within the reporting period. The report also contains information regarding licenses that are revoked, closed, or expired within the reporting period.
 - In calendar year 2023 there were 2,628 licensing decisions made:
 - 63% were made timely.
 - 32 licensing decisions were over 30 days overdue.
 - 2,187 licenses were issued, 21 denied, 405 applications withdrawn, and 15 revoked.

- ADHOC501 Federal Waiver – Non-Safety Licensing Standards: Provides a list of the number of exceptions or waivers granted by Ch. DCF 56 code citations for the reporting period.
 - In calendar year 2023 there were 2,272 exceptions or waivers granted for foster care licensure.
 - The most common granted exception is to Ch. DCF 56.09(2)(b) supervision of children which allows both foster parents to work outside of the foster home. This was granted 1,320 times.

REQUIREMENTS FOR CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS (ITEM 34)

How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning statewide to ensure that the state complies with federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements, and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children?

Available Data or Information that Demonstrates System Functioning

Wisconsin complies with federal requirements for criminal background clearances that relate to licensing or approving foster and adoptive placements. Licensing agencies must conduct background checks, with different expiration dates, before licensing foster and adoptive parents. These checks must be run for foster parents, any residents of the home who are 10 or older and are non-client residents, and any employees who will have regular, direct contact with a foster child. For a child under 18 years old, the licensing agency is not required to obtain further information if the child's background information disclosure does not indicate an offense that would be a bar. Comparable convictions from other states or U.S. jurisdictions are treated the same as if they were in Wisconsin. Foster home licensing agencies conduct background checks at initial and re-licensure.

There are six required types of background checks:

- Adam Walsh (FBI)
- Adam Walsh Child Protective Services (CPS)
- Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ)
- Caregiver or Integrated Background Information System (IBIS) Check
- Reverse Address Sex Offender registry check
- Local Law Enforcement Checks

The following is a resource developed for foster care coordinators regarding each type of background check:

Background Checks

Module 4: Licensing Process

Type of Check	Timeframe	What is checked?	How do you do it?	Expiration	Resources
Adam Walsh: FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation)	Initial Licensure: Required for prospective foster and adoptive parents who are caring for children from the public child welfare system. It does not apply to adoptive families seeking domestic or international adoptions unless the child qualifies for Adoption Assistance.	Check of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) records; not all arrests or convictions are reported to the FBI.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agency must have an account with the WI Dept. of Justice (DOJ). DOJ will provide fingerprint cards once agency has an approved policy on record with DOJ regarding consent and records management. Or the agency may have the applicant complete an electronic capture of their fingerprints for submission. Agency must obtain a signed consent, previously approved by DOJ, from each applicant and submit with the completed fingerprint card. Results will be sent through the agencies on-line account. Results must be scanned into eWiSACWIS. 	This check is valid as long as the foster or adoptive parent is continually licensed. If there is a break in licensure, the applicant must be re-fingerprinted and the checks completed before a license can be renewed.	DCF Memo Series 2007-16: Adam Walsh Requirements State Child Abuse and Neglect Registry Info Memo 2008-03i: Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act Questions and Answers
Adam Walsh: Child Protective Services (CPS) Checks	Initial Licensure: Required for prospective foster and adoptive parents.	Check of Child Protective Service records in each county or state the person has lived in for the last 5 years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agency requests records from each county/state the applicant has lived in for the last five years. It is not enough to just check eWiSACWIS records, as those records only go back to when each county agency or DMCPs (Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services) began using eWiSACWIS - typically only back through 2001. DMCPs and county agencies are required to comply with requests for CPS records for the purposes of foster care licensing. To complete checks outside of WI there is a resource created with each state's process – the State Child Abuse and Neglect Registry. Results must be scanned into eWiSACWIS 	4 years, although many licensing agencies complete this at each re-licensing period.	

Type of Check	Timeframe	What is checked?	How do you do it?	Expiration	Resources
WI Dept. of Justice (DOJ) and Caregiver	Initial Licensure: Required for prospective foster and adoptive parents.	Check of arrests and convictions submitted to WI DOJ, not all local arrests and convictions are submitted to DOJ. This is a name-based check.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant completes the Background Information Disclosure form or BID. • The agency completes the Single or Multiple Name based check form for each applicant. • Agency submits request to DOJ. • DOJ results will be sent through the agencies online account. • Results must be scanned into eWISACWIS. 	4 years, although many licensing agencies complete this at each re-licensing period.	Forms: Background Information Disclosure form DCF-F-2978 WI Criminal History Single Name Record Request form DJ-LE-250 WI Criminal History Single Name Record Request form DJ-LE-250A
IBIS or Caregiver	Initial Licensure: Required for prospective foster and adoptive parents.	Check of entity records for persons who have been denied, revoked, or otherwise prohibited from working with children or vulnerable populations. <i>Note: this does not check child abuse and neglect records in WI.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant completes the Background Information Disclosure form or BID. • The agency completes the Single or Multiple Name based check form for each applicant. • Agency submits request to DOJ. • DOJ will automatically send the request to review the Children's Licensing Denial System. • The agency will receive notification from the Department of Health Services whether or not the name submitted is included in the system. This is known as the IBIS letter. • Results must be scanned into eWISACWIS. 	4 years, although many licensing agencies complete this at each re-licensing period.	Forms: Background Information Disclosure form DCF-F-2978 WI Criminal History Single Name Record Request form DJ-LE-250 WI Criminal History Single Name Record Request form DJ-LE-250A

Type of Check	Timeframe	What is checked?	How do you do it?	Expiration	Resources
Reverse Address Sex Offender Registry Check	Initial Licensure and Relicensure: Required for prospective foster and adoptive parents.	The database checks nationwide sex offenders. This check indicates where registered sex offenders have reported to authorities they are living. This is an address check, not a name-based check. Sometimes people are not forthright about who lives in their home.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Sexual Offender Registry Check shall be done on the Wisconsin DOC website: http://offender.doc.state.wi.us/public/ Agencies shall use the "Geographical Search" function and check all address within a 1 mile radius. Agencies shall use the "List" view when checking the results and ensure that no address on the list matches the provider's address. Agencies shall print and save the entire list in the provider file, and scan the entire list into eWISACWIS. 	2 years or the end of the licensing period, whichever occurs first. Must be completed at each licensing renewal.	DSP Numbered Memo Series 2015-01 : Reverse Sex Offender Checks
Local Law Enforcement Checks	Initial Licensure: Required for prospective foster and adoptive parents.	Due to the fact that not all local contact with law enforcement is reported to DOJ, agencies must run local checks to determine the complete understanding of the background. This is done through CCAP (Consolidated Court Automation Programs) and checks with local law enforcement agencies where the applicant has lived for at least the last five years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CCAP checks are run through this website: http://wcca.wicourts.gov/index.xsl, which contains most records handled through Wisconsin Circuit Courts. Local law enforcement agency checks are completed by contacting each law enforcement agency in the city where the person has lived. Some law enforcement agencies have specific processes for requesting such information. 	4 years, although many licensing agencies complete this at each re-licensing period.	

Section 48.685 of Wisconsin Statutes, DCF 56.055, and Chapter DCF 12 of Wisconsin Administrative Code set forth criminal history and child abuse record search requirements, including barred crimes and other offenses that prohibit licensing a person as a foster parent, allowing a person to live in a foster home, or employing a person as a caregiver. Some offenses are a permanent bar, some are a bar for five years with rehabilitation approval, and some are a bar unless the person obtains rehabilitation approval. The procedures for obtaining rehabilitation approval are in Chapter DCF 12 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code.

To receive a rehabilitation review, the applicant must submit a Rehabilitation Review Application Packet. The applicant may submit the application packet to the foster home licensing agency if they are seeking regulatory approval for foster care only. If the applicant is seeking regulatory approval for foster care and adoption through the Public Adoption program, or the applicant is seeking foster home licensure from the DMCPs, DCF must complete the Rehabilitation Review.

In addition to the crimes and offenses listed in the statute, section 48.685 (5m) of the Wisconsin Statutes provides that the licensing agency must review the circumstances of convictions of any offense that is not barred by the statute to determine if the crime is substantially related to the care of a foster child. Section DCF 12.06 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code provides factors for the licensing agency to consider in determining whether a crime is substantially related. Rehabilitation approval is not available for crimes that are substantially related.

A licensing agency must make a reasonable effort to contact the potential licensee to obtain further information if any of the following apply:

- The statute specifically requires a determination on whether the circumstances of certain convictions are substantially related to the care of a foster child. If a person was convicted of any of the following crimes less than five years before the background check, the licensing agency must obtain a copy of the criminal complaint and judgement of conviction and make the substantially related determination:

940.19(1)	Misdemeanor battery
940.195	Battery to an unborn child
940.20	Battery, special circumstances
941.30	Reckless endangerment
942.08	Invasion of privacy
947.01(1)	Disorderly conduct
947.013	Harassment
- If the DOJ criminal history indicates a charge of a crime that is on the barred list but does not clearly indicate whether there was a conviction, the person was found not guilty, or the charge was dropped or dismissed, the licensing agency must make reasonable efforts to determine the final disposition of the charge.
- If the person's background information disclosure indicates a charge or conviction of a barred crime but the DOJ criminal history does not include the charge or conviction, the licensing agency must make every reasonable effort to contact the clerk of courts to obtain a copy of the complaint and the final disposition.

- A military discharge was other than “honorable.”

All background checks must be scanned into eWiSACWIS and all results of the background checks must be documented in the home study report the agency completes. Any conviction or finding must be mitigated in the home study if the person is licensed.

Wisconsin contracts for title IV-E determination services to review all placements and associated necessary licensing requirements, including background checks for foster care and treatment foster care. This third-party check provides ongoing quality assurance of licensing determinations as they relate to background checks. In addition, eWiSACWIS functionality was enhanced to include electronic records of background check results. DSP staff meet monthly with the contractor to review any compliance issues. If a problem is noted, the contractor works with the foster care licensing agency to obtain the necessary information. In the rare circumstances that issues arise that are not resolved with the local agency and the contractor, DSP OHC staff will engage in corrective action planning with the agency to ensure they comply with the background check rules and regulations. Additionally, DSP runs a monthly check of all OHC providers with the Sex Offender Registry in Wisconsin and if there are any matches found, DSP OHC staff work with the local agency to identify a resolution.

ITEM 35 – FOSTER AND ADOPTION PARENT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PLAN

Please see separately attached recruitment plan.

ITEM 36 – INTERSTATE COMPACT FOR THE PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN (ICPC)

How well is the foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention system functioning to ensure that the process for ensuring the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children is occurring statewide?

The Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) is responsible for processing requests for the placement of children across state lines under the Interstate Compact of the Placement of Children (ICPC) and Wisconsin law pursuant to Wis. Stat. s. 48.988. A new ICPC statute was passed pursuant to Wis. Stat. s. 48.99 and codified in state statute in 2020 as part of overall federal ICPC requirements. It will not go into effect until 35 states codify the new provisions in their state statutes. The Wisconsin ICPC specialists work with other states as well as Wisconsin’s local agencies to process incoming and outgoing requests.

Available Data or Information That Demonstrates Functioning

Wisconsin was one of the six original states to pilot the National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise (NEICE) beginning in November 2013. Wisconsin continued using the NEICE web-based Case Management System beyond that pilot and has been recognized nationally and by external partners as a leader in this effort. The NEICE system is now used by 38 states, allowing quicker transmission and exchanges between those agencies. NEICE 2.0 was released in 2021 and offered additional reports that provide both national and state specific data. Wisconsin

ICPC has worked diligently with NEICE to complete data clean up in an effort improve the quality of the data pulled from the system and has identified this system as mutually beneficial to Wisconsin and other states who use this platform as an exchange.

From 2015 to 2019, eWiSACWIS enhancements completely changed Wisconsin's internal process for requesting placements under the ICPC. Under the current process, local agencies are required to submit any outgoing ICPC requests through eWiSACWIS (except for private adoption agencies that do not have access to eWiSACWIS). All necessary information and documentation are required before the local agency can electronically submit the request. This further reduced the time ICPC specialists spend explaining and acquiring necessary ICPC documents to process it. Utilizing eWiSACWIS for all ICPC information improves communication and efficiency between the local agencies and the Wisconsin ICPC specialists.

Wisconsin's ICPC program follows internal standard operating procedures designed to ensure timely processing of ICPC placement and home study requests. Policy and procedures for the workforce are documented in Wisconsin's Ongoing Services Standards, found at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/ongoing-services-standards.pdf>.

In 2023 updated ICPC desk guides were published to help the workforce understand the process and requirements by ICPC regulation type, and an ICPC informational brochure was developed to support families and caregivers in understanding the ICPC process.

The totality of these resources will allow local child welfare professionals to quickly access the information they need about the ICPC to facilitate timely placement of children in and out of Wisconsin over the next five years.

Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention (Items 33–36) Brief Assessment on Progress to Date

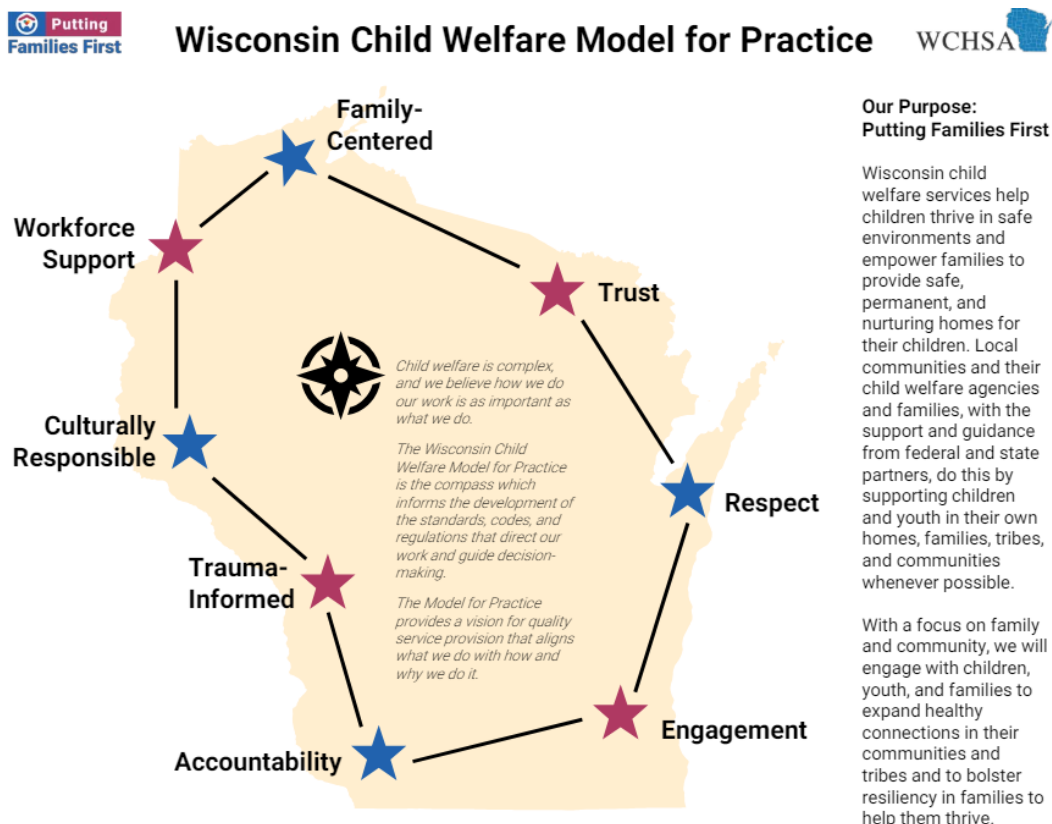
DCF has established and comprehensive standards in place that comply with federal guidelines to address this area. Ongoing monitoring initiatives will continue over the next five years to ensure compliance.

3. Plan for Enacting the State's Vision

DCF's 2025 – 2029 Children and Family Services Plan for enacting the state's vision over the next five-year period is built around Wisconsin's Putting Families First child welfare system transformation approach. In alignment with the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), Wisconsin is working to become more family-focused and collaborative in serving more children in-home.

Through a collaborative effort between DCF, the Wisconsin County Human Service Association (WCHSA), county and tribal child welfare agencies, and legal and other external partners, the Wisconsin Child Welfare Model for Practice was developed as the compass which informs the development of the standards, codes and regulations that direct Wisconsin's work and guide its decision-making at the state and county level. As stated in the Model for Practice:

- Wisconsin child welfare services help children thrive in safe environments and empower families to provide safe, permanent, and nurturing homes for their children.
- Local communities and their child welfare agencies and families, with the support and guidance from federal and state partners, do this by supporting children and youth in their own homes, families, tribes, and communities whenever possible.
- With a focus on family and community, Wisconsin will engage with children, youth, and families to expand healthy connections in their communities and tribes and to bolster resiliency in families to help them thrive.



Over the next five years, Wisconsin, through its Putting Families First approach, aims to dramatically reduce the proportion of child protective services (CPS) and youth justice (YJ) children and youth who are placed into out-of-home care, especially those that are served outside of their community or in congregate care settings. This shift in the system began when research indicated that children and families served by both the youth justice and child protection system have better results when supported in their family homes.

Through the existing collaborative approaches described in Section 1, DCF utilized external partner feedback channels to develop four broad goals to focus Wisconsin's priorities over the next five years. Over this period, Wisconsin will continue to expand its understanding and use of prevention and other resources for families and build a strong, trauma-informed and responsive child welfare infrastructure to best meet the needs of the workforce and the child welfare system.

Wisconsin's 2025 – 2029 Child and Family Services Plan Over-Arching Goals:

1. Strengthen local communities and build services to support families in their homes.
2. Keep children in family settings whenever possible.
3. Improve youth service provision to keep youth supported in their communities.
4. Support the Wisconsin workforce with solutions and improvements.

For each goal, DCF identified underlying, realistic, quantifiable, and measurable objectives it will implement to support Wisconsin's overall vision. Specific information provided for each objective includes the selection rationale, how DCF will measure progress, the planned staff training, technical assistance and evaluation, and necessary implementation supports to ensure Wisconsin accomplishes its goals over the next five years.

Goal 1: Strengthen Local Communities and Build Services to Support Families in their Homes.

Objective 1.1: To improve safety supports for children being served in the home.

Rationale: All children in Wisconsin are safe and loved members of thriving families and communities. The Wisconsin child welfare system will strengthen all Wisconsin families through specific in-home supports to reduce unnecessary traumatic out-of-home care child removals because children belong with their families.

Key Activities:

- Expansion of Wisconsin's Targeted Safety Support Funding (TSSF) program to provide flexible funding. TSSF increases the ability of local agencies to provide a wider array of formal and informal resources to serve families in-home, including increased case management time spent directly with families.
- Support the provision of Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) through Wisconsin's robust Family Foundations Home Visiting Program.
 - More information on Wisconsin's three EBPs included within its Five-Year Prevention Plan can be found at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/homevisiting>
- Partner with Home Visiting (HV) providers to learn about successes and challenges in partnering with CPS in order to inform practice guidance.
- Develop a collaboration guide to help CPS partner with HV programs and use HV as a safety service.

Measures of Progress:

- Monitor the number of children/families served through TSSF and HV.
- Evaluate total TSSF funding usage and local agency creative approaches.
- Create a workgroup with local agencies to ensure an ongoing feedback loop, report evaluation findings, expand collaboration, and share best practices.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance and Evaluation:

- DCF will continue to provide ongoing program guidance, technical assistance, and coordinate collaborative efforts across the state.
- Agency specific consultations as requested or as needs are identified.

Implementation Supports:

- DCF will continue to create venues for peer support and shared best practices.
- Continued funding requests through Wisconsin's biennial budget process and evaluation of existing EBPs for service array inclusion.

Objective 1.2: Clarify and streamline case practice to increase family engagement and equity while reducing disparities.

Rationale: Streamlined case practice allows child welfare professionals to spend more time working directly with families to keep them informed while addressing their specific needs. A uniform approach will also ensure all families receive the same assistance across the state to increase equity and reduce disparity.

Key Activities:

DCF will implement three strategic initiatives to accomplish this objective:

Streamline the Initial Assessment (IA) Process

Goals of this project include:

- Clarify and streamline IA eWiSACWIS documentation (e.g. reduce redundancies in data entry, improve workflow, allow for better documentation of collaborative efforts with tribes for ICWA cases) in response to feedback from county agencies, DMCPs, tribal child welfare professionals and families.
- Implement ways to center family voice and strengthen family engagement and partnership, including sharing information about CPS and the IA with parents/caregivers and connecting families to concrete supports/services early in their interactions with CPS.
- Identify opportunities for IA cases to close sooner.

Quality Case Planning

Goals of this project include:

- Identify case planning tools that can be utilized consistently across child welfare practice (Youth Justice, all of CPS, in-home/out-of-home care, etc.).
- Develop best practice standards to ensure case planning is inclusive, clear, and effective.
- Identify/implement strategies to reduce systemic barriers to Quality Case Planning (time, resources, data gaps, etc.).

Revise Safety Standards

Goals of this project include:

- Revise the current danger threat lists by removing biased language and combining into one list.
- Elevate family voice and parental/caregiver and community strengths (e.g. parental protective capacities, protective factors) throughout the safety assessment, analysis, and planning process.

- Revise the process CPS professionals use to determine child safety and assess the need for and degree of system intervention.
- Revise the safety assessment, analysis, and planning process to make it more understandable to families and consistent across CPS professionals.

Measures of Progress:

- Solicitation of external partner feedback throughout the process. This includes hosting post-go-live support sessions (twice weekly for the first three weeks post launch, and then weekly for the following six weeks).
- Implement changes to highlight parental proactive capacities and the need to notify and engage with tribal partners during the IA and safety assessment and planning processes with a targeted completion date of early 2025.
- Research and implement updated eWiSACWIS functionality and the creation of a corresponding eWiSACWIS User Guide.
- The creation of a training webinar for child welfare professionals, including supervisors, and updated foundation training for all new IA professionals.
- Monitor the length of time IA cases remain open.
- Research and selection of new case planning tools.
- The publication of new Access and Initial Assessment Safety standards.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance and Evaluation:

- DCF will provide policy updates and technical assistance as needed when practice changes are implemented.

Implementation Supports:

- eWiSACWIS enhancements to support practice changes.

Objective 1.3: Elevate lived experience to build capacity, promote collaboration, and inform child welfare system improvements.

Rationale: To elevate those with lived experience so their voices, experiences and recommendations can inform improvements to the child welfare system; and to build the capacity of those with lived experience.

Key Activities:

- Manage a contract to provide services to support the engagement, leadership development, and retention of LE stakeholders within the Division of Safety and Permanence lived experience efforts.
- Identify and support lived experience experts to participate in the following groups: Child Welfare Parent Leaders, Relative Kinship Caregiver; Youth Advisory Council, and Youth Leadership teams.

- Construct a communication and outreach plan that strategizes the infusion of LE experts through partner meetings, discussions and technical assistance and support to build the Lived Experience Statewide Strategic Efforts.

Measures of Progress:

- Monthly and quarterly contract reporting through the Lived Experience Stakeholder Support Program Performance Monitoring Plan.
 - DCF will work with contractor to develop additional metrics on how to capture lived experience input to monitor improvements and impact over time.
- Conduct a survey to determine the extent local agencies are actively engaging with families.
- Increase membership and participation numbers on the Parent Leaders Workgroup, Youth Advisory Council, and Relative Caregiver Stakeholder Group.
- Monitor LE training engagement annually with a target of 75 participants in CY 2025.
- Publication of a department wide DCF Lived Experience Charter.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance and Evaluation:

- To be identified through contract monitoring and analysis of provided metrics.

Implementation Supports:

- The recruitment, retention, and the engagement of lived experience experts.

Objective 1.4: Implement title IV-E claiming procedures for civil advocacy.

Rationale: Providing independent legal representation early in foster care proceedings and other civil legal proceedings can help prevent children from entering foster care, and for youth already in foster care it can improve the rate of reunification and result in more permanent outcomes for the child and the family.

Key Activities:

- Coordinate with the Children's Court Improvement Project (CCIP) to identify the most effective implementation approach.
- Solicit local county agency feedback as needed.
- Release updated application materials.

Measures of Progress:

- Publication of new application materials.
- County utilization of the program.
- Number of clients and families served.
- Over time, DCF will examine how to document/measure the impact of the program on child welfare outcomes.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance and Evaluation:

- DCF will publish updated guidance, offer training, and continue to onboard new participating county agencies.
- Technical assistance will be provided as requested or needs are identified.

Implementation Supports:

- N/A – DCF's current infrastructure currently supports this change.

Goal 2: To Keep Children in Family Settings Whenever Possible.

Objective 2.1: Expand the definition of “relative” so that children can be placed more easily with those who they already know and love, and those caregivers can receive financial support.

Rationale: When children are able to stay with those who know and love them – and who they know and love in return – they are in a better position to thrive and maintain and grow crucial connections to their families, communities, and cultures.

Key Activities:

- Continue collaboration with local and tribal child welfare agencies to implement 2023 Wisconsin Act 119 which expanded Wisconsin’s definition of “relative” to include and define “like-kin.” This change also incorporated a tribal nation’s definition:
 - “Like-kin” means an individual who has a significant emotional relationship with a child or the child’s family that is similar to a familial relationship and who has not previously been the child’s licensed foster parent. For an Indian child, “like kin” includes individuals identified by the child’s tribe according to tribal tradition, custom or resolution, code, or law.
- Expand eligibility for the kinship care subsidy program.

Measures of Progress:

- Increase in the number of kinship care providers and children placed with relatives/like-kin caregivers.
- Monitor the ratio of un-licensed to licensed providers and time to licensure.
- Continued discussions with tribal partners on any impacts seen to placement preferences for Indian children since implementation.
 - Increased ICWA compliance monitoring will become possible if the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) on Adoption and Foster Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) requires states to report additional ICWA information.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance and Evaluation:

- DCF will provide updated program guidance and coordinate collaborative efforts across the state.
- Technical assistance will be provided as requested or needs are identified.

Implementation Supports:

- The Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) will coordinate with internal budget and finance staff to ensure appropriate funding levels to accommodate this change.

Objective 2.2: Adopt Separate Licensing Standards for Relative Kinship Foster Family Homes.

Rationale: Children in foster care often do best when placed with relatives because family connections are critical to healthy child development and a sense of belonging, relative and kinship care helps to preserve children's cultural identity and relationship to their community, and children living with relatives experience fewer behavioral problems and higher placement stability rates compared to children living with non-relatives in foster care.

Key Activities:

- DCF will evaluate the recommended standards of national organizations related to admission policies, safety, sanitation, protection of civil rights, and use of the reasonable and prudent parenting standard.
- Coordinate ongoing collaboration with relatives/kin and organizations that support relative/kinship caregivers on developing separate licensing standards in Wisconsin for relatives and kin to ensure that the lived experiences of those caregivers are appropriately reflected in the new licensing standards.
- Adopt separate licensing standards for relative kinship foster family homes that align with the provisions of the 2023 federal rule change that allowed this practice.

Measures of Progress:

- Issuance of updated standards and administrative code.
- Increase the number of licensed relative kinship foster family homes.
- Monitor the impact on kinship care (KC) provider numbers. Lessening the licensing burden on relatives should increase the amount of KC providers that decide to become licensed foster family homes to secure higher payment rate to support children in their care.
- Work to identify the impact on Item 4: Placement Stability.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance and Evaluation:

- DCF will provide updated program guidance and coordinate collaborative efforts across the state.
- Technical assistance will be provided as requested or needs are identified.

Implementation Supports:

- To be determined based upon emerging needs, though may require eWiSACWIS enhancements to accommodate the change.

Objective 2.3: Eliminate non-safety related barriers to relative and non-relative Foster Care (FC) approvals.

Rationale: To make it easier for relatives and like-kin to become licensed placement providers so children can remain with those they know and love.

Key Activities:

- Define and implement revisions to Wisconsin's foster care licensing standards, requirements, and maintenance payments to ensure alignment with the Federal Model Standards for Foster Home Licensing.
- Develop recommendations for improving the foster care program.
- Update administrative rules and policies as informed by external partner needs and wants.

Measures of Progress:

- Issuance of updated standards and administrative code.
- Increase the number of licensed foster family homes.
- Monitor how providers reflect the ethnically and culturally diverse populations Wisconsin serves.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance and Evaluation:

- DCF will provide updated program guidance and coordinate collaborative efforts across the state.
- Technical assistance will be provided as requested or needs are identified.

Implementation Supports:

- To be determined based upon emerging needs, though may require eWiSACWIS enhancements to accommodate the change.

Objective 2.4: Increase support and engagement for relative caregivers.

Rationale: To hold and support conversations about evidence-based, innovative programming approaches with child welfare professionals and external partners so those partners can shift their practice and provide feedback to the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

Key Activities:

- Facilitate monthly Permanency Collaborative meetings with external partners.
- Use ongoing feedback from partners to inform policy and program changes.
- Communicate philosophical shifts recommended by DCF and advertise best practice to support the Putting Families First child welfare transformation in Wisconsin.

Measures of Progress:

- Continued collaborative efforts with tribal partners regarding the provision of kinship services and the recent "relative" definition change.
- Meet quarterly with the Relative Kinship Caregiver group to ensure an ongoing feedback loop regarding DCF strategic initiatives to guide practice development.

- Over time, DCF will examine how to document/measure the impact of these initiatives on child welfare outcomes.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance and Evaluation:

- DCF will continue to provide ongoing program guidance updates, technical assistance as needed, and coordinate collaborative efforts across the state.

Implementation Supports:

- To be determined based upon emerging needs.

Goal 3: Improve Youth Service Provision to Keep Youth Supported in Their Communities.

Objective 3.1: Streamline and clarify Group Home (GH) licensing processes to remove non-safety related barriers.

Rationale: To simplify the licensing process to reduce administrative burden and ensure compliance with existing Wisconsin administrative code.

Key Activities:

- Adopt modern best practices that support provider service delivery.
- Repeal requirements that are no longer considered necessary for the health and safety of children and are overly burdensome to businesses.
- Streamline and clarify the licensing process and ensure alignment with existing administrative rule.

Measures of Progress:

- Establish an Advisory Council in CY 2024, inclusive of lived experience, providers, and purchasers, to inform rule revisions.
- Convene bi-monthly council meetings to ensure a consistent feedback loop.
- Issuance of updated standards and administrative code in CY 2025.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance and Evaluation:

- DCF will provide updated program guidance and coordinate collaborative efforts across the state.
- Technical assistance will be provided as requested or needs are identified.

Implementation Supports:

- To be determined based upon emerging needs, though may require eWiSACWIS enhancements to accommodate the change.

Objective 3.2: Improve and Support Youth Justice (YJ) case practice to achieve better outcomes.

Rationale: DCF believes in making the investments needed to realize our shared vision of all children and youth in Wisconsin being safe and loved members of thriving families and communities. No matter which system “door” a youth enters, DCF strives to support a coordinated and comprehensive response to provide the support needed to fulfill its youth-driven vision that “all youth have the tools to thrive in adulthood.”

Key Activities:

- Support evidence-based community and in-home services for justice involved youth.

- Continued utilization of the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) to assess a referred youth's risk factors which point to the youth's characteristics and behavioral patterns that would need to change to reduce future problem behaviors.
- Identify local service array gaps and collaborate statewide to develop strategic approaches to create a framework for interventions that is responsive to local needs.
- Implement an effective service array funding infrastructure.

Measures of Progress:

- Continued solicitation of external partner feedback, including youth served, throughout the process.
- Monitor impact at reducing the frequency of out-of-home placements and re-offenders.
- Provision of treatment-oriented, trauma-informed, community-based facilities for the small number of youth who do require placement in such settings.
- Limit the use of secure detention and correctional placements.
- Over time, DCF will examine how to document/measure the impact of these initiatives on child welfare outcomes.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance and Evaluation:

- DCF will continue to provide ongoing program guidance updates, technical assistance as needed, and coordinate collaborative efforts across the state.

Implementation Supports:

- To be determined based upon emerging needs, though may require eWiSACWIS enhancements to accommodate the change.

Goal 4: Support the Wisconsin Workforce with Solutions and Improvements.

Objective 4.1: Innovate training provision through a cohort-based model.

Rationale: Provide new professionals with the fundamental knowledge and skills necessary to successfully assume a full caseload at a basic level of proficiency. WiLearn is a re-imagined, efficient, and modernized method of training new CPS professionals in the state. Since the Wisconsin child welfare system is only as strong as the professionals who provide the services to children and families, DCF is committed to developing and providing a robust training experience. Building a committed, confident, and competent CPS workforce is essential to Wisconsin families and it begins with supportive, effective child welfare professional training, WiLearn.

Key Activities:

- DCF will continue collaborating with the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS) to solicit county and other external partner voice to direct the framework and parameters of WiLearn. This continuous quality improvement approach ensures Wisconsin's training system is responsive to the changing needs of evolving workforce demands and ongoing practice changes.
- Ensure new any proposed training topics reflect workforce needs and align with Wisconsin's Putting Families First initiatives.

Measures of Progress:

- Convene bi-monthly WCWPDS Steering Committee meetings to ensure an ongoing implementation feedback loop.
- Conduct ongoing child welfare professional WiLearn satisfaction surveys.
- Complete an evaluation on the WiLearn Program that examines the total number of participants, average length of time to training completion, and pre/post completion test scores comparisons.
- See additional measures under Initial Training Initiatives (Item 26) in Section 2.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance and Evaluation:

- See Initial Training Initiatives (Item 26) in Section 2.

Implementation Supports:

- See Initial Training Initiatives (Item 26) in Section 2.

Objective 4.2: Build and enhance Youth Justice (YJ) data, training, and technical assistance infrastructure.

Rationale: Supporting a community-based youth justice system that focuses on prevention and diversion and provides accountability and services to youth and families in the system prepares them to thrive after system involvement.

Key Activities:

- Equip county youth justice professionals across the state with the robust training they need to identify and provide effective interventions for young people.
- Continued partnership with the Wisconsin County Human Service Association (WCHSA), the Wisconsin Association of Family & Children's Agencies (WAFCA), and other external partners regarding training and out-of-home care strategies for youth justice youth and families with complex needs.
- Develop a statewide Youth Justice data system to implement case planning, manage workloads, perform quality insurance, and publish public-facing data products to promote accountability and systems change.
- Streamline and simplify youth justice funding.

Measures of Progress:

- Expand foundational and advanced training opportunities available to Wisconsin Youth Justice Professionals.
- Monitor professional completion and timeliness numbers of the core Youth Justice training sequence offered by the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS).
- Continue to incorporate youth justice case management data within Wisconsin's eWiSACWIS system – including the use of youth-specific assessment results in decision-making, case planning, and service selection.
- Create reporting products to support county review and analysis of youth justice data.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance and Evaluation:

- DCF will continue to coordinate collaborative efforts across the state.
- DCF will work with WCWPDS to shape training and technical assistance opportunities to assure Wisconsin achieves this objective.

Implementation Supports:

- Required changes to the WCWPDS training and eWiSACWIS systems.

Objective 4.3: Advance the priorities of building affirming and inclusive environments for LGBTQ+ youth and families to thrive and ensure racial equity and support for underserved communities.

Rationale: DCF plays an integral role in ensuring the well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and other identified LGBTQ+ youth in the state of Wisconsin, particularly those who are involved in or at risk of involvement in the child welfare system via child protective services and youth justice. National data indicates that LGBTQ+ youth are disproportionately overrepresented in the out-of-home care population. These children often do not receive affirming care and services that are necessary for their safety and well-being. LGBTQ+ youth are at a heightened risk for family rejection, victimization, school bullying, sex trafficking, substance abuse, suicidality, hospitalization, and homelessness.

Key Activities:

- Provide staff opportunities for external training and resources to further educate them on the issues that LGBTQ+ youth and families face.
- Implement recent federal rule change under titles IV-E and IV-B for children in foster care who are LGBTQ+ to ensure that each child in foster care receives "safe and proper" care and has a case plan that addresses the specific needs of the child while in foster care to support their health and wellbeing.

Measures of Progress:

- Incorporation of "safe and proper" requirements within existing case practice and review.
- Publication of an informational memo and provision of corresponding informational sessions to assist local agencies prior to, and implementation of, the new practice.
- Over time, DCF will examine how to document/measure the impact of these initiatives on child welfare outcomes, especially as "safe and proper" practice compliance data becomes available through DCF's standardized case review process.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance and Evaluation:

- DCF will continue to provide ongoing program guidance updates, technical assistance as needed, and coordinate collaborative efforts across the state.

Implementation Supports:

- To be determined based upon emerging needs, though may require eWiSACWIS enhancements to accommodate the change.

Objective 4.4: Utilize qualitative and quantitative data to drive system decision making and improvements.

Rationale: Wisconsin's child welfare system uses Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) to better understand what affects our system's performance. This deeper understanding of ongoing trends helps guide improvements to child welfare practice, processes, and outcomes.

Key Activities:

- Creatively develop metrics and monitoring practices and space for exploration of current practice, including championing connectedness, using data.
- Monitor fiscal data and IV-E compliance to ensure the financial stability of Wisconsin's state child welfare system and support the system's ability to serve families of Wisconsin by keeping them together.
- Utilize existing data, including racial disparities, as part of Wisconsin's Putting Families First strategic efforts to dramatically reduce the number of children in out-of-home care.
- The Child Welfare CQI Advisory Committee will continue to meet quarterly to provide guidance on large-scale initiatives to support and improve Wisconsin's child welfare system (which includes both Child Protective Services and Community-Based Youth Justice).

Measures of Progress:

- Hold four meetings a year to analyze local, state, and national child welfare data, research, and other pertinent information to develop guidance and/or provide support related to key projects and initiatives related to child welfare system improvement.
 - One recent example of a specific strategic project that the Child Welfare CQI Advisory Committee supported was the [Initial Assessment Improvement Project](#) which resulted in changes to practice standards and guidance and supporting documentation within eWiSACWIS.
- As identified by DCF, provide oversight and leadership for specific quality improvement initiatives to support the department's continued dedication to a data-driven decision-making approach to inform best practice and implement child welfare practice, processes, and outcomes.
- Over time, DCF will continue to examine how to document/measure the impact of these initiatives on child welfare outcomes.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance and Evaluation:

- DCF will continue to provide ongoing program guidance updates, technical assistance as needed, and coordinate collaborative efforts across the state.

Implementation Supports:

- To be determined based upon identified needs through this system-wide approach, though may require eWiSACWIS enhancements to accommodate some changes.

Objective 4.5: Modernization of the state eWiSACWIS system.

Rationale: Supporting Wisconsin's child welfare workforce through efficient, consistent, and de-duplicated data entry and enhancing the system's support for mobility will allow professionals to spend more time with children and families.

Key Activities:

- Streamline core workflow processes and make them available to child welfare professionals on mobile devices.
- Make a concerted effort to reduce documentation burden by removing requirements unless defined in current statutes and standards.
- Support data exchanges with state and county agencies to reduce duplicate entry and improve data quality and interoperability.
- Explore secure web portals that close the loop with external providers, allowing collection and secure exchange of high-fidelity data on services to measure outcomes for children, youth, and families.
- Continue discussions regarding a secure communication app for youth and families that supports chat, video calls, document exchange, and appointment scheduling with their case worker.
- Continued enhancements to the Supporting Youth and Children (SYNC) group care provider referral website.

Measures of Progress:

- In CY 2024, expand SYNC usage to Child Placing Agencies (CPAs) for foster care placement referrals.
- Develop a plan to share data garnered through SYNC with providers and CPAs. Potential data elements may include the timeliness of provider responses to referrals and reasons for denial of placement that will lead to a better understanding of which placing agencies are referring to which provider agencies.
- DCF will provide regular updates as initiatives are prioritized, based upon available funding, and implemented through eWiSACWIS releases through the Annual Progress and Services Reporting (APSR) process.
- Implementation of phase two and three of the SYNC website.

Staff Training, Technical Assistance and Evaluation:

- DCF will continue to provide ongoing program guidance updates, technical assistance as needed, and coordinate collaborative efforts across the state.

Implementation Supports:

- Maintain a human-centered design process to engage child welfare professionals in system enhancement and innovation.

- The Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) will coordinate with internal budget and finance staff to ensure appropriate funding levels to accommodate these changes.
- Multiple system change implications, including needed eWiSACWIS enhancements.

4. Quality Assurance System

See Quality Assurance Systemic Factor in Section 2.

5. Children and Family Services Continuum

The following section describes how DCF plans to use specific federal funding streams to support the state child welfare system in alignment with federal rules and policies and DCF's strategic plan over the next five years.

Stephanie Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services Program

IV-B, Subpart 1 - Homeless and Runaway Youth Funding

The goal of the Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Program is to prevent and reduce the number of youths experiencing homelessness in Wisconsin by ensuring that youth and their families have the services and supports that they need. The target population of the RHY Program is youth and young adults ages 12-21 that have run away, are at-risk of running away, who are homeless, or who are at imminent risk of becoming homeless.

DCF recognizes the needs of RHY program participants are varied, and as such has identified a strategic program approach over the next five years that is responsive to the unique needs of different subsets of the RHY population while effectively implementing a holistic RHY Program.

RHY Program Populations and Service Needs

- *Runaway Youth*
Youth in crisis are stabilized and remain with family or are stabilized to reunify with family as soon as possible. Whenever possible, youth must be stabilized through formal options such as shelter or host homes. When not possible, the program will work with the youth to identify stable and potentially sustainable housing options.
- *Homeless Youth with Families*
Coordinate with local Continuum of Care as well as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and other service providers who can meet presenting needs.
- *Unaccompanied Homeless Youth*
Youth in crisis are stabilized through formal options when consent can be obtained. When consent cannot be obtained or youth are not willing to utilize formal options, the program will work with the youth to identify stable and potentially sustainable housing options.

If a program provides housing, it must demonstrate knowledge of and commitment to a Housing First approach along with an understanding of the developmental, social, and legal needs of young people.

Population Estimates and Service Data

- Permanent Connections, Academics, Training and Employment, Housing, and Social and Emotional Well-being (PATHS):
 - Two PATHS programs will provide supportive housing, peer mentoring, community connections, and intensive case management to youth at imminent risk of homelessness after experiencing child welfare between the ages of 17-21 over the next five years.
 - PATHS prioritizes serving youth at the highest risk for homelessness with both programs utilizing the Transition Age Youth Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Assistance Tool (TAY-VI-SPDAT). Barriers to obtaining and maintaining secure housing such as past evictions, documented disabilities, housing discrimination related to sexual orientation and/or gender identity, previous sexual exploitation/trafficking, and previous criminal records were commonly reported among those served and will remain an area of focus during this period.
 - In 2023, the northern PATHS program served 42 youth, 18 of whom were pregnant and/or parenting, and the southern program served 24 youth, 7 of whom were pregnant and/or parenting. Of the 66 youth served by PATHS, 57% were Caucasian, 30% Black/African American, and 13% reported multiple races/other.
 - PATHS expects to serve 65 youth in 2024 and 2025.
 - Current PATHS contracts are set to expire at the end of CY 2026 which will necessitate DCF's evaluation of their continued appropriateness.
- Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY):
 - RHY service provision over the next five years will include facilitation of a 24/7 RHY hotline, referrals to community resources, crisis management, drop-in centers, family mediation, licensed/clinical counseling, and formal shelter. These services vary between contractors within each of Wisconsin's seven Youth Services regions, though they are required to be active members of their local continuums of care, and to enter participant information data into the Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS).
 - Regional RHY programs served 1,162 new and unduplicated youth in calendar year 2023 and provided 198 formal shelter.
 - DCF estimates the RHY programs will serve over 800 youth in 2025 and provide 175 youth with formal shelter.
 - Current state RHY contracts are set to expire at the end of CY 2026 which will necessitate DCF's evaluation of their continued appropriateness.

Services for Children Adopted from Other Countries

Over the next five years, DSP will maintain a limited role in international adoptions. Parents adopting children internationally can access services through their county department of human services, through their private insurance, and through the Wisconsin Family Connections Center (WiFCC) contract.

WiFCC offers statewide and regional based services for adoptive families that include resources, training, education, short-term post-permanency case management, and support groups. It is currently funded through federal title IV-E and state General Purpose Revenue (GPR) funds in Wisconsin. More information is available at <https://wifamilyconnectionscenter.org/>.

Services for Children under the Age of Five

Over the next five years, Wisconsin will continue to follow Wisconsin's Act 181, "Best Outcomes for Children" legislation, which went into effect in 2012 and provides for better case planning to reduce the length of time that children under the age of five in foster care are without a permanent family. The act established procedures regarding concurrent planning and requires that the child welfare agency determine whether concurrent planning should be used in a particular case. In certain cases, the agency must engage in concurrent planning unless the court orders the agency to do otherwise.

DCF will continue its birth to five efforts to provide focus on the continuum of services for that age group. DCF recognizes the critical window of opportunity during children's early years for healthy brain development and how investment in those years supports the state's goal to reduce children in OHC and ensure more children are served in their family home.

This section describes Wisconsin's planned efforts over the next five years to reduce the length of time children under the age of five are in foster care without a permanent family and how DCF's work helps meet the developmental needs of children under the age of five who receive services under the title IV-B or IV-E.

Table: Demographics of Children under the age 5 in OHC on December 31st of each Year.

Child Sex	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Female	1,629	1,522	1,496	1,241	1,150	1,071
Male	1,719	1,627	1,576	1,389	1,228	1,131

Child Primary Race	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Black/African American	1,038	990	941	794	772	757
White	1,903	1,742	1,737	1,483	1,291	1,161
American Indian/Alaskan Native	291	262	231	207	187	166
Asian, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	47	46	40	33	39	2
Other	69	109	123	114	89	116

Child Hispanic	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Yes	313	319	322	236	213	203
No	2,971	2,728	2,632	2,278	2,049	1,825
Unknown	64	102	118	117	116	174

Total	3,348	3,149	3,072	2,630	2,378	2,202
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Planned Activities to Address Developmental Needs

Training

Over the next five years, DCF will ensure Initial Assessment and Ongoing staff receive two days of training on the effect maltreatment has on child development. Participants will actively explore the developmental needs of infants, children, and toddlers and the consequences of child abuse and neglect in children from birth to adolescence. That information will establish a framework to recognize potential developmental problems early, thereby enhancing their ability to develop appropriate family service plans.

Foster Parent Training Topics	
Pre-Placement	Foundation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Overview of Foster Parenting • Expectations of Foster Parents • Caring for Children in Foster Care <i>(including the developmental needs of infants, children, and adolescents)</i> • Developing and Maintaining Family Connections • Caregiver Self Care • Medication Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attachment • Healthy Identity Development • Dynamics of Abuse and Neglect: Contributing Factors • Dynamics of Abuse and Neglect: Signs and Indicators • Effects of Fostering on the Family • Guidance and Positive Discipline • Impact of Trauma on Child Development • Maintaining Family Connectedness • Overview of Children's Court System • Partners in Permanence • Separation and Placement

DCF will continue to follow Wis. Admin. Code s. DCF 51.05, implemented in 2018, which requires that adoptive parents receive at least 25 hours of training over this period. Six of these hours must be in person, though in 2024 legislation was passed allowing the in-person training requirement to be met via live virtual instruction. These training topics are relevant to the needs of young children and help the child transition to the adoptive home. Some of the content covered includes:

- Grief and loss;
- Previous abuse and neglect;
- Impact of trauma;
- Understanding the child's culture;
- How trauma affects the normal stages of development for young children; and,
- Additional adoption competencies outlined in Administrative Rule.

Improving Support for Foster and Adoptive Parents

Over the next five years, DCF will continue to support efforts that strengthen critical linkages between the success of children served within the child welfare system and the supports provided to those who care for them to ensure that the children's developmental needs are met. This includes annual state funding to local county and tribal agencies and non-profit organizations to support foster parents and normalcy activities for children in out-of-home care. Qualifying expenses under these grants can include incentives for the support and retention of licensed relative, foster parents, and court-ordered kinship families.

DCF will continue to use the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths tool (CANS) to identify cases where a foster parent has a Level of Care Certification lower than the child's assessed level of need. In those instances, a plan of support and/or services will be put in place to support the placement of that specific child with that provider. Per policy, the CANS assessment must be done upon change of placement and every six months by the case manager and entered in to eWiSACWIS.

Lived Experience Expansion

Over the next five years, DCF will continue to look for ways to incorporate lived experience voice into how it informs policies, programs, and legislation. The feedback, insights, and perspectives offered are critical when implementing system improvements aimed at keeping children with their families. Lived experts help identify and articulate system barriers and obstacles that exist which impact families and create challenges that prevent them from keeping their children safe.

More information regarding DCF's ongoing Lived Experience efforts can be found in the collaboration section of this plan.

Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA)

The 2024-2025 PDSA collaborative will focus on the topic of improving professional collaboration between child welfare and other local partnering agencies. Child welfare agencies will invite their local partners who also serve young children to improve communication between the two systems, including Birth-to-3, Children's Long-Term Support (CLTS) Programs, and Comprehensive Community Support (CCS) Programs.

Many of the children these programs target are young children under the age of 5. Improving the partnership between the child welfare system and these agencies can help to ensure these young children are served more appropriately and efficiently. Increased supports for the family can support their ability to serve children in-home, preventing long out-of-home care placements and/or preventing such placements altogether. Local level feedback, key takeaways, and other learnings will be shared with the state-wide CQI committee for future system improvement considerations.

Collaboration with Early Care and Education and Other Family Support Programs to Connect to Quality Early Learning, Family Support and Prevention Services

Early Care and Education

There is ample and growing evidence that quality early learning improves the social, emotional, physical, and academic outcomes of children - particularly for those affected by trauma and poverty.

Over the next five years, DCF will continue to focus on ensuring that coordination and collaboration is supported through working closely with the Division of Early Care and Education (DECE) within DCF as part of its Families First Initiative.

Coordination with YoungStar

Over the next five years, DCF will continue to make a concerted efforts to connect children in OHC with high quality options using Wisconsin's Child Care Quality Rating System. YoungStar uses a 5-star rating system with the level 5 as the highest level of quality; overall, 3-5 stars are considered elevated quality and a desirable goal for placement of children.

DCF policy states that children in OHC should only be placed in higher quality setting programs, namely those that are rated 3-5 stars and DCF expects to maintain a high level of children in OHC programs in higher quality programs over this period.

Coordination with Head Start

Over the next five years, DCF will continue its collaborative work with the Head Start Collaboration Office (HSCO) to coordinate and identify more specific opportunities to increase the enrollment of children in OHC in Head Start programs.

Coordination with Home Visiting – Family Foundations Home Visiting Program (FFHV)

Home visiting programs serve many of Wisconsin's most vulnerable families or refer them to community resources. These families face challenges such as housing instability, substance abuse, mental health issues, and domestic violence.

Over the next five years, FFHV will continue ongoing collaboration with early childhood efforts described earlier in this section and remain an instrumental component of DCF's Putting Families First work. This will include discussion and planning about how to better connect families in Wisconsin's child welfare system to the home visiting program as part of a more robust array of home-like service continuum.

DCF contracts with city and county health and human services departments, tribal organizations, and non-profit agencies to provide evidence-based home visiting services; in Wisconsin, this is called Family Foundations Home Visiting (FFHV). These contracts specify the number of families to be served and other service-related requirements. DCF will continue to support and monitor the contracted agencies to ensure high-quality services are available for families. Services are targeted toward families facing multiple life stressors such as poverty, substance use, domestic violence, history of child maltreatment, and low education levels.

Contracted agencies select evidence-based home visiting models that meet their communities' needs. Currently, agencies use at least one of the following: Early Head Start (EHS), Healthy Families America (HFA), Parents as Teachers (PAT), and Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP). Each model has guidelines that programs follow to ensure that they implement the models with fidelity. Additionally, all models include some type of individualized goal plan that the home visitor and the client develop together to guide the work with the client.

Over this period, DCF will continue to ensure the three evidence-based home-visiting services in its approved Five-Year Prevention Plan: NFP, HFA, and PAT are implemented in compliance with the Health Resource and Services Administrations (HRSA) guidelines and follow the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) requirements.

More information on Wisconsin's Prevention Plan can be found at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/family-first/prevention>.

DCF will develop an in-state expertise model to deliver training and technical assistance resources for contracted agencies using the HFA and PAT models. These in-state resources

(such as in-state trainers) will help to increase training timeliness and reduce training costs and travel burden on the contracted agencies.

The Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS) will continue to sponsor multiple trainings throughout the next five years to support the development of highly skilled home visiting professionals. WCWPDS, DCF, external evaluators with University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and contracted agencies will also participate in quality improvement projects to improve their processes and outcomes with families over this period.

Collaboration with Birth to 3 Program

Over the next five years, DCF will continue to collaborate with the Department of Health Services (DHS) surrounding the barriers that prevent families involved with CPS from engaging with Birth to 3. DCF will also coordinate with the Birth to 3 Program to review data, referrals, consent for services, screening, and enrollment in Birth to 3. This will help determine patterns and if potential next steps to improve screening and referral practices to best serve families over this period.

Connection to Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Consultation to Support Families

The development of an IECMHC system in Wisconsin was initially supported through a technical assistance grant from the Center of Excellence at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. When that grant ended, the work continued under the facilitation and sponsorship of the collaborative Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health Collective Impact Infant Toddler Policy group representing multiple state agencies, systems, and organizations. This group established a universal model framework for a system of IECMHC informed by existing evidence-based models in other states; adopted a set of national competencies for IECMHC Consultants; developed a set of core communication documents to communicate what consultation is to key stakeholders; and began outreach to pre-service and in-service partners to build career pathways and support in Wisconsin to build and sustain an IECMHC workforce.

Healthy Minds Healthy Children, Wisconsin's holistic, sustainable, and culturally responsive statewide IECMHC, launched in September of 2023 in early care and education programs in the southern region. Currently, consultation is also available in the northern region, with a plan to add others as the program grows over the next five years. Wisconsin's IECMHC model is structured to include other systems and programs that work to support the mental, social, and emotional health of young children. IECMHC is a multi-level preventative intervention that builds the capacity of teachers, providers, and families; it has demonstrated impacts for improving a child's social skills, reducing challenging behaviors, preventing suspensions and expulsions, improving child-adult relationships, and reducing teacher stress, burnout, and turnover.

Connection to Primary Prevention Programs

DCF provides prevention programs and services specifically focused on families with children prenatal to five years of age. Through new Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Grants that began in January 2019 (one in each of the six DCF regions of the state) families with young children can access services such as, but not limited to New Baby Visits, Newborn Behavioral Observations, parent skill building and parent groups, basic needs and employment support services, family stabilization support, and home visiting services specifically targeting families with heightened risk of child abuse and neglect.

Coordination with the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board (CANPB) on Primary Prevention

Information regarding DCF's planned work with CANPB can be found in the collaboration section of this plan.

Efforts to Track and Prevent Child Maltreatment Deaths

Wisconsin Act 78 and Systems Change Review

CAPTA funds continue to support Wisconsin's efforts to track and prevent child maltreatment deaths. The 2009 Wisconsin Act 78 became effective on February 1, 2010, requiring the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to share information with the public in instances of child death, serious injury, and egregious incidents due to suspected child maltreatment, as well as cases in which a child in out-of-home care placement is suspected to have died by suicide. In 2016, Wisconsin began implementing a new critical incident review process, the Systems Change Review (SCR), which utilizes principles of safety science that provide a framework for understanding the inherently complex nature of the work and systemic factors that influence decision making. In alignment with the Child Welfare Model for Practice, the critical incident review process also provides a safe and supportive environment for professionals to process, share, and learn from critical incidents.

Within Wisconsin's county-administered, state-supervised service model, Act 78 directs the local child welfare agency to notify DCF when there is suspicion that one of the following incidents have occurred. Key references from the act are included below:

Child death or serious injury is defined as "an incident in which a child has died or been placed in serious or critical condition, as determined by a physician, as a result of any suspected abuse or neglect that has been reported under this section or in which a child who has been placed outside the home by a court order under this chapter or Ch. 938 is suspected to have committed suicide."

Egregious incident is defined as "an incident of suspected abuse or neglect...involving significant violence, torture, multiple victims, the use of inappropriate or cruel restraints, exposure of a child to a dangerous situation, or other similar, aggravated circumstances."

Once the local child welfare agency determines an incident likely meets the above threshold(s), Act 78 requires the local child welfare agency to submit specific case information to DCF within two working days. The specific information required is outlined in Wis. Stat. ss. 48.987 (7) (cr) (a), (b), (c), (d), and (e), (f). The information the local child welfare agency submits to DCF is transmitted via eWiSACWIS.

DCF's Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) has the primary responsibility to review and analyze these submissions. Specifically, DSP is responsible for the qualification and public notification of incidents, as well as determination and facilitation of review. In Wisconsin, there are two levels of review that can be assigned to an incident. One is a "Summary" review; the second is a "Practice Review."

Summary Review

All cases that qualify for public notification receive a Summary Review, which consists of reviewing the electronic case record. DCF communicates results of this review to the public through a "90 Day Summary."

Practice Review

Incidents that involve significant or current CPS intervention receive a higher level of review, in addition to the Summary Review, called a Practice Review. DCF communicates results of, and any specific recommendations identified from, a Practice Review in a document called the "6 Month Summary."

In 2016, DCF adopted a new, safe systems approach to analyzing cases qualifying for a Practice Review. This method is formally referred to as the Systems Change Review process and is a methodical approach to analyzing cases assigned to a Practice Review. The steps of a Systems Change Review include:

- Review of the case record and development of key observations
- Interview of relevant professionals (i.e., *human factors debriefing*)
- Discussion and analysis of system influences on key learning opportunities (i.e., *mapping session*)
- Documentation of contextual information and analysis to inform and understand key observations (i.e., *second story*)
- Scoring of documentation and conversion to data points (i.e., *Safe Systems Improvement Tool-Wisconsin*)
- Sharing of relevant learnings with local agency management
- Recommend program and practice improvements for the Wisconsin child welfare system

DCF implemented the Systems Change Review on November 1, 2016, in the balance of the state and on June 1, 2018, in the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS). As part of this, DCF provides additional and detailed information and training to local child protective service agencies. Key findings and next steps in advancing the learnings from the Systems

Change Review process are available on the DCF website at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/access-ia/act78>.

Additional information related to understanding and responding to child maltreatment, including recommendations for legislation and other actions, can be found in the state's annual Child Abuse and Neglect Report, which can be found at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/5693.pdf>.

Statewide Plan to Prevent Maltreatment Fatalities

DCF is a participant on the Wisconsin Child Death Review State Advisory Council, which works to develop and implement activities to prevent child fatalities. The council reviews information learned through the statewide Child Death Review Teams, case reviews, and additional data sources to identify themes and consider opportunities to prevent child deaths, including child deaths resulting from maltreatment.

In 2018, DCF joined the [National Partnership for Child Safety](#) (NPCS), a quality improvement collaborative comprised of county, state, and tribal child and family serving agencies whose mission is to improve child safety and prevent child maltreatment and fatalities by strengthening families and promoting innovations in child protection. This professional learning collaborative is supported by Casey Family Programs and focuses on applying safety science in child welfare. To date, NPCS includes 36 other jurisdictions nationwide that annually provide child welfare services in their respective communities. The shared goals of NPCS are to strengthen families, promote innovations in safety culture, and reduce and prevent child maltreatment and fatalities through a public health approach. One important element of the NPCS work is sharing data, which allows for the analysis of trends and patterns that help to identify areas for improvement. This partnership is a proactive approach, grounded in safety science that assists DCF in improving child safety and preventing future deaths.

In addition to Wisconsin's continued engagement with other jurisdictions across the country through NPCS, DCF's Systems Change Review process for critical incidents results in learning about systems factors that impact practice and can be leveraged with local child welfare agencies and other external partners to better understand, identify, and prioritize system improvement efforts. What is learned from Wisconsin's critical incident review process is shared with the state's Child Welfare Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Advisory Committee. The advisory committee uses this information, along with other inputs such as administrative data and other case review data, to identify and determine opportunities for state-level child maltreatment prevention, child protective services practice improvements, and child welfare system change.

More information regarding the CQI Advisory Committee can be found under Item 25 in Section 2 of this plan.

MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program

Wisconsin's Promoting Safe and Stable Families program (PSSF) is administered by the Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) and has four components – family preservation, family support, time limited-reunification services, and adoption promotion and support. Each of these components receives at least twenty percent of funds for service delivery.

Specific percentage of Title IV-B, Subpart 2 funds spent on Service Delivery

Title IV-B, Subpart 2 funds are allocated to local child welfare agencies for the operation of local programs and services aimed at preventing child maltreatment and enabling children to remain safely with their families. Of total PSSF funds, approximately 20% is used by DCF for state-level adoption promotion and support services activities. Approximately 5% is used by DCF for state operations, including training and technical assistance to local county and tribal child welfare agencies. The remaining 75% of PSSF funds are allocated to local county and tribal child welfare agencies to fund family support, preservation, and reunification programs. Local agencies are required to use the federal funding for allowable family support, family preservation, and time-limited family reunification programs and services. Additionally, local agencies must allocate spending across these service areas in accordance with federal PSSF requirements.

Planning and service coordination amounts are described in the CFS 101 attached to this plan. Family preservation, family support, and time limited reunification services are primarily delivered by 71 county agencies. The Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS) does not receive an annual PSSF allocation because DCF supervises and administers child welfare services in Milwaukee County. Adoption promotion and support services to the local child welfare agencies are provided at the state level through the Public Adoption Program. A portion of the federal award is also used to fund regional and statewide family preservation, family support, and time-limited activities, including funding programs for DMCPS and the 11 federally recognized tribes headquartered in Wisconsin.

Service Decision-Making Process for Family Support Services

For the adoption promotion and support services portion of PSSF, funds are directed toward promoting and supporting adoption as a permanency outcome for children. The PSSF funds for adoption services are used in two ways. One is to support the public adoption program to finalize adoptions of children in OHC through financing adoption professionals' salaries and recruitment activities for adoptive families. The second is to support the Wisconsin Family Connections Center, formerly known as the Wisconsin Adoption & Permanency Support Program, to provide resources and supports to adoptees and adoptive families.

Each year, local child welfare agencies are required to report how they plan to use the funds across service categories. At least 25% of each local agency's allotment is required to support family preservation, family support, and time-limited family reunification services. Additionally, each agency must collect information to track relevant children and family outcomes related to

the use of the funds, which are reported back to DCF. This local agency-led use of PSSF funds ensures that family support services, as well as preservation and reunification services, are community-based and best able to meet the needs of children and families within Wisconsin's child welfare system.

As DCF develops and implements new child welfare policies, standards, and procedures aimed at transitioning the child welfare system to become more in-home, family-focused, and collaborative, local child welfare agencies are expected to use a combination of funding to coordinate services and target populations in ways that strengthen local communities and build services to support children and families in their homes. Local child welfare agencies are also encouraged to align PSSF program outcomes with other county or state initiatives to improve coordination of efforts. For example, local child welfare agencies use PSSF funds support local home visitation, child abuse prevention efforts, coordinated service teams, family resource centers, community response programs, and reunification services. Finally, local child welfare agencies are encouraged to align their PSSF funds with evidence-based programming or other promising approaches in the areas of home visiting, trauma-informed care, and youth development to create a better coordinated system of care for children and families who are most at-risk and in need of services. This coordination and collaboration will continue to guide the use of PSSF over the next five years.

Examples of local PSSF programs in the last year include the following:

- Marathon County served 43 families with their PSSF funding through their Family Support Services, which provides parent education services. All families reported feeling more confident in their parenting abilities upon receipt of services. Eighty percent of those enrolled families had no new reports of child abuse and neglect. Additionally, of the 23 families who began PSSF support with their child/children in their care, 22 were able to keep their child/children in home throughout participation in services.
- Walworth County spread its PSSF funding across several service areas to serve families with children in home and in out-of-home care. The county finds creative ways to keep families together through respite, peer mentoring, in home therapy, housing assistance and safety support services. They report the funding has assisted in reducing the number of children in out-of-home care as well as increasing their timeliness to reunification. They also reported a decrease in the time a child spends in an out of home care from an average of 18 months in 2022 to 12 months in 2023.
- Vernon County was able to serve 43 children and 24 families in 2023. It used PSSF funds to keep families together through services such as parent aides, in home therapy, respite and financial assistance. These services are proving to increase parental protective capacities and in 2023, led to a reduction of children in out-of-home care.
- Portage County used a portion of the PSSF funds for family preservation. They were able to offer respite child care services to 14 families, and none of these families had a screened in child abuse or neglect report during the service provision. Portage County also used PSSF funding to support in home safety services for 39 families. Uniquely, Portage County has dedicated staff who are available to families outside of traditional work hours. PSSF assisted them in increasing the numbers and hours spent with the

families they served. All 39 families receiving in home safety services demonstrated decreased safety concerns, saw an increase in parental protective capacities, and their children remained safely in their homes.

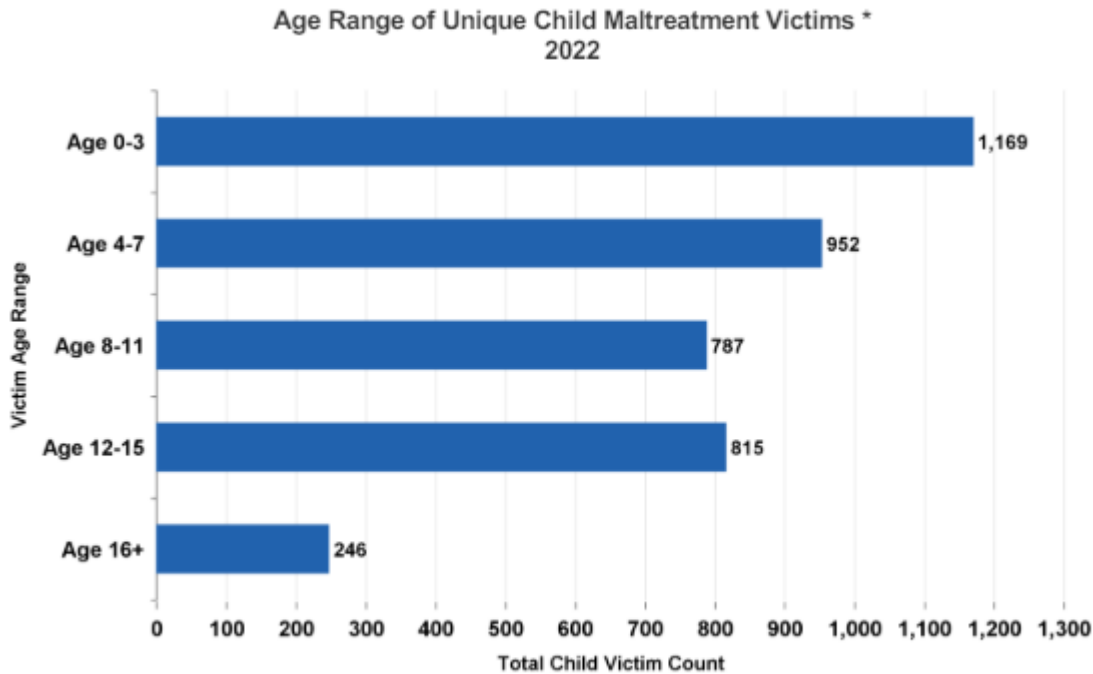
- Racine County used PSSF funds for their Boost Program, which provides families with support and preservation services. The Boost Program is transforming the way families view their agency. Over 100 children were served and over 90% of these children remained in home and did not have a screened in child abuse or neglect report while engaged in the program.
- Kenosha County served 43 families and focused on using the PSSF funds to help families remain together and connected by providing parenting skill development and enhancing protective capacities. They offer voluntary community-based services, which focus on prevention, to reduce the risk of out-of-home care placements and reunify families in a timely manner.
- La Crosse County used PSSF funding for their Community Response Program, a prevention based contracted service that aims to divert families from the child welfare system. They were able to serve 83 children. Every child served during this reporting period remained in their home while participating in Community Response. La Crosse County also used PSSF funding for wrap around services to help remove barriers to children returning home by providing intensive parenting support as well as financial support as needed. In this program, they served 13 families and successfully reunified seven children in the reporting period.

Estimated number of individuals and families to be served in FY 2025:

- County agencies statewide have been able to serve about 80,000 children and 9,000 parents/caregivers annually with this funding. DCF estimates these numbers to be consistent in FY 2025.

Population at Greatest Risk of Maltreatment

Under section 48.981(9) of the Wisconsin Statutes, DCF provides an annual report to the governor and the Legislature on child abuse and neglect; this is called the Wisconsin Child Abuse and Neglect Report. The report includes information about which populations are at the greatest risk of maltreatment, as identified by substantiated maltreatment claims. Each section of the report also includes information concerning identification and services to at-risk populations. The report can be found at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/5693.pdf>. In 2022, children under age three accounted for largest number of victims and 53.4% of victims were under the age of 8, as shown on the following graph.



* The total number of children included in this chart is slightly larger than the number of unique victims in Table 9 as some children were maltreated multiple times throughout the year, and belong in two age groups.

Section 5, Services for Birth to Five, describes how DCF and its partners will identify, provide, and coordinate services to meet the needs of vulnerable children under the age of 5, including both children in foster care and those served in-home or in community-based settings over the next five years. The increase in parental drug addiction and use is a continued concern and will frame many of these efforts over this period. Additional information regarding DCF's ongoing efforts focused on drug affected children is included in the CAPTA section of Wisconsin's 2020 – 2024 CFSP Final Report.

Monthly Caseworker Visits

Over the next five years, DCF will continue to follow the standards established in the 2006 Child and Family Services Improvement Act to report on monthly caseworker visits and report the updated numbers in December 2024 per PI-24-02 instructions.

In FFY2023, caseworker contact requirements remained consistent and were met for 96.7% of the children subject to this measure which exceeds the federal regulation requirement of 95%. Of these contacts, 87% percent were made with the child in the placement location. DCF will continue to monitor performance on this practice requirement and provide statewide, regional, and local training and technical assistance to ensure performance compliance.

Over the next five years, Wisconsin plans to use the Monthly Caseworker Visit Grant to support ongoing WCWPDS system efforts that include training on standards and frequency of caseworker visits and coordinate with the Department of Health Services (DHS) on their Coordinated Services Teams (CST) Initiatives to provide a complete, personalized system of care that focuses on children with complex behavioral needs.

John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood

Agency Administering Chafee:

DCF's Independent Living (IL) Program is designed to help system-involved youth aged 14 and older develop crucial life skills and achieve outcomes like their non-system involved peers. DCF staff oversee the IL program, which consists of tribal, county, and Transition Resource Agency (TRA) service partners.

In addition to IL supports young people receive while in out-of-home care (OHC), youth who exit OHC at age 18 or older, or after age 16 via an adoption or court-ordered Ch. 48.977 guardianship, are supported by the program until age 23. DCF utilizes Education and Training Voucher (ETV) funds annually to support eligible youth in achieving their postsecondary goals for five years or up to age 23, whichever occurs first. Services provided are in alignment with the requirements of the federal John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for the Successful Transition to Adulthood.

This approach aligns Wisconsin's Chafee Program with DCF's overall vision for child welfare provision covered throughout this Children and Family Services Plan (CFSP).

Description of Program Design and Delivery

DCF utilizes Chafee funds to operate a regional TRA model. This service structure provides dedicated supports, resources, and staff to young adults in the years immediately following their discharge from care and streamlines the processes by which youth access their Chafee benefits, IL supports and ETV funds, as well as learn about and access other public benefits.

TRA agencies partners are intentionally private agencies outside of the state/county system to offer increased flexibility, different resources, and varied expertise that complement those of DCF and local child welfare and tribal agencies. This structure enables TRAs to respond to youth needs in a timely and comprehensive way as resources allow to provide IL services to youth while still in care, which sets the foundation for their discharge from care and improves youth outcomes in the years immediately.

Over the next five years, DCF will seek to increase engagement with youth, utilize Youth Justice (YJ) data to identify eligibility, and strengthen existing service provider partnerships.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

The state's Chafee Plan is directly informed by youth input through the local and statewide Youth Advisory Councils (YACs), service partners, and directly through program visits, participation in DCF events or meetings, young adult consultants, resource development efforts, and on an as-requested basis. Youth compensation varies depending on the event and/or project.

Local and Statewide YACs

Wisconsin has a state YAC that meets four to six times a year, as well as local YACs that TRAs coordinate in each region, many of which meet monthly. DCF staff will coordinate and facilitate all state YAC meetings and events, including frequent and close collaboration with YAC officers, in partnership with the consulting agency Public Knowledge through a lived experience contract to elevate not only the state YAC but DCF's other lived experience efforts and partnerships. Each TRA has at least one YAC advisor, who is responsible for coordinating the local YAC and supporting youth involvement at the state YAC (travel logistics, emotional support, etc.).

While TRA staff run the local YACs, they keep DCF staff regularly informed of membership, events, successes, challenges, resource needs, etc., during standing DCF/TRA meetings. Over the next five years, DCF staff plan to observe regional YACs on a more regular basis to observe firsthand and, as youth members request, provide input to or receive input from the group.

DCF staff compensate state YAC members for their meeting attendance and provide gas gift cards when youth transport themselves to in-person meetings and events. DCF also supports lodging when warranted (e.g., two-day state meeting). Regional TRA meeting compensation or incentive is at the discretion of the local TRAs and child welfare agencies (CWA). All entities commonly provide food or other items to support and incentive youth's involvement.

Partner Agencies

Young adults, that are unable or unwilling to share their feedback directly with DCF, can contact their local IL service providers. This is accomplished via regular email communication, standing meetings dedicated to IL program oversight and information sharing, impromptu, or scheduled touch-bases.

Direct Youth Input

DCF's Bureau of Youth Services (BYS) IL staff conduct program visits with tribal and TRA service providers at least once every three years. When possible, they include an interview with a young adult client as part of the review and incorporate that feedback into the program visit summary. This process informs DCF oversight of the IL program, direct support of respective TRA(s) that received the visit(s), and Chafee priorities moving forward.

Over the next five years, DCF will continue to engage youth through its National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD) Improvement Plan process, sponsor All-Star interns annually, and empower youth to serve as consultants. The emphasis on lived experience is a cornerstone of DCF's Putting Families First initiative.

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Positive Youth Development (PYD) philosophy is embedded in all services available through the Chafee program and the basis for DCF's Youth Services Framework:

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/ys/pdf/ys-framework.pdf>.

It informs DCF practice, youth participation, program expectations, and service provision to ensure alignment with a youth's wants, needs, and goals.

NATIONAL YOUTH IN TRANSITION DATABASE

DCF's processes for information sharing, feedback loops, and data collection were identified as areas in need of correction during Wisconsin's 2023 NYTD Federal Review. Over the next five years, DCF will provide NYTD Improvement Plan (IP) progress updates through subsequent Annual Progress and Services Plans (APSR) as it works to address these issues.

Wisconsin's NYTD Review Final Report can be found at

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/WI_NYTD_Final_Report.pdf.

Serving Youth Across the State

A primary objective of Wisconsin's regional IL service model is to ensure that robust IL services are available to qualifying young people across the state, especially in the years immediately after discharge, regardless of where the youth resides. Another objective is that, as much as possible, the regional model allows for personalized services and supports according to the youth's wants and needs and geographic considerations like topography, resource options and availability, population density, culture, and local government variability.

This approach builds upon Wisconsin's state-supervised, county-administered child welfare and youth justice system structure, which allows for localized service provision in important and impactful ways. Tribal agencies also operate their own IL programs as subject matter experts when it comes to serving the young people in their communities.

The DCF IL coordinator oversees all TRA IL providers to ensure consistent and comparable messaging, information sharing, technical support opportunities, and input gathering. The IL coordinator also fosters the TRAs' working relationship with each other to bolster collaboration efforts if/when youth relocate and need to be served by a different agency.

DCF's policy coordinator plays a similar role supporting the tribal and county IL programs to ensure statewide consistency.

Data

IL service data resides in DCF's eWiSACWIS system, which has a report that details what service(s) were provided, to which youth, and by which county or TRA. This report therefore could identify variability by county and region, though as mentioned previously, data collection was an area in need of improvement during Wisconsin's NYTD Review. Over the next five years, DCF will provide updates on its IP through subsequent APSRs and share reliable data when available.

Serving Youth of Various Ages and Stages of Achieving Independence

Youth Ages 18 - 21

Wisconsin extends foster care for youth 18 to 21 who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and are enrolled full-time in high school or equivalent. All costs related to the extended OHC placement for youth are paid for with state and county dollars, and title IV-E funds are drawn down as applicable. CWAs provide youth in court ordered OHC placements IL supports and services, including opportunities to learn, practice, develop life skills, and take on responsibilities appropriate for their age, developmental abilities, and maturity level. The CWA also coordinates the youth's case and discharge planning.

Though Wisconsin youth in extended OHC account for a small percentage of the overall child welfare system population, DCF established the regional IL service model to provide some of the structure and resources that would otherwise be provided via extended care. The regional IL programs target resources and supports in key IL domains to all youth ages 18 to 23, regardless of participation in IL.

Over the next five years, DCF will continue to encourage and support CWAs to utilize Supervised Independent Living (SIL) placements when appropriate, so that youth can gradually transition from their time in care.

Youth Ages 21 – 23

Wisconsin expanded its IL eligibility to age 23 on January 1, 2023, despite the absence of state funding as a continuation of existing pandemic practice.

Youth ages 21 to 23 who are IL-eligible now qualify for services via the TRAs or tribal IL program just as younger IL-eligible young adults do. TRAs follow the youth's lead to identify the key areas of need and support targeted to address the unique needs of an older population. A key focus for clients ages 21 to 23 is making sure they have a plan following their discharge from IL services to ensure referrals to other benefits and services for which they qualify beyond the IL program.

Many TRAs also administer other young adult programming and ETV funds which allowed for a seamless service expansion process.

DCF informed its young adults and partners of the change in the following ways:

- Released DCF Informational memo 2022-26i:
<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/memos/2022-26i.pdf>
- Shared program updates with CWA partners and service providers via standing meetings and trainings, including Bureau of Regional Operations' (BRO) regular updates.
- Provided direct updates to the statewide Youth Advisory Council, while TRAs informed local YACs.
- Updated resources, training materials, and presentations.

- Revised existing and new Requests for Proposals (RFPs), contract language, program scopes, outcome templates, and other contract administration materials to include service provision up to age 23.

Youth from other States

TRAs serve young people who discharged from another state's child welfare system so long as the youth discharged in a way that aligns with Wisconsin's program eligibility criteria and the state of origin is not also providing IL and/or ETV supports.

The DCF IL coordinator works with the youth, applicable TRA, and other state to collect and review the minimum amount of information necessary to determine the youth's eligibility. If deemed IL-eligible in Wisconsin, the youth qualifies for IL and ETV supports until age 23, and the TRA serves them as they would any other IL clients.

Collaboration and Consultation with Other Private and Public Agencies

HEALTH CARE COORDINATION FOR YOUTH AGING OUT-OF-CARE

Wisconsin is in compliance with the federal requirement that the state Medicaid program provide services to youth formerly in another state's child welfare system who discharged in a qualifying way. Wisconsin's Department of Health Services (DHS) administers Medicaid and consults with DCF as needed.

Specific to this requirement, DCF collaborated with DHS to issue DCF Informational Memo 2022-27i: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/memos/2022-27i.pdf>.

Over the next five years, DCF will continue to work with DHS to ensure this requirement is met and young people eligible for the benefit successfully access it.

HOUSING NEEDS COORDINATION

Housing is a persistent and acute need for youth previously in foster care and an area in which TRA partners commonly support IL-eligible youth. Feedback provided to DCF illustrates there is a statewide shortage of safe, sustainable, and affordable housing options.

Past and ongoing actions taken by DCF and its partner agencies to address this issue include:

- Division X funding to support rapid rehousing partners.
- DCF state flexible funding to TRA agencies that does not have the room and board restrictions that Chafee funds have.
- Coordination with the Anti-Human Trafficking (AHT) program to sync efforts for youth for whom both programs are relevant. DCF provides each TRA a small AHT funding allocation to support IL clients who experienced trafficking as a minor.
- TRAs that serve Dane and Milwaukee counties partner with local housing developments to offer priority housing to young adults former in foster care.

- DCF drafted Informational Memo 2023-25i to provide guidance on Foster Youth Independence (FYI) Vouchers:
<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/memos/2023-25i.pdf>.
- DCF staff have an ongoing collaboration with the Department of Housing and Development (HUD) and TRAs to assist this effort.
- TRAs secure external grants specific to supporting youth's housing costs.

COORDINATION AND CONSULTATION WITH TRIBES

Six of the 11 federally recognized tribes headquartered in Wisconsin operate an IL program. They are the Bad River, Ho-Chunk, Lac Courte Oreilles, Menominee, St. Croix, and Red Cliff.

Over the next five years, DCF will continue to offer this funding opportunity to other tribes in the state each year. Each tribal IL program has discretion to tailor their IL programs' scope and areas of focus according to their population needs. All agencies work closely with DCF's policy coordinator to construct and execute their IL programs. The policy coordinator educates tribal agencies on IL program eligibility, shares IL resources and best practices, and facilitates various opportunities for the tribes to connect with and learn from other tribal IL programs.

Youth served by a tribal child welfare agency who are IL-eligible may elect to access supports provided by TRAs, including ETV, if their tribe has an IL program. This may be in addition to supports they receive via the tribal IL program, so long as there is not duplication of efforts or benefits.

The DCF IL coordinator created a referral packet that includes guiding documents and a referral letter template to support tribal youth referrals to TRA services. Once referred, TRAs can also provide or connect the youth to non-IL services through their partner agencies.

See Section 6 Consultation and Coordination with Tribes for information regarding DCF's overall consultation approach with tribal nations.

Determining Eligibility for Benefits and Services

Youth eligibility for IL services is automatically determined in eWiSACWIS through a combination of the young adult's placement history, age, amount of time in care, and discharge date. This automated process removes the potential for subjectivity when making eligibility determinations. In the event that the DCF IL coordinator needs to make a manual eligibility determination, for example a youth was served in a tribal child welfare system or came from out of state, the coordinator must follow a defined process and keep thorough documentation of that eligibility determination.

Over the next five years, DCF will ensure fair and equitable service provision and treatment through a continued commitment to PYD, lived experience, and aiding and empowering disadvantaged populations. This approach is reflected throughout program requirements in effect for its IL service providers.

DCF requires TRAs to:

- Consider and incorporate youth's strengths, needs, goals, preferences, communication styles, and sense of identity and community throughout the process.
- Provide culturally responsible services treating youth with fairness and equity to ensure youth are understood and served within the context of their identity, family, creed, community (as defined by them), tribe, history, culture, and traditions.
- Provide services that are rooted in positive youth development, allow for youth choice and self-determination, promote social and community integration, and are individualized based on the youth's needs and desires.

See Coordination and Consultation with Tribes in this Section for information regarding DCF's ongoing fair and equitable service efforts for Indian children.

Cooperation in National Evaluations

Over the next five years, DCF will cooperate in any federal national evaluations of the effects of the programs in achieving the purposes of Chafee.

Education and Training Vouchers (ETV)

In Wisconsin, ETV program eligibility mirrors IL eligibility, with the added requirement that the young person be enrolled in a program or institution that fulfills the postsecondary requirements outlined the Chafee Act and in DCF Guidelines:

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youthservices/pdf/bs-funding-guidelines.pdf>.

Over the next five years, TRAs will administer ETV funds to qualifying clients, including children served by tribal IL programs, along with other IL supports to holistically serve the youth, sync efforts, and guard against a disruption in benefits/services. DCF staff will continue to oversee the TRAs' administration of ETV funds and cooperate with postsecondary partners to further the goals and applicability of the ETV program.

Educational Assistance

In Wisconsin, since TRAs provide direct IL and ETV support, they review student documentation, are in direct contact with postsecondary programs, and know the attendance cost. This service provision centralization prevents providing ETV funds that duplicate other benefits or are beyond the student's cost of attendance.

TRAs provide funds directly to schools according to DCF guidelines, federal regulations regarding ETV funds, uniform financial principles, and other requirements as necessary. ETV funds should only be applied as a last resort, after other educational aid has been applied.

Other Training Programs

Education and employment are two of the five primary IL domains in Wisconsin and will remain key focus areas for the department and its IL partners over the next five years.

TRAs routinely assist youth with postsecondary enrollment and financial aid needs leading up to and during a youth's enrollment. TRAs collaborate with postsecondary partners regarding potentially IL eligible youth, child referrals, and available services. Campuses with a Fostering Success program (<https://www.wisconsin.edu/fostering-success>) expand these collaborative efforts even further.

CWAs lay the groundwork for a youth's educational and employment plans and goals by assisting with initials requirements, sharing information about Brighter Star, and taking the youth on school tours.

A strength of Wisconsin's IL program is the degree to which most TRAs directly provide other benefits and services for which IL-eligible youth qualify. This streamlines and simplifies youth access to employment assistance and training programs such as:

- FoodShare Employment and Training (FSET)/SNAP
- Wisconsin Works (W2)
- Transitional Jobs (TJ)
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

If a TRA does not directly provide one or more of these services, they are still available to IL-eligible youth. The TRA coordinates with the appropriate local agency to assist with enrollment, access, and retention of benefits for which the youth qualify.

Chafee Training

In the next five years, DCF IL staff plan to continue building on recent training efforts to support workforce needs and address findings from Wisconsin's 2023 NYTD Federal Review. This includes ongoing IL 101 trainings and expanding information sharing efforts with groups involved with adolescents during their time in care, notably, out-of-home care providers.

Over this period, DCF IL staff also plan to broaden technical assistance options to include office hours and expand collaborative efforts within DCF, other state agencies, and external partners to identify training opportunities. Exact topics will be informed by direct requests or identified through program need areas. Recent trainings have focused on BadgerCare+, FoodShare, serving LGBTQ+ youth, youth strengths, FYI vouchers, trafficked youth, the Federal Communication Commission's Affordable Connectivity Program, and tribal child welfare.

6. Consultation and Coordination with Tribes

The Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA), passed in 2009, specifies the responsibilities of the state and counties regarding Indian children, as well as protections for Indian children under state court jurisdiction. The law can be found at

<http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/48/I/028>.

DCF and the 11 federally recognized tribes headquartered in Wisconsin share the goal of supporting the safety, health, and well-being of tribal children, families, and communities. Over the next five years, continued collaboration to support this goal and ensuring lines of communication remain open will be key priorities.

As sovereign nations, tribes establish and administer their own codes, policies, procedures, and programming related to child welfare. Because of their sovereignty, their codes, policies, and procedures may differ from state statute and policies – and from each other's. For example, some tribal codes and standards have a lower threshold than state statute to screen in cases for further assessment to allow for earlier intervention with their families. In other situations where county/Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS) child welfare professionals have primary case management responsibility, these non-tribal child welfare professionals are statutorily required to invite the child welfare professionals, from the Indian child's tribe, to participate in case management. County and DMCPS child welfare professionals will continue to collaborate with the tribal child welfare professionals to ensure WICWA compliance as well as identify and provide culturally appropriate and effective services and supports to Indian children and families involved in the child welfare system over this period.

Funding

DCF provides limited child and family service (child welfare, childcare, domestic violence) funding directly to tribes through a consolidated Family Services Program with multiple funding streams. In addition to the Family Services Program funding, tribes may also receive funding to operate in-home safety services, Brighter Futures programming, Independent Living programming, kinship care, and home visiting programs. They also have the option to enter into a title IV-E pass through agreement for the reimbursement of allowable administrative expenditures. Currently seven tribes have IV-E pass-through agreements with DCF and can submit quarterly claims. The seven tribes include the following:

- Bad River
- Lac Courte Oreilles
- Lac du Flambeau
- Oneida
- Menominee
- Red Cliff
- Ho-Chunk

2023 Wisconsin Act 19 granted authority for DCF to enter into agreements with tribes to allow tribes to administer subsidized guardianship (SG) ordered by a tribal court under tribal law and

to be reimbursed by DCF for eligible SG payments. The Oneida Nation will be the first tribe to pilot this process and it will remain an area of focus over the next five years.

Process Used to Gather Input from Tribes

Wisconsin Executive Order #18 outlines requirements for each Wisconsin cabinet agency regarding working and collaborating with tribes on a government-to-government basis. Furthermore, DCF collaborated with the tribes to update its tribal consultation policy to commit to maintaining positive government-to-government relationships and negotiating in good faith.

DCF has several ways in which it executes its policy to work alongside tribes. The primary method is via annual consultation sessions where DCF leadership convenes with tribal leaders. Parties jointly develop the agenda and broadly focus on the addressing issues or concerns regarding department policies, implementation plans, services, and challenges. The annual consultation provides a venue for DCF to enhance its overall relationship with tribes and identify actions that will improve conditions of, and services for, American Indian children and families.

The consultation process was instrumental in DCF's efforts to expand Wisconsin's statutory definition of a "relative" to include "like-kin" and specifically "For an Indian child, "like-kin" includes individuals identified by the child's tribe according to tribal tradition, custom or resolution, code, or law." This change supports DCF's Putting Families First approach to ensure children can be placed more easily with those who already know and love them, and those caregivers can receive financial support.

The 2024 annual consultation occurred on June 4, 2024.

Aside from annual consultation meetings, DCF staff also consult with tribes via bimonthly Indian Child Welfare (ICW) Committee meetings, which include the DCF tribal affairs specialist, tribal liaison, division leadership, as well as tribal child welfare directors and attorneys. The ICW directors or designees are also invited to participate and serve on committees and workgroups established by the DCF as projects and tasks require. Given their unique opportunity to work with many counties around the state, tribal child welfare staff are well positioned to provide feedback on state-wide practice.

The contact list for tribal officials is available at <http://witribes.wi.gov/docview.asp?docid=19085&locid=57>

A list of ICW directors is available at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/wicwa/wifedirectribes.pdf>

Ongoing Coordination and Collaboration with Tribes in the Implementation and Assessment of the CFSP & Subsequent APSRs

The bimonthly ICW Committee meetings are crucial to DCF's ongoing coordination and collaboration with tribes. This group broadly discusses child welfare-related issues, including but not limited to, policy and procedure changes and development. Post pandemic, these meetings continue to allow virtual attendance which has resulted in increased participation

from each individual tribe and allows workers/supervisors to attend pertinent discussions relevant to their work. Travel costs can still create a barrier to tribal participation, so to address this barrier, DCF continues to cover hotel costs and reimbursing other travel related expenses for in-person attendance.

In addition to the large group, DCF, tribal child welfare, and legal staff and professionals from related organizations (e.g., Children's Court Improvement Program) comprise the Tribal/State Child Welfare Policy & Law (PALS) Workgroup; this group meets upon request of the ICW Committee and focuses on policy and legal issues.

Case Review System and WI Tribes

For Circuit Court cases, where WICWA and ICWA apply, the Indian child's tribe is a legal party to the case and maintains the right to participate at all reviews. County agencies must provide notice of the reviews to the Indian child's tribe(s) and invite them to participate in the review process. If the review occurs at a court hearing, the court must also send notice of the review to the Indian child's tribe.

For Tribal Court cases, each tribe will have their own laws, policies, and procedures to guide their review system. As sovereign nations, they have the authority to develop a system that works best for their community. State and county agencies do not have a role in these reviews and have no regulatory authority over another sovereign.

Compliance with ICWA in Consultation with Tribes

The codification of the federal Indian Child Welfare Act into state statute was an important step to improving ICWA compliance in Wisconsin. After a four-year effort that included considerable discussion and negotiation, 2009 Wisconsin Act 94 passed unanimously in the Wisconsin Legislature and codified the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA). The process of developing and passing the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act is shown in a following documentary video available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCLUbS4FxWo>.

In 2024, DCF submitted a formal comment in support of the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) to amend AFCARS regulations to require state title IV-E agencies to collect and report data elements related to the procedural protections of ICWA.

The Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS) delivers Indian Child Welfare Act specific trainings both in-person and virtually, with important considerations related to tribal culture and working effectively with tribal families. This empowers new child welfare professionals to start their career with an understanding of the importance of partnering with tribes when working and Indian child.

In addition to these WCWPDS trainings, DCF staff also offer ongoing, and as needed, technical assistance and desk guides to aid child welfare professionals' efforts with WICWA compliance. These desk guides consist of the following:

- A Child Welfare Practitioner's Guide for Meeting the WICWA Active Efforts Requirement - <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/464.pdf>
- WICWA eWiSACWIS Desk Aid - <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/423.pdf>

Chafee Foster Care and Independence Act/Educational and Training Vouchers (Tribal)

See the Chafee Foster Care and Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) Program Sections in this plan for more information relating to Tribal Consultation, eligibility for benefits and services, and ensuring fair and equitable treatment for American Indian youth under the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act and ETV.

Exchange Copies of the APSR

DCF will inform the ICW Committee of the publication of the 2025 – 2029 Children and Family Services Plan and provide electronic access once posted.

Section E - Targeted Plans with the 2025 – 2029 CFSP

See below for transmittal of plans within this CFSP and those provided as separate documents and included in the June 30, 2024, transmittal e-mail. For copies of these documents, please submit a request to DCFCFSR@wisconsin.gov.

Health Care Oversight Plan

All children placed in out-of-home care through a court order or voluntary placement agreement are eligible to receive Foster Care Medicaid (Title XIX). Children who have an adoption assistance or subsidized guardianship agreement continue to be eligible for Title XIX Medicaid until their agreement expires. Within 30 days of the child's placement into foster care, they are required to have a medical and dental examination in accordance with the schedule of the HealthCheck program. HealthCheck is a Medicaid health care benefit that provides continuous, quality health care for individuals until age 21. HealthCheck exams are scheduled on a regular basis using guidelines developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Additionally, DCF and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) work collaboratively to improve the quality, access, and timeliness of health care services to children and youth in out-of-home care through the implementation of a Medicaid medical home service delivery model called Care4Kids. Care4Kids creates a healthcare coordination team for each enrolled child which includes a healthcare coordinator, the child (as applicable), the child's parents, the child's current caregivers, and child welfare and healthcare professionals. Coordination of developmental and mental/behavioral health services is critical to ensure appropriate and timely service delivery and to communicate service specific information to all the members of the healthcare coordination team. This includes assuring that identification and ongoing oversight of children who are prescribed psychotropic medications is occurring regularly, including recommended metabolic testing for children on antipsychotic medication. Wisconsin's Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (eWiSACWIS) has a section to enter each child's health concern(s), medication(s), and medical/provider(s)' name for additional oversight and coordination.

Through Care4Kids, children receive an out-of-home health screen within two business days of entering out-of-home care, a comprehensive initial health assessment within 30 days of entering out-of-home care, mental health and developmental screenings, mental health and/or developmental evaluations (if needed), and a comprehensive health care plan tailored to the child's individual health needs. The initial health assessment includes identification of possible acute and chronic physical health, behavioral and/or mental health, oral health, and developmental concerns. The health care plan includes all the following: the child's relevant prior and current diagnoses, current medications, names and contact information of all individuals who are instrumental to the child's care and treatment, names of external supports (e.g., Birth-3 care coordination, CLTS service coordinator), name of the lead prescriber for all children with two or more psychotropic medication prescriptions, the name of the provider responsible for metabolic monitoring of every child who is prescribed an antipsychotic

medication, enhanced periodicity schedule for comprehensive HealthCheck exams, tracking and timely follow up on referrals, short and long-term treatment goals, barriers to care, an individualized crisis/action plan for behavior management, an action plan for exacerbation of a chronic condition, transition plans between inpatient and outpatient settings and for when the child leaves the medical home, and the method and frequency of communication among the child's healthcare coordination team.

To ensure children in foster care placements are not inappropriately diagnosed with mental illness, other emotional or behavioral disorders, medically fragile conditions, or developmental disabilities, and placed in settings that are not foster family homes as a result of the inappropriate diagnoses, Wisconsin utilizes the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool. The CANS assesses a child's strengths and needs across several life domains to inform placement decisions utilizing a Placement Complexity Chart:

		Placement Options		
Child's Level of Need (LON)	Provider's Level of Certification (LOC)	Foster Home	Group Home	Residential Care Center
1/2	1	Child-Specific		
	2	Basic		
3	3	Moderate Treatment	Group Home	
4	4	Specialized Treatment		
5	5	Exceptional Treatment		Residential Care Center
6	6			
	This level of care may be used in transition planning for youth who were previously placed in a higher level of care.			
	Placement of children at this level is not appropriate.			
NOTE: A child in out-of-home care can be served by a placement with a certification level (or its equivalent) lower than the child's level of need if an exception has been granted and documented in the child's electronic case record by the placing agency and the agency shows what services and supports will be provided to meet the child's needs.				

To assist child welfare professionals with these complex cases, DCF issued Appendix 10: Guidance for Working with Individuals with Disabilities as part of its Child Protective Services Access & Initial Assessment Standards and worked with the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System to develop a Child Welfare Considerations for Children with Disabilities training: <https://wcwpds.wisc.edu/web-based-courses/children-with-disabilities/>.

As of January 1, 2023, eligible youth aging out of care in Wisconsin, who were born on or after January 1, 2005, and who move to another state will be eligible for coverage as former foster care youth under the new state's Medicaid program. DCF issued Informational Memo 2022-27i available at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/memos/2022-27i.pdf> on October 14, 2022, outlining this change.

Medicaid's continuous enrollment condition during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) ended on March 31, 2023. Children who exited out-of-home care or had their subsidized guardianship or adoption assistance agreement terminate before April 1, 2023, were able to maintain their Foster Care Medicaid coverage because of this continuous coverage provision.

As a result of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, effective January 1, 2024, children will receive continuous Foster Care Medicaid coverage for the duration of their 12-month certification period, even if they leave out of home care or their subsidized guardianship or adoption assistance agreement terminates.

Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment Plan

- Submitted separately.

Disaster Plan

- Submitted separately.

Training Plan

- Submitted separately.

Section G: Financial Information

Payment Limitations – Title IV-B, Subpart 1:

In FY 2022, Wisconsin did not spend any IV-B subpart 1 funds on child care, foster care maintenance or adoption assistance.

Child Care: \$0

Foster Care Maintenance: \$0

Adoption Assistance: \$0

Non-Federal funds that were expended for foster care maintenance payments in Wisconsin were not used to match title IV-B subpart 1 funds in FY 2005. In FY 2023, Wisconsin did not expend any non-federal funds for foster care maintenance payments that were used to match title IV-B subpart 1 funds, and thus did not exceed the amount of FY 2005 level. Other allocated state and local funds are used for matching purposes. Wisconsin will spend less than 10% of title IV-B, subpart 1 Federal funds for administrative costs (section 424(e) of the act) in any year it receives the award, including FY 2024.

Payment Limitations – Title IV-B, Subpart 2

Each of the four service categories of PSSF - family preservation, community-based family support, time-limited family reunification, and adoption promotion and support services - had a minimum of 20% of the total title IV-B subpart 2 funds allocated to provide services in each category. The amounts allocated to each service category are specified in the CFS-101, Part II. Wisconsin plans to spend less than 10% of federal funds for both PSSF and monthly caseworker visits under title IV-B, subpart 2 for administrative costs in FY 2023.

Wisconsin's accounting and reporting procedures and processes do not support the classification of child welfare costs financed with state and local county funds into categories that align with subpart 2 programs when comparing FY 2022 costs to the FY 1992 base year.

The Community Aids program in Wisconsin was established in 1980 and provided state and federal funding to counties to use for social, mental health, alcohol/drug abuse, disability, and child welfare services. These funds were distributed to counties in the form of one general unrestricted block grant that could be used for any local social service and child welfare activities. Such services included, at each county's discretion, subpart 2-type services.

As part of the creation of the new Department of Children and Families in 2008, the Community Aids GPR funds were divided into two separate allocations. DCF now receives GPR for child welfare services and the Department of Health Services is allocated GPR for local social services, AODA, developmental disabilities, and mental health services.

In CY 2022, counties reported spending a total of \$245.2 million on child welfare services for children and families. At the time of this plan's publication, the CY 2023 financial data is not yet available. These expenditures were supported by \$101.2 million in state general purpose revenue fund and federal IV-E, IV-B, and SSBG funds for the Children and Families Allocation to

counties to support local child welfare costs. The balance, \$144.0 million, was local funding. The increase in expenditures from 1992 to 2022 was greater than the change in federal funds received for child welfare services over that period, resulting in the state/local share accounting for a greater proportion of the total expenditures. The portion of these state and local funds used for IV-B subpart 2 services was estimated to be at least \$3.1 million.

Wisconsin assures that subpart 2 funds provided to the state will not be, and have not been, used to supplant federal or non-federal funds for existing services and activities which promote the purposes of subpart 2.

Wisconsin also funds family support services through programs administered by the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board. Those programs are summarized below.

Table 44: Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board Programs (SFY 2023)

Program	Category of Service	Funding	Geographic Distribution	Target Group
Community Based Programs				
a. Evidence-Informed Parent Education	Prevention/Support Services	\$1,283,694	9 funded programs offering services in 23 counties	Universal
b. Abusive Head Trauma Prevention	Prevention/Support Services	\$45,803	2 funded agencies in 2 counties	Universal (<i>for all new births</i>)
c. Child Sexual Abuse Prevention	Prevention/Support Services	\$150,000	Statewide	Professionals
d. Family Resource Center Infrastructure	Prevention/Support Services	\$842,820	10 funded programs in 19 counties	Universal
e. Supplementary Primary Prevention	Prevention/Support Services	\$825,860	22 funded programs in 32 counties and 2 tribal nations	Universal
f. Family Navigator	Prevention/Support Services	\$100,000	1 funded program in 53206 zip code	Universal to Service Area
g. Tribal Primary Prevention	Prevention/Support Services	\$158,000	3 funded programs	Universal

			with 3 tribal nations	
h. Innovation/Research	Prevention/Support Services	\$60,682	1 funded program	Targeted Prevention
Professional Development		\$90,000	23 certified trainers and parent co-presenters	Professionals

Table 45: General data for Community Based Prevention Programs from July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

Program	# Caregivers	# Families	# Children	# Professionals
Parent Education	N/A	2,304	2,115	120
Supplementary Primary Prevention	9,576	N/A	N/A	109
Abusive Head Trauma	N/A	6,061	N/A	N/A
Family Navigator	56	53	187	N/A
Tribal Primary Prevention	N/A	97	N/A	N/A
Child Sexual Abuse Prevention				148
Protective Factors*				197
Totals:	9,632	8,515	2,302	2,081

*Number of professionals who completed the six courses of *Bringing the Protective Factors to Life in Your Work* training.

Summary of caregivers who participated in Parent Education and agreed to share their demographic information:

- Race/Ethnicity: 47.1% White, 13.9% African American, 9% Hispanic/Latino, 5.7% American Indian, 2.1% Asian, 0.1% Hmong, 4.8% Multi-Racial, and 16.6% did not respond or selected preferred not to answer.

Summary of caregivers who participated in Parent Education (for parents who participated in a one-time event and agreed to share their demographic information):

- Race/Ethnicity: 49.4% White, 4.3% African American, 7.1% Hispanic/Latino, 15.4% American Indian, 2.1% Asian, 0.3% Hmong, 0.9% Multi-Racial, and 20.6% did not respond or selected preferred not to answer.

State Match Requirement

The Title IV-B program requires a 25% state match for Subpart 1 and 2 funds. The Chafee program requires a 20% match for the CCFCIP and ETV funds. No match is required for CAPTA funds.