

# **ANNUAL PROGRESS AND SERVICES REPORT**

FISCAL YEAR 2026



Wisconsin Department of  
Children and Families

# Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	1
Glossary of Acronyms and Terms .....	5
1. Overview and Agency Administering the Child and Family Services Plan .....	9
Overview .....	9
Administering Agency for Title IV-B, Title IV-E, CAPTA, Chafee and ETV .....	9
Agency Vision Statement .....	9
Putting Families First Initiative.....	10
Organizational Structure.....	10
Collaboration .....	12
Collaboration to Support State Policies and Programs .....	13
Collaboration to Strengthen the Voice of Children, Youth and Parents who are Involved or have Experience with the Child Welfare System. ....	13
Collaboration Specific to Federal Plans and Reviews.....	15
Cross-Systems Collaborations.....	15
2. Update on the Assessment of Current Performance in Improving Outcomes.....	23
Context for State’s Current Performance.....	23
Child and Family Outcomes .....	26
Safety Outcomes 1 and 2 .....	26
Permanency Outcomes 1 and 2.....	34
Well-Being Outcomes 1, 2, and 3 .....	49
Systemic Factors .....	53
Management Information System (Item 19) .....	53
Case Review System (Items 20-24).....	56
Quality Assurance System (Item 25).....	66
Training System (Initial, Ongoing and Foster Parent Training, Items 26-28).....	71
Service Array Systemic Factor (Items 29-30) .....	82
Agency Responsiveness (Items 31-32).....	87
Foster and Adoptive Recruitment Systemic Factor (Items 33-36).....	89
3. Plan for Enacting the State’s Vision.....	96
Goal 1: Strengthen Local Communities and Build Services to Support Families in their Homes. .....	97
Goal 2: To Keep Children in Family Settings Whenever Possible.....	102

Goal 3: Improve Youth Service Provision to Keep Youth Supported in Their Communities...	106
Goal 4: Support the Wisconsin Workforce with Solutions and Improvements. ....	108
4. Quality Assurance System.....	113
5. Children and Family Services Continuum.....	113
Stephanie Tubbs Jones Child Welfare Services Program .....	113
<i>IV-B, Subpart 1 - Homeless and Runaway Youth Funding</i> .....	113
Services for Children Adopted from Other Countries.....	114
Adoption Disruptions and Dissolutions.....	115
Services for Children under the Age of Five.....	115
Planned Activities to Address Developmental Needs.....	115
Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA).....	116
Applied Learning Communities.....	117
Collaboration with Early Care and Education and Other Family Support Programs to Connect to Quality Early Learning, Family Support and Prevention Services.....	117
Coordination with Home Visiting – Family Foundations Home Visiting Program (FFHV).	118
Collaboration with Birth to 3 Program.....	119
Connection to Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Consultation to Support Families .....	119
Connection to Primary Prevention Programs .....	120
Coordination with the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board (CANPB) on Primary Prevention.....	120
Efforts to Track and Prevent Child Maltreatment Deaths.....	120
Wisconsin Act 78 and Systems Change Review.....	120
Statewide Plan to Prevent Maltreatment Fatalities.....	122
MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program .....	123
Specific percentage of Title IV-B, Subpart 2 funds spent on Service Delivery.....	123
Service Decision-Making Process for Family Support Services.....	123
Population at Greatest Risk of Maltreatment .....	125
Kinship Navigator Funding .....	126
Monthly Caseworker Visits .....	126
Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive Payments .....	127
Adoption Training Program.....	127
Adoption Savings .....	128
Challenges in Accessing/Spending Previous and Future Funds.....	128

Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) Transition Grants.....	128
Wisconsin FFPSA Transition Act Grant Funds Programs, Services and Operational Costs .....	128
John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood.....	129
Agency Administering Chafee:.....	129
Description of Program Design and Delivery .....	129
Serving Youth Across the State .....	132
Serving Youth of Various Ages and Stages of Achieving Independence.....	133
Collaboration and Consultation with Other Private and Public Agencies.....	134
Determining Eligibility for Benefits and Services.....	135
Cooperation in National Evaluations .....	136
Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) .....	136
Chafee Training .....	137
6. Consultation and Coordination with Tribes.....	139
Process Used to Gather Input from Tribes .....	140
Ongoing Coordination and Collaboration with Tribes in the Implementation and Assessment of the CFSP & Subsequent APSRs.....	140
Case Review System and WI Tribes .....	141
Compliance with ICWA in Consultation with Tribes.....	141
Chafee Foster Care and Independence Act/Educational and Training Vouchers (Tribal) .....	142
Exchange Copies of the APSR .....	142
CAPTA State Plan Requirements and Update .....	143
2024 Annual CAPTA Report .....	143
Substantive changes, if any, to state law or regulations that could affect the state's eligibility for the CAPTA State Grant.....	143
Significant changes from the state's previously approved CAPTA plan .....	143
How CAPTA Funds Used .....	143
Multi-Disciplinary Outreach, Consultation and Coordination.....	144
Update on the State's Continued Efforts to Support and Address the needs of Substance-Exposed Infants .....	145
CAPTA Annual State Data Report Items .....	147
Child Welfare Workforce Data.....	147
Information on Child Protective Services Workforce .....	148
Youth Justice Transfer .....	150

CAPTA Contact Information.....	150
Updates to Targeted Plans within the 2025 – 2029 CFSP .....	152
Health Care Oversight Plan .....	152
Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment Plan .....	153
Disaster Plan .....	153
Training Plan .....	153
Financial Information .....	154
Payment Limitations – Title IV-B, Subpart 1: .....	154
Payment Limitations – Title IV-B, Subpart 2 .....	154
Chafee.....	155
Attachment 1 – Kin Navigator Annual Report .....	156

# 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 Other 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 Compliance, Research and Analytics is responsible for the oversight and management of data analytics and program integrity of Division of Safety and Permanence 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 foster care, kinship care and other out-of-home-care placement policy guidance; and licenses and monitors group homes, residential care centers, qualified residential treatment providers, 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 reviews, research and program evaluation.

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

**BSWB** = Bureau of Safety and Well-Being is responsible for child protective services policy and practice standards. The bureau also manages child welfare and child abuse/neglect prevention services; monitors federal and state legislation related to child welfare; supports cross-system services that benefit children and youth in the child welfare system; manages

family violence prevention and intervention programs; and oversees child-welfare staff and provider professional-development activities.

**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 (CIP).

**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.

**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 on state child welfare planning.

**DSP** = Division of Safety and Permanence oversees the statewide child welfare and community-based youth justice systems.

**eWiSACWIS** = Wisconsin Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS 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 Database.

**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, qualified residential treatment programs 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.

**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; provides services for youth ages 18-23 who are no longer in out-of-home care.

**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.

**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

In this document, the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) provides its first annual update on Wisconsin's 2025 – 2029 Children and Family Services Plan (CFSP). This Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) describes the achievements made since the submission of the CFSP and Wisconsin's plan over the next year to advance its goals and objectives in support of Wisconsin's vision for its child welfare system.

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

Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF)  
201 West Washington Avenue  
P.O. Box 8916  
Madison, WI 53703

DCF is the state agency that oversees local county administration of these programs to assist children and families, except in Milwaukee County where administration remains with the state. 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, 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 systems to dramatically increase the proportion of children supported in their homes and communities.
4. Dedicating additional resources to support success for all youth, in particular, teenage girls, children with complex care needs and youth ages 18-23 exiting 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.

## **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 & 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 foster homes, child placing agencies, group homes, shelter care facilities, residential care centers and qualified residential treatment programs for children and

youth. The bureau provides policy guidance and statewide leadership on foster care, guardianship and kinship care programs.

BPOHC also 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 Compliance, Research and Analytics

The Bureau of Compliance, Research and Analytics (BCRA) within DSP is responsible for the oversight and management of data analytics and program integrity of Division of Safety and Permanence programs and policies related to child welfare to ensure 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 of Safety and Permanence (DSP), 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 system-wide collaboration 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 and child support)

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.

---

### Contact Person for the Children and Family Services Plan

John Elliott, Division Administrator  
Division of Safety and Permanence  
Department of Children and Families  
201 West Washington Avenue  
P.O. Box 8916  
Madison, WI 53703  
Phone (608) 422-6894  
Fax (608) 266-5547  
Email: [John.Elliott@wisconsin.gov](mailto:John.Elliott@wisconsin.gov)

## Collaboration

DCF continues to build on its extensive and established collaboration network that serves as the hallmark of DCF operations to coordinate the state child welfare system. Of particular significance over the last year has been DCF's continued efforts around its Putting Families First system transformation efforts and a stronger emphasis on the meaningful and systematic involvement of those most impacted by the child welfare system as required under 45 CFR 1357.15(d)(1).

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 and ongoing input from counties, tribes and other external partner organizations on DCF's Putting Families First strategic planning process, including 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).
- Engaging individuals, youth and families who are involved or have experience with the child welfare system in policy 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's continued efforts to outline and implement its Putting Families First vision and meet key requirements of FFPSA.
- 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.

- Soliciting input on federal and state plans and reviews, in part by sharing relevant federal, state and administrative data regarding child welfare system trends and issues, to prioritize data-driven decision-making.

The requirements of the Family First Prevention and Service Act continue to drive Wisconsin work and are encompassed in initiatives throughout this CFSP. Over the next year DCF will ensure external partners understand the why, what and how its Putting Families First approach advance these priorities.

### *Collaboration to Support State Policies and Programs*

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

These efforts include representation at councils and workgroups described throughout this section and ongoing communication with county child welfare agencies. Department regional meetings for local child welfare agency foster care coordinators, child welfare program supervisors and fiscal managers provide policy and procedure updates and 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.

DCF continues to 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 collaborate with children, youth and parents who are involved or have experience with the child welfare system throughout this period to offer continuous system improvements and identify service gaps, as detailed in the paragraphs below.

### *Collaboration to Strengthen the Voice of Children, Youth and Parents who are Involved or have Experience with the Child Welfare System.*

DCF continues ongoing efforts with the goal of more effectively and systematically elevating and incorporating the voice of children, youth and parents who are involved or have experience with the child welfare system in DCF policies and programs in alignment with Putting Families First as required under 45 CFR 1357.15(d)(1).

### *Child Welfare Parent Leaders Workgroup*

The Office of Children's Mental Health and DCF's coordinator meet monthly with parents across the state who were involved with the children welfare system 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, seek 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.

### *Youth Advisory Council*

DCF supports and provides oversight of the Wisconsin Youth Advisory Council (YAC). 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 empowers members to draw attention to the needs of youth in the child welfare system and advocates for solutions to address these needs. In May 2025, YAC hosted its third Legislative Day to provide members civic education and the opportunity to advocate for change in the child welfare system through conversations with legislators on important issues. At this event, members were also given the opportunity to connect with policy staff and others with foster care experience to share their initiatives.

DCF will continue to support local and statewide YACs to participate in similar future opportunities.

### *Youth Leadership Teams*

The purpose of DCF's Youth Leadership Team (YLT) is to support youth across the state who have been engaged with the youth justice system (past or present) and want to share their perspectives, provide input to DCF and strengthen 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.

Adult supporters assist in youth participant recruitment and engagement, transport youth to and from meetings (when meetings were held in-person four times per year) and help youth overcome any barriers to attending virtual meetings. The expansion of virtual capabilities has increased youth participation in rural areas across Wisconsin.

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.

In 2024, DCF staff sought feedback to inform youth justice training curriculum development and in 2025 regarding the case planning process. DCF will continue to support and consult with these advisory bodies to ensure broad and consistent youth voice in DCF policies and programs.

#### *Relative Caregiver Stakeholders*

DCF formed a statewide team of relative caregivers with varying caregiving experience and levels of child welfare system involvement to actively partner with and provide their perspective on DCF's strategic initiatives. The group meets virtually on a quarterly basis and the members participate in other opportunities to share their experiences throughout DCF as desired. Caregivers 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 the 2025 - 2029 CFSP and subsequent APSRs.

DCF will continue to expand these feedback loops through its ongoing National Youth and Transition Database (NYTD) Improvement Plan process, the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) site visit and CCWIS review in 2025 and the Round 4 Children and Family Services Review (CFSR) in 2026.

In addition to posting the 2025 - 2029 CFSP and subsequent APSRs online, DCF continues 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 inform DCF's overall vision, measure progress towards the goals and objectives of the 2025 -2029 CFSP and will continue to support ongoing strategic planning.

---

#### **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 and representatives from the K-12 educational, mental health and alcohol and other drug abuse (AODA) systems. Its members come from varied professional fields and meetings are open to the 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. This includes using Milwaukee-specific child welfare performance data and processes outcome measures to evaluate its effectiveness and funding priorities through semi-annual reporting

More information on the Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council and its meetings 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.

DCF continues to 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, through an Educational Stability Workgroup to improve educational outcomes of children in child welfare and coordinate services and supports that enhance educational needs. Together, DCF and DPI provide an annual overview and regular technical assistance to local child welfare and education agencies on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), including the Education Passport: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/essa/pdf/essa-guide.pdf>.

On November 15, 2024, new federal Non-Regulatory Guidance: Ensuring Educational Stability and Success for Students in Foster Care was released. It updated previous joint guidance from 2016 and provided critical new information on how federal laws support students in out-of-home care. DCF and DPI are updating Wisconsin's current resources on educational stability for students in response.

Collaborative work in the last year has centered around improving resources to support school-based and child welfare agency-based points of contact:

- In April 2024, an ESSA Overview presentation was given to roughly 160 child welfare professionals and out-of-home care providers across the state.
- In September 2024, a Back-to-School Lunch and Learn for education and child welfare points of contact was offered with over 200 attendees from 60 counties attending. The presentation was recorded and posted to DPI's YouTube channel to be shared with new points of contact throughout the year: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tDWfEsjJk7o>. Survey responses from registrants prior to the webinar guided the provision of information and identified areas of local collaborative success and struggle to be included in future workgroup resources.
- From September - October 2024, Members of the Educational Stability Workgroup participated in DPI's "Understanding Youth Serving-Systems for School Staff" series: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/safe-schools>, presenting on Wisconsin's Youth Justice (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhx4-h5wruk>) and Out-of-Home Care (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tDWfEsjJk7o>) systems. A key objective of both presentations was to develop understanding of child welfare related systems to improve collaborative efforts between Wisconsin districts and child welfare agencies.
- Throughout the year, workgroup members provided technical assistance to schools and child welfare agencies, answered questions about educational stability protections outlined in ESSA and supported points of contact through disputes.

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 continues to provide funding for Fostering Success programs through the University of Wisconsin System to offer tangible support, resources, guidance and community to students with foster care experience. Currently, ten UW campuses have a Fostering Success program, with one more under development.

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. Support includes information and resource sharing, collaborative planning, and joint events and meetings. 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 student academic retention and success.

DCF will continue to assess 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) and the Department of Health Services (DHS) for the purpose of ensuring that young children have access to high-quality learning opportunities and other holistic family supports, such as home visiting. An example of coordination in this area includes the Governor’s Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) which is co-chaired by the DCF secretary and DPI superintendent, with DHS serving as an appointed member. DSP’s policy initiatives advisor and the executive director of the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board (CANPB) are also two recent appointees. The ECAC’s mission is “to help ensure that all children and families in Wisconsin have access to early childhood programs and services.” The council is comprised of public and private leaders that provide advice on the strategic direction for the state’s efforts to promote early childhood development through a cross-system agenda with the overall goal of having all young children be safe, healthy and successful. Through this continued inter- and cross-agency collaboration, DCF anticipates other potential areas of overlap and focus between child welfare and early childhood systems could be elevated and discussed by this advisory body over the next year.

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 and collaborates with home visiting and prevention programs, as needed, to ensure children grow up in safe, stable and nurturing families and communities.

---

#### COLLABORATION TO SUPPORT THE CHILD WELFARE WORKFORCE

DCF’s Bureau of Regional Operations (BRO) supports 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, programs and initiatives. BRO will regularly share policy updates, review data and engage in practice discussions 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. BRO also engages with counties on a one-to-one basis during on-site monitoring meetings, which allow for deeper discussions about individual county practice, performance, successes and challenges.

DCF collaborates with the Wisconsin County Human Services Association's (WCHSA) Children, Youth and Families Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) as a mechanism for engagement with the counties and solicitation of feedback. 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.

---

### 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 year, DCF expects all panels to fulfill their responsibilities as required by CAPTA regarding meetings, mission and submission of annual reports. Each county-based panel receives approximately \$10,000 in CAPTA funds per year to support their activities.

The panels engage in and coordinate local activities, most having county agency members, evaluate state and local child welfare agency policies and make annual policy and practice recommendations for system improvement. They can also choose to review specific cases, including child fatalities and near fatalities. Lastly, the panels benefit from attending the national conference, where they can make connections, learn about other states' CRP initiatives and bring ideas back to Wisconsin.

In alignment with DCF's Putting Families First approach, panels advocate for better outcomes for children, youth and families in their communities. The DCF coordinator organizes quarterly meetings for panel chairs and co-chairs and an annual informational meeting for all members to provide ongoing opportunities for collaboration and consultation with one another.

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>.

---

### COURT SYSTEM COLLABORATION

DCF collaborates with the Children's Court Improvement Project (CCIP), and the court system overall, in multiple ways for the purpose of ongoing coordination with judicial and legal partners 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 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 multi-disciplinary Commission also convenes separate subcommittees to address issues such as permanency outcomes, child safety decision-making and the educational challenges faced by children and youth in out-of-home care. Recently a Family Engagement and Representations Subcommittee was created to focus on improving the legal and judicial experiences of parent and families working within the child welfare system.

---

### Joint Projects

The two entities regularly engage in joint child welfare program planning, policy and legislative development and program improvement activities. Current projects include 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 Tailored Dispositional Orders Project was piloted in three counties and is being expanded statewide. Utilizing the SMART goals framework it collaboratively brings together county and tribal child welfare agencies and court and legal partners to improve Conditions for Return in CHIPS cases and/or Conditions of Supervision in Youth Justice cases. In CHIPS cases, the project tailors the Conditions for Return to safety and identifies a parent's needed behavior changes to safely return the child to the home. In Youth Justice cases, the project seeks to reduce the number of conditions while promoting individualized conditions that highlight behavior changes through a balance of sanctions and rewards. Project accomplishments are shared at interdisciplinary conferences, trainings and meetings to encourage new counties to participate.

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 include informing county agencies and courts of available funding, providing technical assistance, exploring ways to implement an interdisciplinary practice model and monitoring county programs. Lastly, DCF continues to assess implementation of title IV-E reimbursement in civil legal proceedings necessary to carry out the state title IV-E plan.

The WICWA Continuous Quality Improvement Project assesses compliance with WICWA and the achievement of project's goals through onsite county file reviews, focus groups and surveys. DCF and CCIP staff will continue to review and conduct follow-up trainings in the counties with the highest number of circuit court cases subject to WICWA. See the Additional System Quality Improvement Initiatives section for additional information.

---

### Training

The biennial Conference on Child Welfare and the Courts, co-sponsored by CCIP and DCF, brings county, tribal and state leadership together to advance sustainable solutions to improve the lives of children and families. Attendees form joint county and tribal teams to review select child welfare agency and court datasets 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, eight tribes and multiple state agencies. Planning currently is underway for the September 2025 Conference on Child Welfare and the Courts

which will include sessions focused on preserving connections to improve the lives of children and families.

In the fall of 2024, CCIP invited DCF staff to participate in the planning and presentation of the first Wisconsin Summit on Domestic Violence and Child Welfare, attended by over 300 people. Due to its success, collaborative planning has started for the next summit, now scheduled to be a regular biennial interdisciplinary training.

CCIP provides legal trainings to caseworkers through DCF's contracted Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS). CCIP is currently providing four trainings on CHIPS and Minor Guardianships and four on Termination of Parental Rights to county and tribal caseworkers and supervisors throughout the state on an annual basis. These in-person and virtual trainings focus on court procedures, defining legal terms, which circuit court forms should be filed and testifying tips for caseworkers. They 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, the Elevating Family Voice Subcommittee was convened to elevate the voice of children, parents and caregivers. Future plans include a legal counsel impact study on children, youth and parents who are involved or have experience with the child welfare system.

CCIP sponsors the multi-disciplinary Judicial Engagement Team (JET) initiative in 12 counties and DCF child welfare regional coordinators are invited to those 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. A JET All Sites meeting will be held in October 2025 to allow all JET counties to learn from one another.

DCF continues 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 a stronger emphasis on the meaningful and systematic involvement of children, youth and parents who are involved or have experience with the child welfare system, DCF's Putting Families

First efforts, revisions to the safety intervention standards, Family Legal Advocacy and Supports program, preparing and implementing the new like-kin licensing rule, the Quality Case Planning (QCP) Project, Qualified Residential Treatment Program claiming and practice and addressing child behavioral health needs.

---

#### DCF Committees

The DCF Judicial Workgroup is currently staffed by DCF's Bureau of Youth Services and facilitates efforts in coordination with CCIP. Members advise DCF on efforts to pilot tailored and effective court orders in youth justice and child welfare. This group will continue to provide additional expertise related to youth justice initiatives, issues, policies and legislation and assist in efforts to evaluate and measure the effects of the Tailored Dispositional Orders Project.

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 at the University of Wisconsin Law School (a pre-petition legal clinic designed to keep families out of the formal child welfare system); presenting at the monthly statewide Permanency Collaborative; 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 continues 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, required under sections 107(b)(2) and 107(c)(1) of CAPTA since 1991, as 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 Wisconsin initiatives Wisconsin to address each area.

---

#### 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.

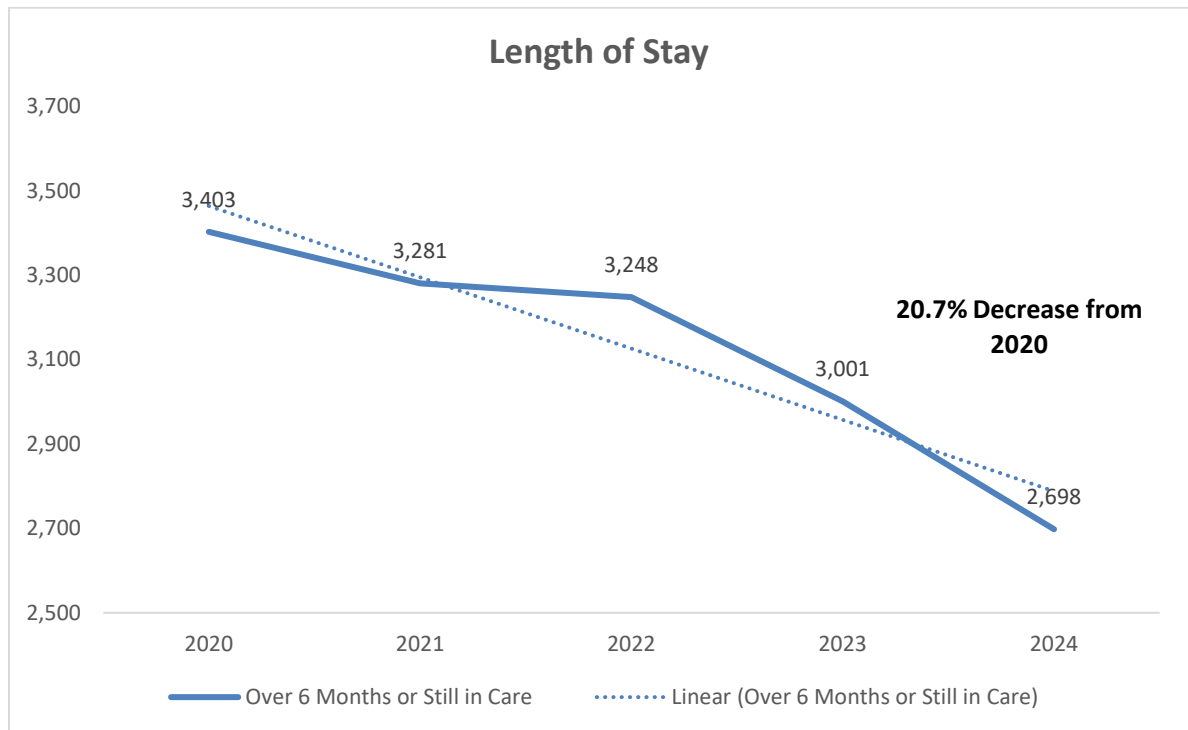
---

#### Current Performance Overview

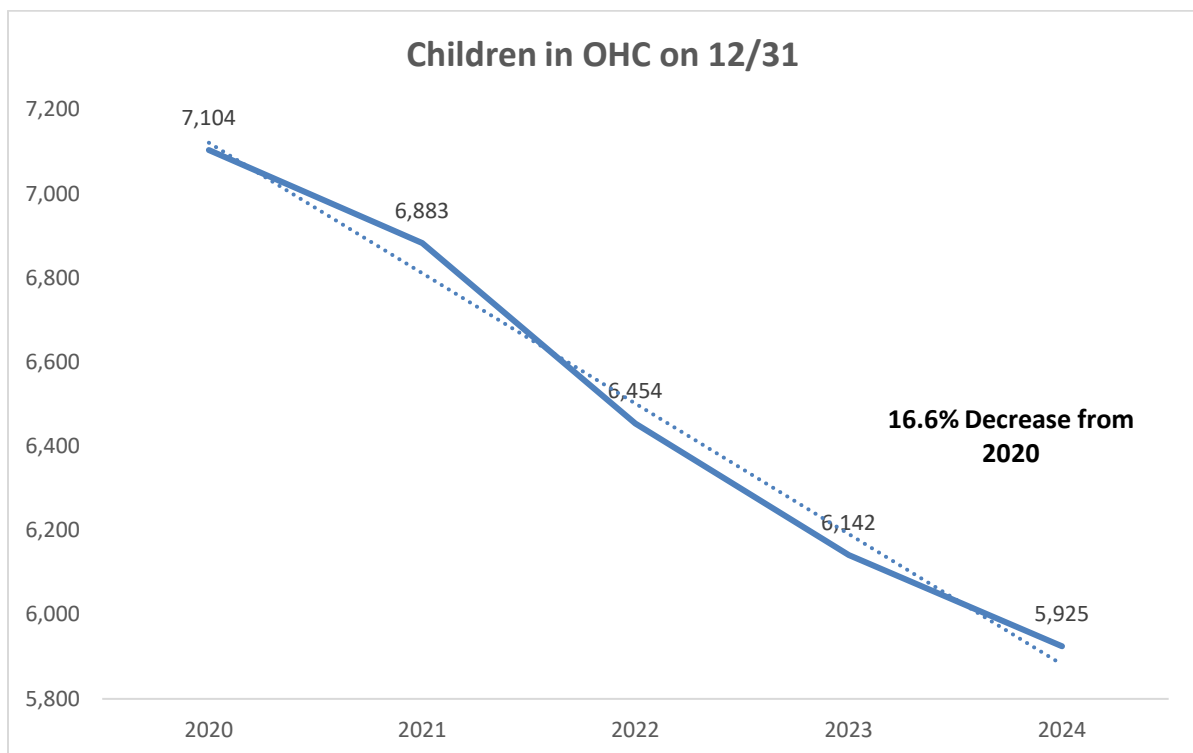
Over the past five years, Wisconsin saw a decline in the number of children staying in care longer than six months and in out-of-home care (OHC) cases overall. This was accompanied by a proportional increase in the number of children placed with relatives and achieving permanency through guardianship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



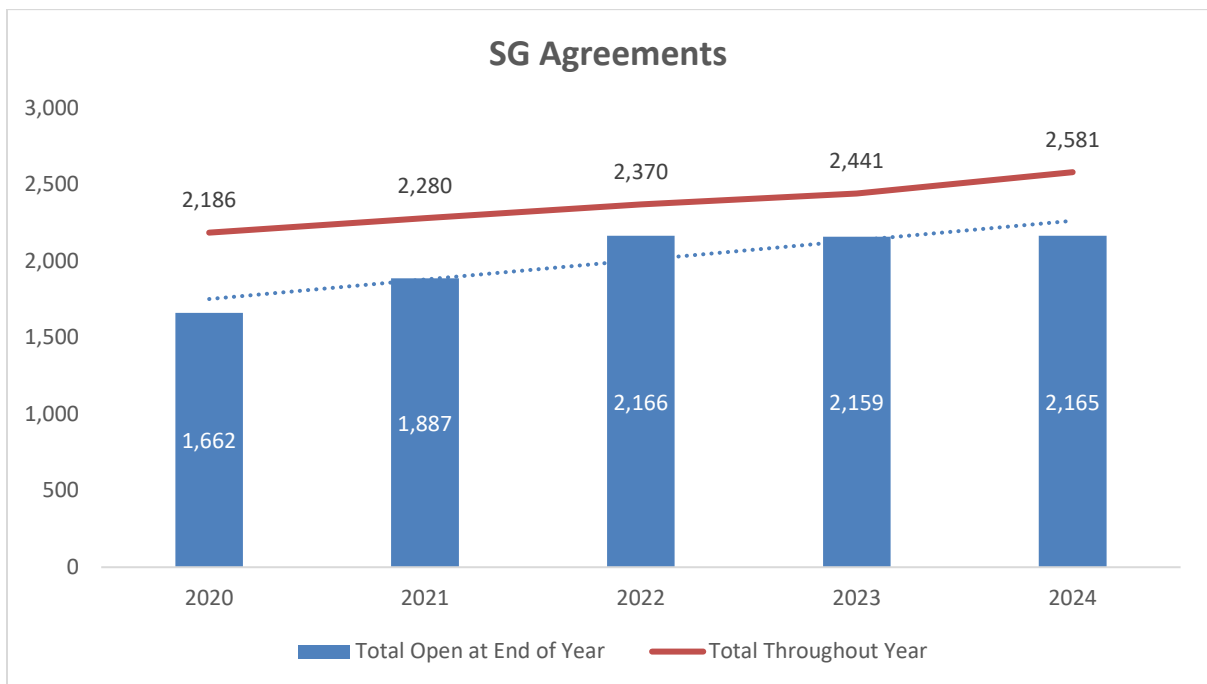
*Length of Stay: Children that Entered OHC within a Calendar Year (CY) and Discharged or Remained in OHC at the end of the Year:*



*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 DCF expects to continue to see fewer children in OHC over the next year.

## 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 CFSR Round 3 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.**

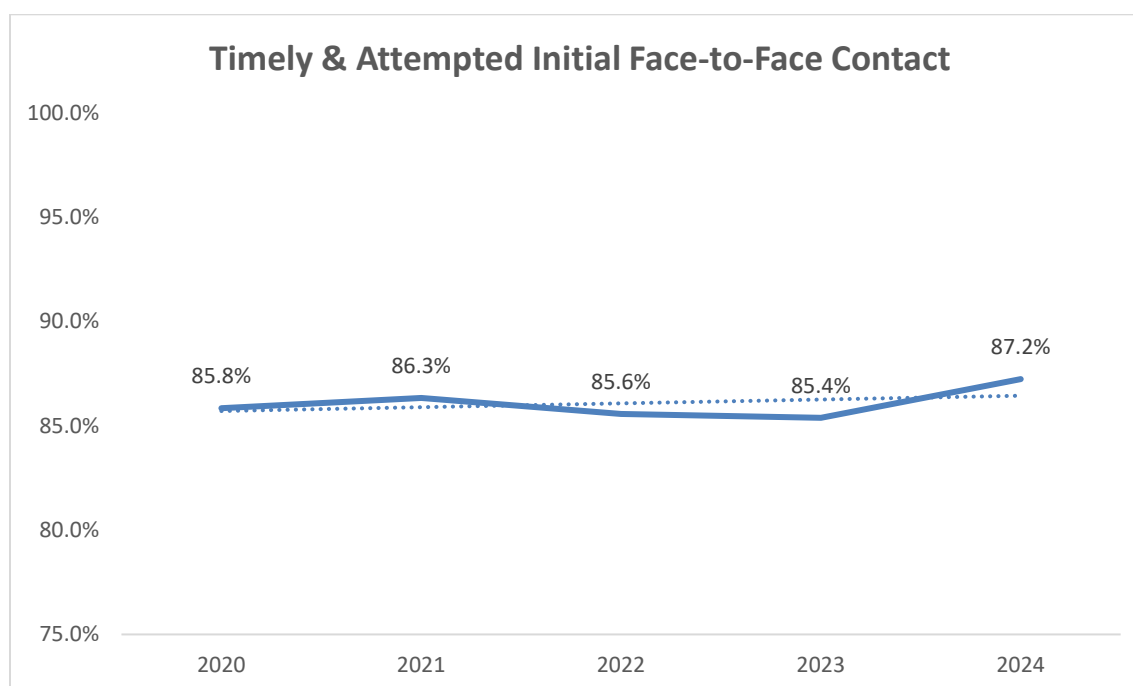
*Were the agency's responses to all **accepted child maltreatment reports initiated**, and **face-to-face contact** with the child(ren) made, within the time frames established by agency policies or state statutes?*

	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)
<b>Item 1</b>	93%	75%	74%	77%	81%

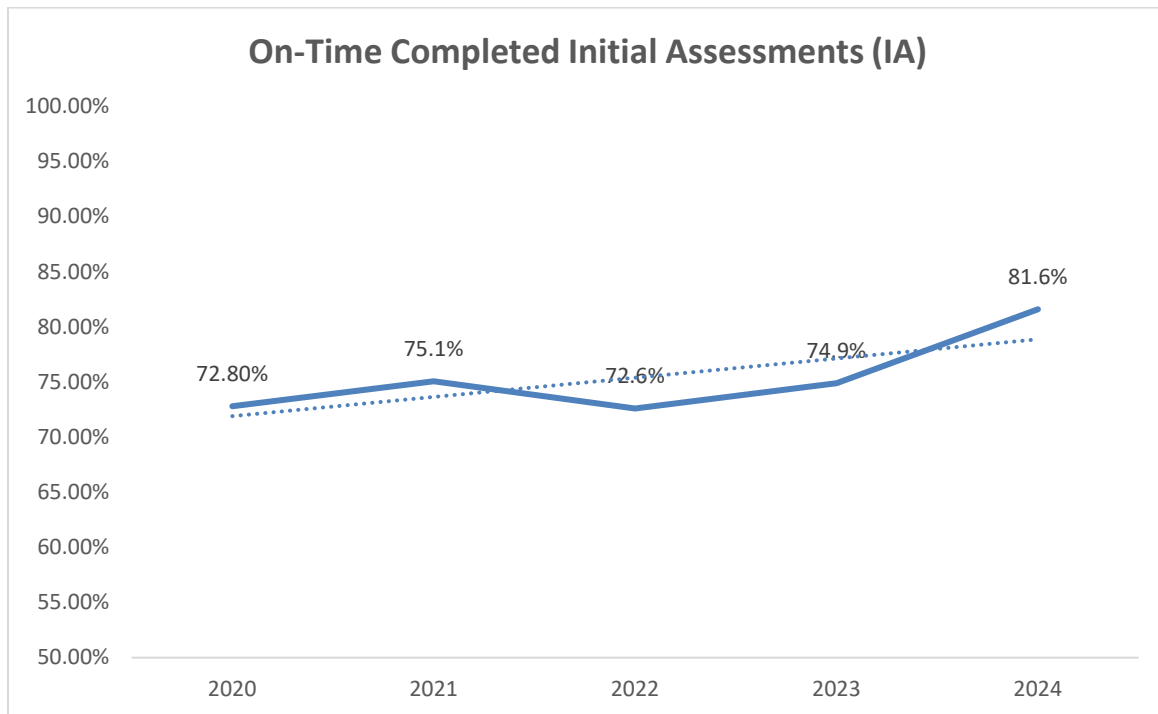
*\*Wisconsin Non-Overlapping Period (NOP) ran from 6/1/22 through 11/30/23.*

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.

### Administrative Caseworker Contact Data



	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Timely Face-to-Face Contact	18,061	17,658	17,343	16,187	16,073
Attempted Timely Face-to-Face Contact	1,413	1,494	1,393	1,364	1,118
Total Initial Assessments (IA) Completed	22,684	22,180	21,893	20,554	19,704

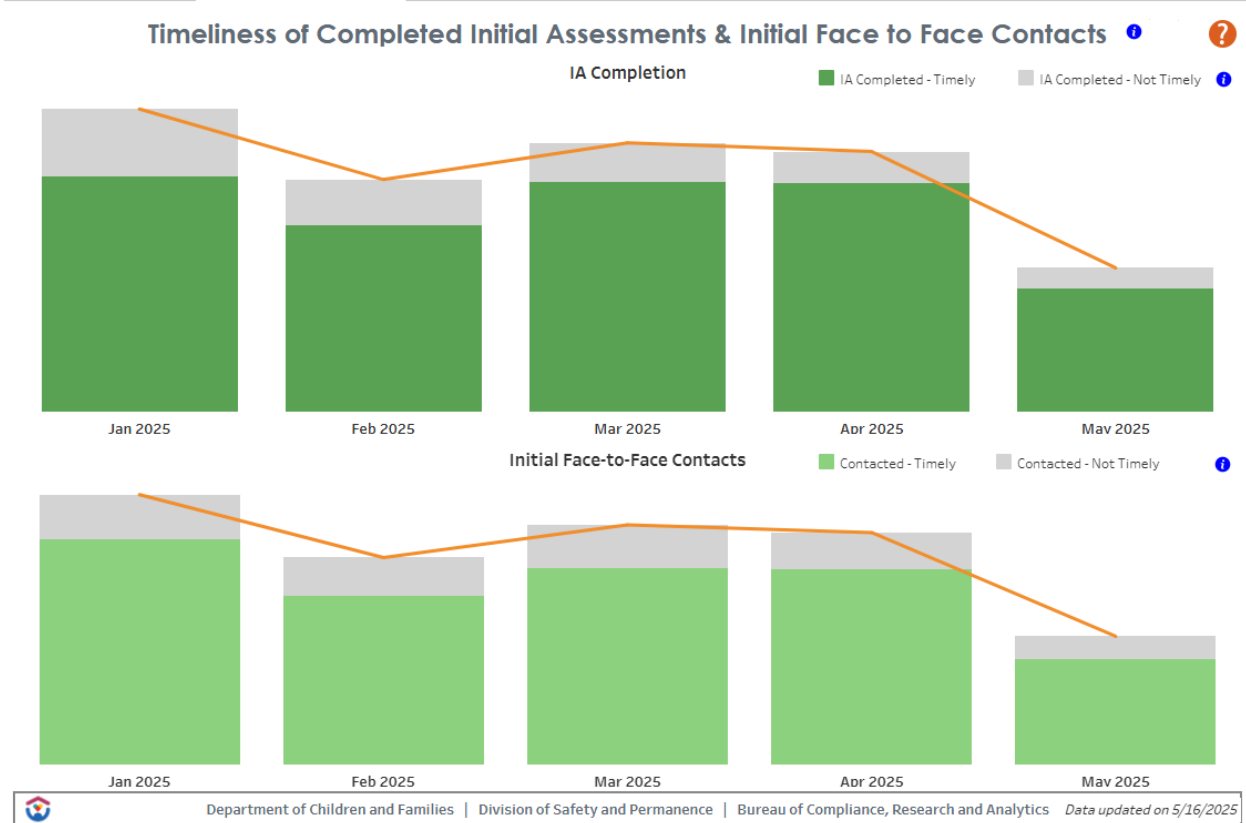


	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
On Time IAs	16,512	16,650	15,890	15,400	16,073
Total IAs Completed	22,684	22,180	21,893	20,554	19,704

The timely completion of Initial Assessments is an important safety measure to protect children and DCF continues working with local agencies to ensure the upward trend reflected in the data above continues. Efforts include:

- Creation of a Face-to-Face Contact Requirement Tip Sheet:  
<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/5536.pdf>
- An Access Response Pilot between DSP, DMCPs and 10 local agencies to explore ways of making the process clearer and more consistent, including:
  - Using a list of factors to determine the response time for screened-in CPS reports, instead of present or impending danger threat criteria.
  - Responding within 24 hours or five business days, instead of same day, 24-48 hour, five business days response times.

## Initial Assessment Dashboard



**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)
<b>Item 2</b>	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.

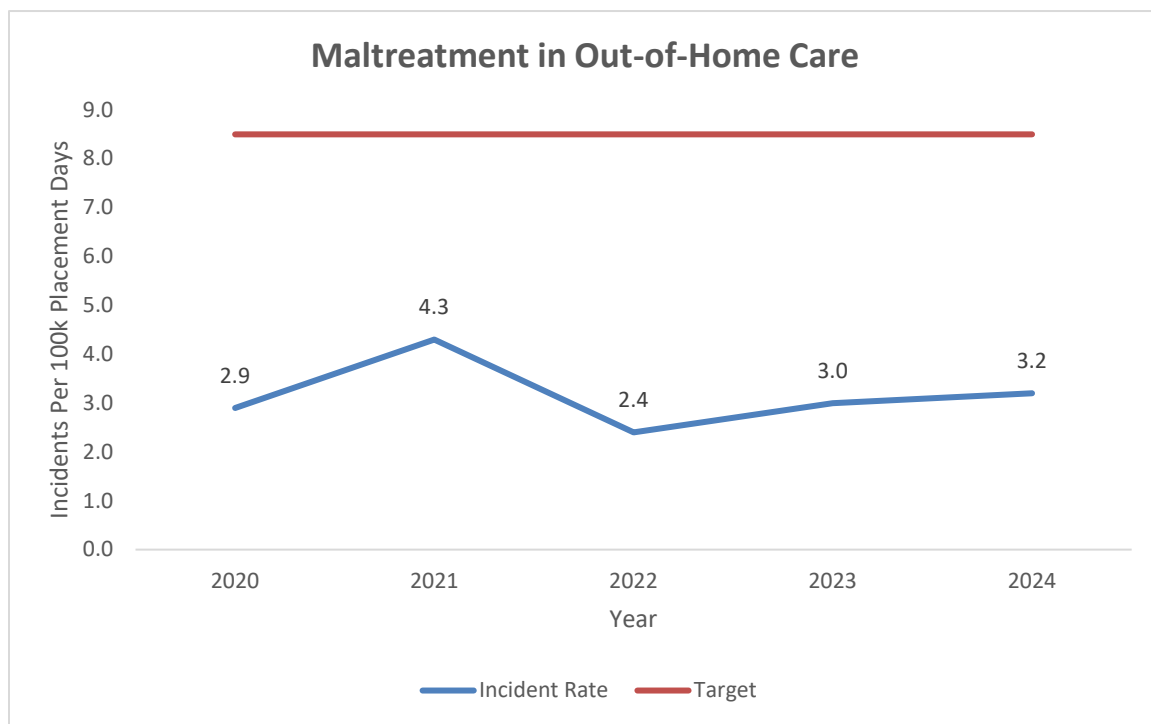
### Item 3: Risk and Safety Assessment and Management.

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)
<b>Item 3</b>	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.

Initial Assessments (IA) are complex with many case/family circumstances, caseworker style and experience and county preference nuances that impact the length of time an assessment remains open. A recent WI Case Review process dedicated around IA focus group participants supported maintaining WI's 60-day IA completion requirement and highlighted a hesitancy to reduce the time for assessment, even in circumstances when children are safe, and maltreatment is unsubstantiated. This timeframe allows for some local discretion to complete faster based on consideration of other workload cases and ensure a thorough assessment is conducted.

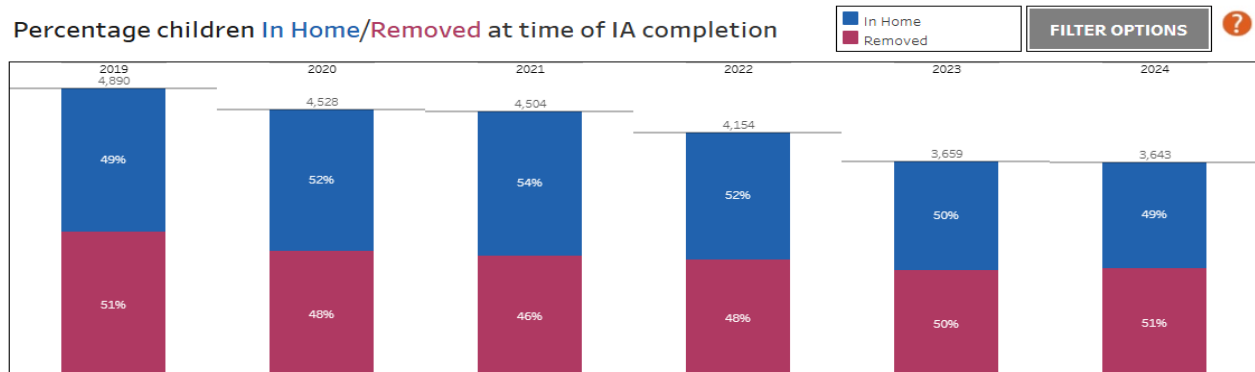
## Administrative Initial Assessment Data

Safety Decision by Initial Assessment (IA) Disposition for Primary Caregiver CPS Initial Assessments: Calendar Year (CY) 2024

Initial Assessment Disposition	Safe		Unsafe		Total	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Case Closed	14,935	85.50%	134	0.77%	15,069	86.27%
Case Opened	347	1.99%	1,773	10.15%	2,120	12.14%
Case Already Opened	136	0.78%	143	0.82%	279	1.60%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,418</b>	<b>88.26%</b>	<b>2,050</b>	<b>11.74%</b>	<b>17,468</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

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.

## Child Welfare Implementation Support Metrics Dashboard



## 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 2024 Data:*

	CSE	RCSE
Amount Due:	2,356	2,448
Completed:	1,862	2,448
Completed Timely:	689	1,361



### 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, 2024, to December 31, 2024.

Risk Management Services	Child/Provider Match Category							
	LOC Exceeds LON (n= 239)		LOC matches LON (n=469)		LON exceeds LOC (n=303)		N/A (n=45)	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Special Training	105	43.9%	126	26.9%	54	17.8%	80	19.8%
Additional Contact	62	25.9%	118	25.2%	110	36.3%	93	23.0%
Rearrange Living	27	11.3%	64	13.6%	49	16.2%	41	10.1%
Closer Supervision	170	71.1%	274	58.4%	186	61.4%	210	51.9%
Additional Rules	36	15.1%	49	10.4%	39	12.9%	43	10.6%
Special Equipment	21	8.8%	36	7.7%	24	7.9%	30	7.4%

### Safety Outcomes Strengths and Challenges

DCF continues to orient the child welfare system toward the goal of keeping children with their families and supported in their homes and communities and the safety data captured throughout this section provides a way of looking at Wisconsin's ability to achieve that goal. 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.

Challenges pertaining to timely Initial Assessments come up infrequently and sporadically. Regional BRO coordinators follow-up with counties when timely completion numbers dip abnormally low to discover the cause and offer support. Common reasons for Initial Assessments not being completed in a timely manner are 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

- 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 continues 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.
- DCF conducted Targeted Case Reviews looking at Quality Case Planning for in-home cases and the intersect of Home Visiting and Child Welfare.
- 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.

## Permanency Outcomes 1 and 2

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

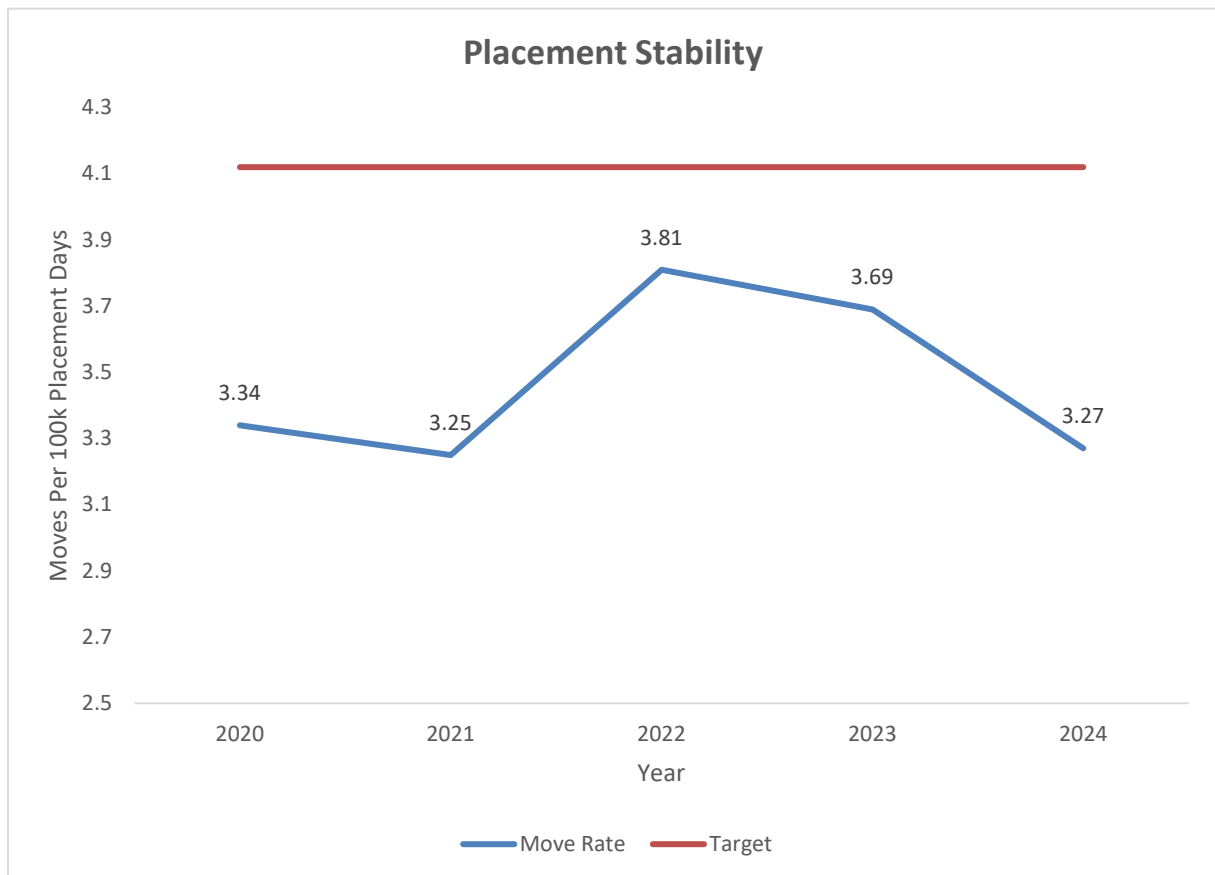
#### Item 4: Stability of Foster Care Placement.

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%

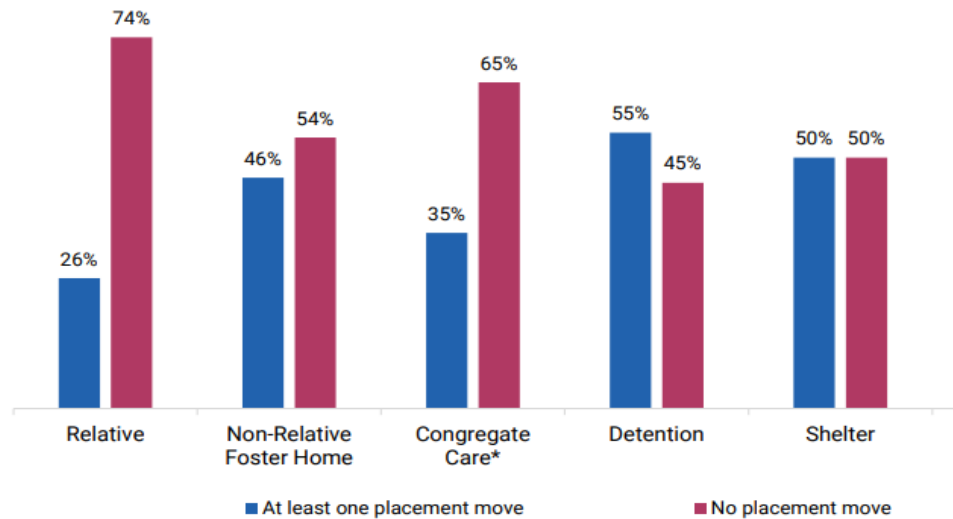
\*Wisconsin Non-Overlapping Period (NOP) ran from 6/1/22 through 11/30/23.

#### National Performance Data-CFSR 3 Measures



Recent data shows that Wisconsin remains consistently well below the national benchmark for Placement Stability.

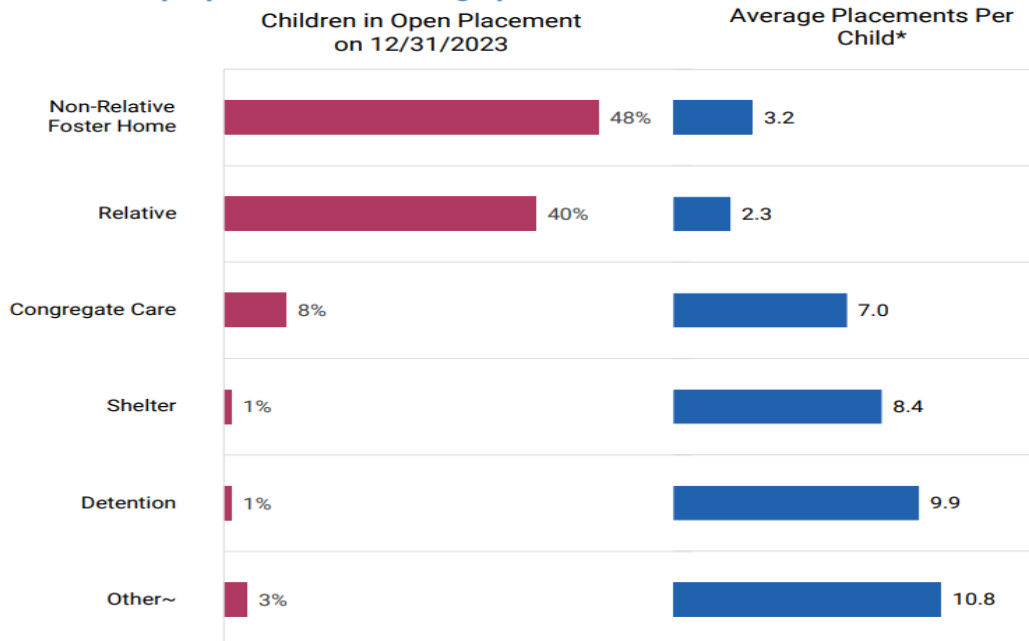
## Children's stability in OHC impacted by initial placement



\*Congregate care placements include RCCs and Group Homes

In 2023, children initially placed with a non-relative foster home changed placements twice as often as children initially placed with a relative. Every move a child makes in OHC is a change to their structure and routine and research shows that children placed with relatives are more likely to be placed with their siblings and achieve permanency with family.

## Placement proportions and average placements

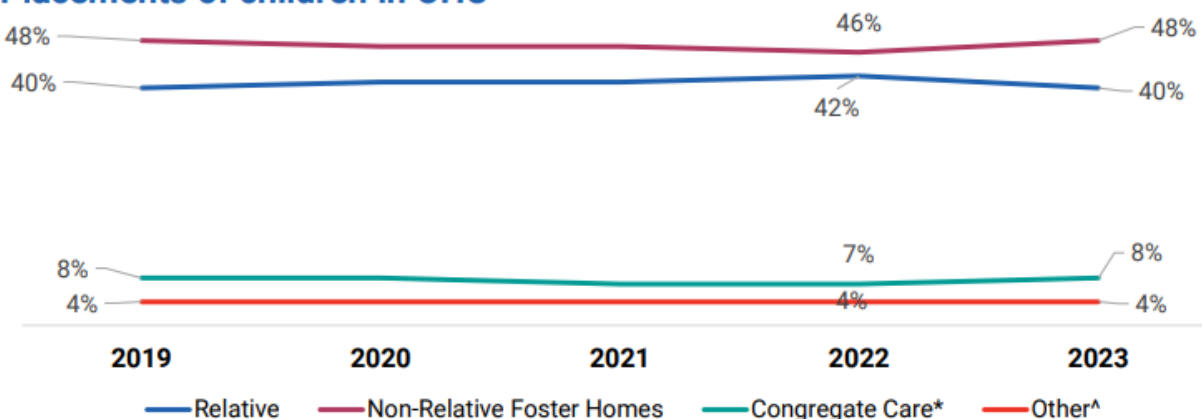


\*Congregate care placements include RCCs and Group Homes.

^Other placements include Institutions, Supervised Independent Living, and Missing from OHC placements.

The benefits of placing children with a relative are seen throughout a child's experience in OHC. Children in relative settings experienced the fewest placement moves. Of the children in OHC at the end of the year, those in relative foster homes experienced fewer placements throughout their time in OHC. Conversely, children experience more placements in their lifetime when placed in non-family settings.

### Placements of children in OHC



\*Congregate care placements include RCCs and Group Homes.

^Other placements include Institutions, Supervised Independent Living, and Missing from OHC placements.

DCF will continue to focus on and implement strategies to improve a child's stability in OHC over the next year.

### 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

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2023
<b>Adoption</b>	1,737	1,595	1,673	1,464	1,339
<b>Reunification</b>	5,271	4,962	4,692	4,620	4,504
<b>Guardianship</b>	1,079	1,003	989	836	799
<b>Permanent Placement with a Fit and Willing Relative</b>	93	85	91	74	74
<b>OPPLA</b>	320	312	273	274	277
<b>No Permanency Plan Goal Listed</b>	1,388	1,227	1,283	1,176	1,141
<b>Total</b>	9,888	9,184	9,001	8,444	8,134

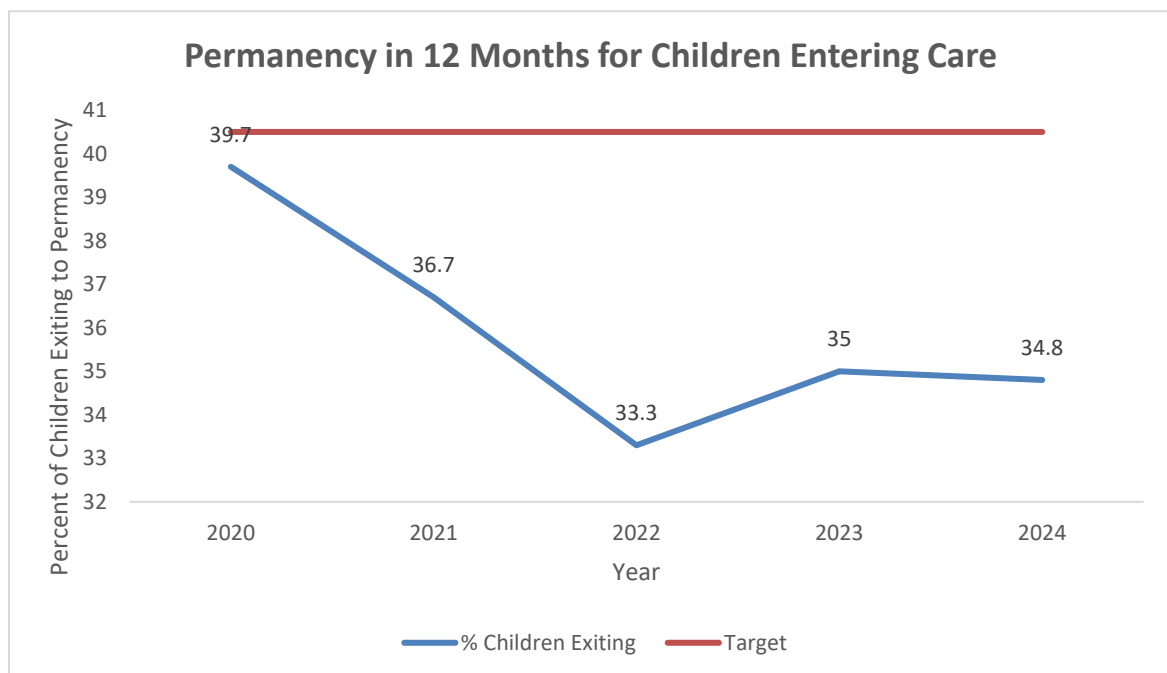
### Item 6: Achieving Reunification, Guardianship, Adoption, or Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement. Case Record Review Results.

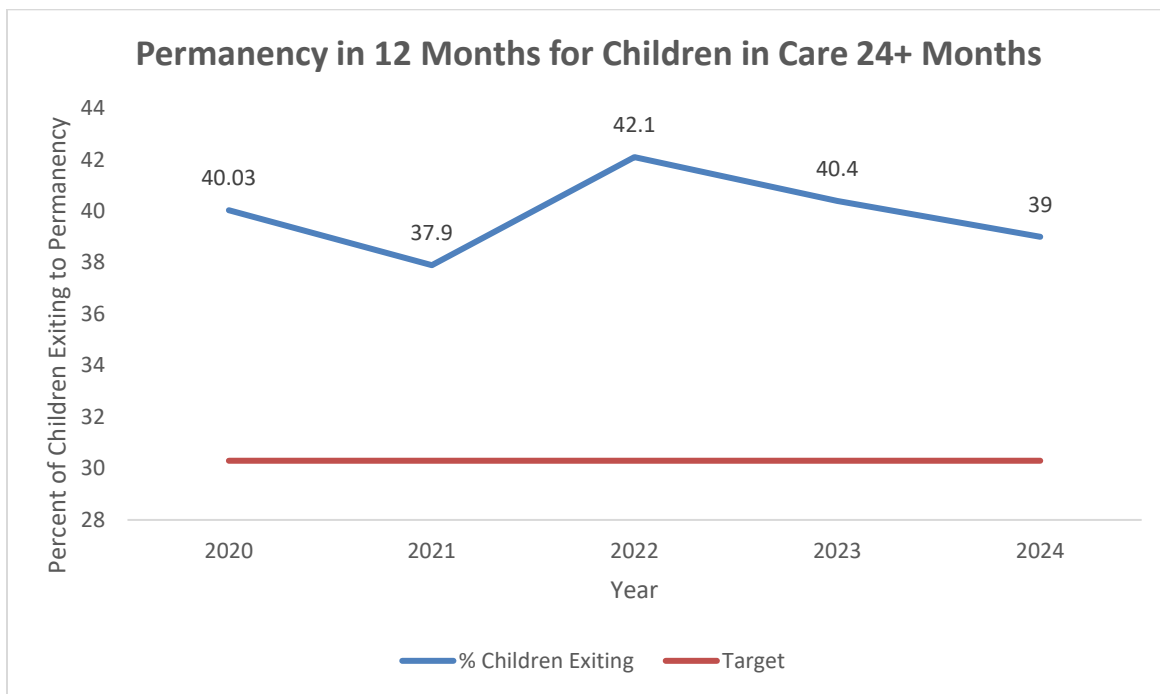
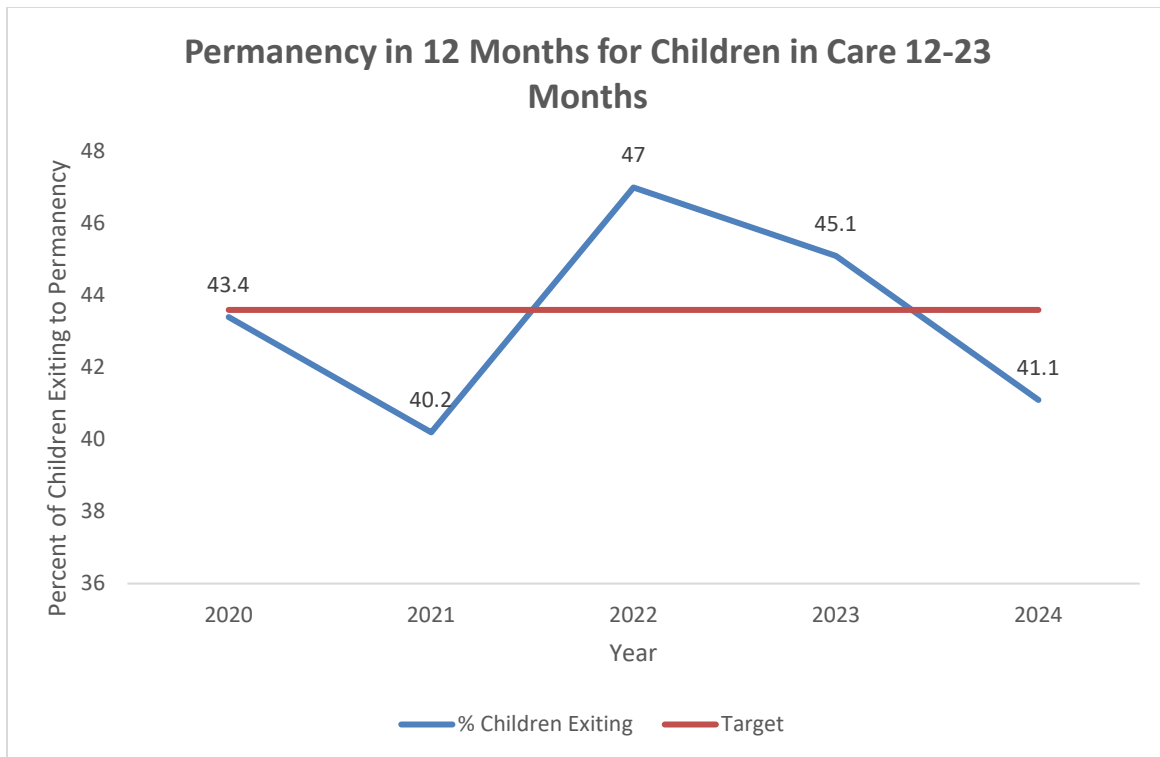
Did the Agency make concerted efforts to **achieve reunification, guardianship, adoption, or other planned permanent living arrangement** for the child?

	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)
<b>Item 6</b>	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

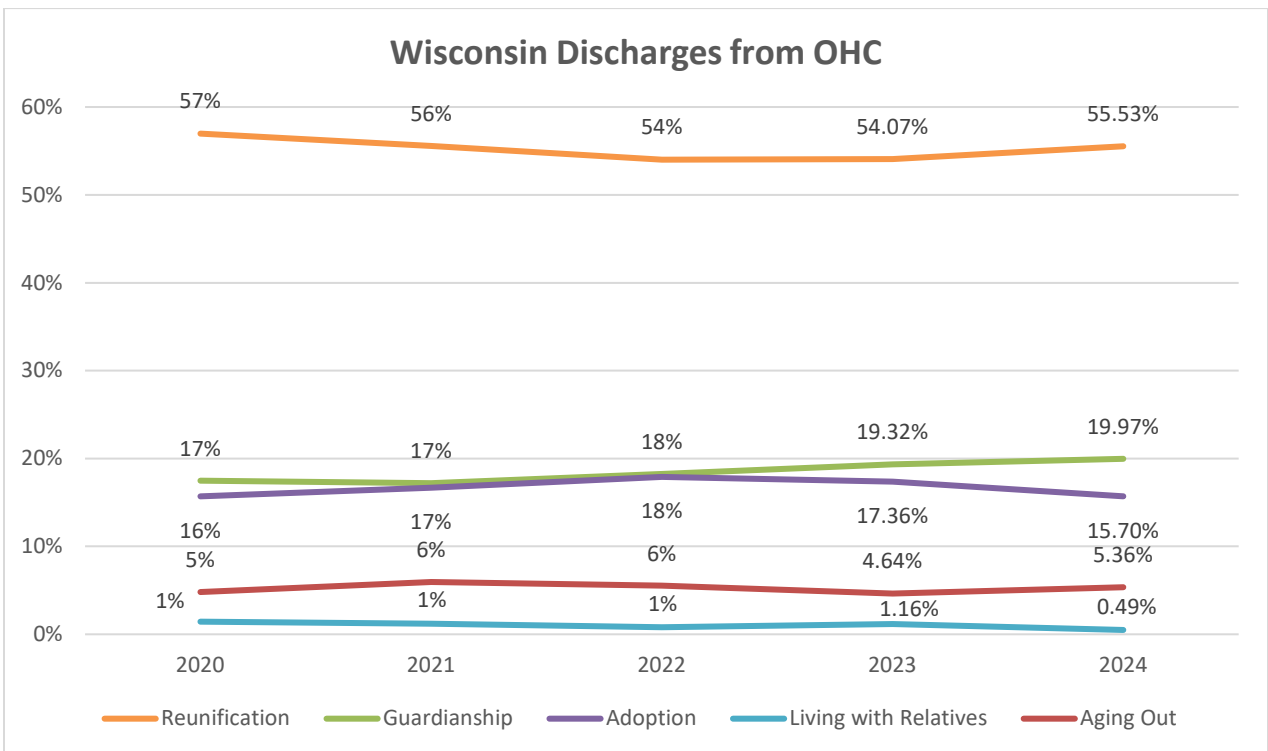
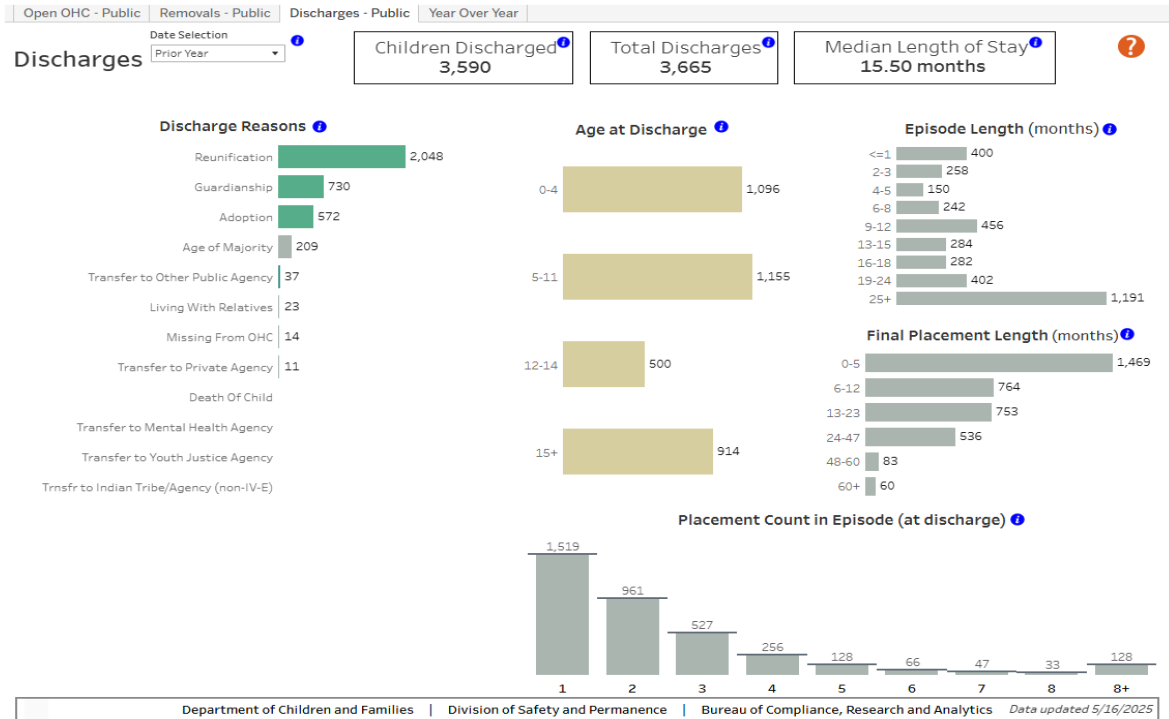




*\*Note, the X axis for the CFSR3 measures above notes performance during the CY Outcome Window.*

Wisconsin continues to focus on child reunification with a parent regardless of length of time in care through concurrent planning, in-home safety plan training and collaboration with the courts system. This approach promotes child permanency, though can delay timeliness and impact Wisconsin performance on the under 12-month statewide data indicator.

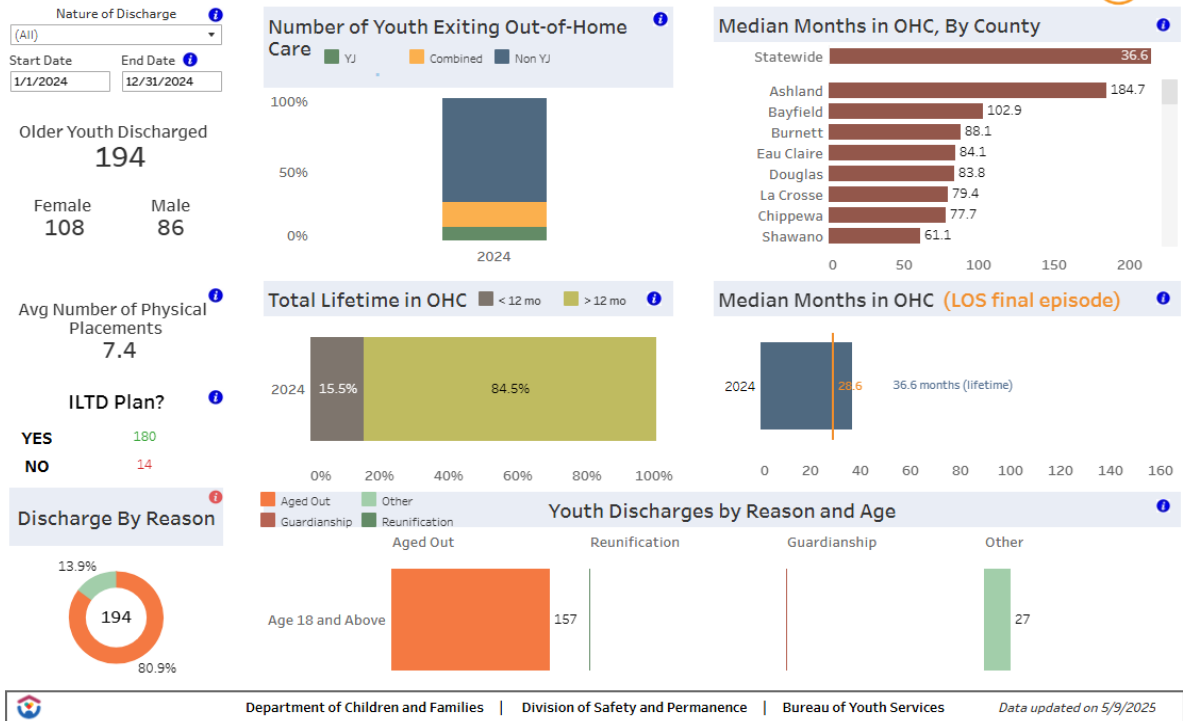
## OHC Discharge Dashboard





## Older Youth Outcomes Dashboard

### Older Youth Outcomes from 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2024



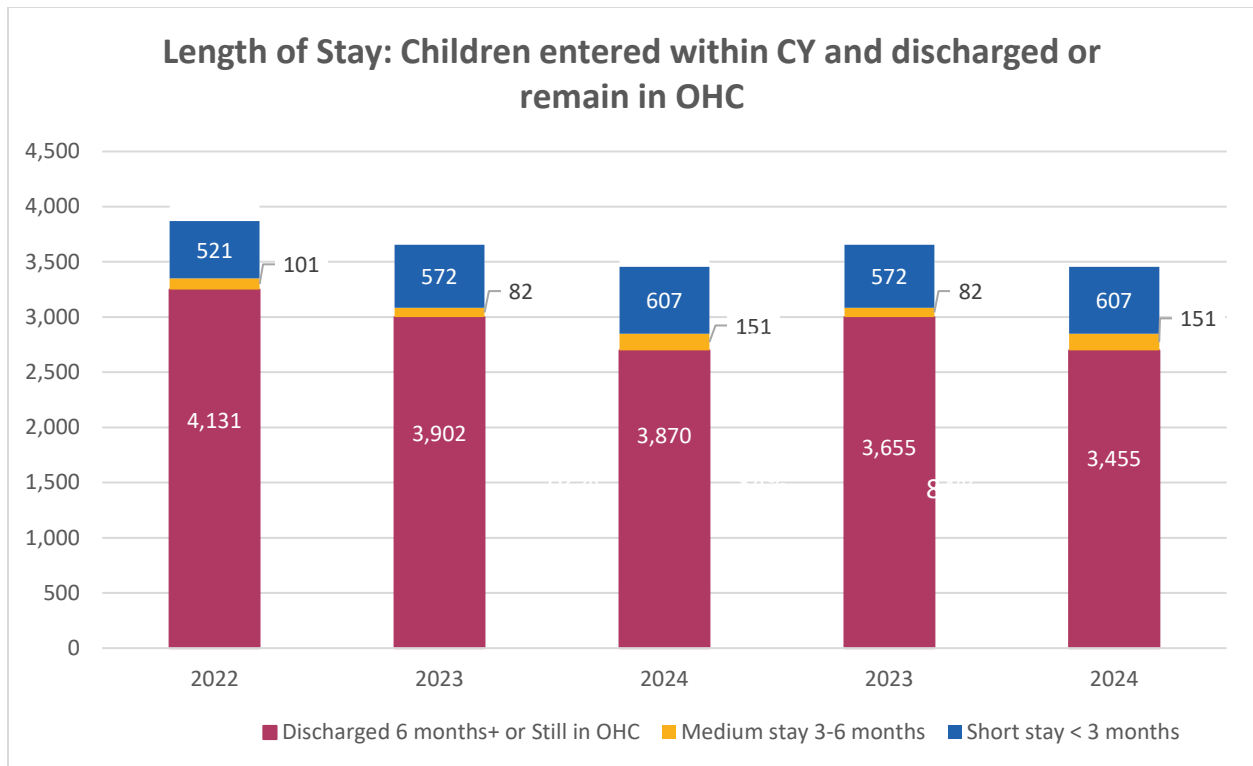
## Youth Discharge Comparison

	Youth Discharge Reason by Calendar Year				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Age Out	220	245	238	184	196
Guardianship	802	708	786	767	730
Total	4,590	4,117	4,305	3,969	3,656

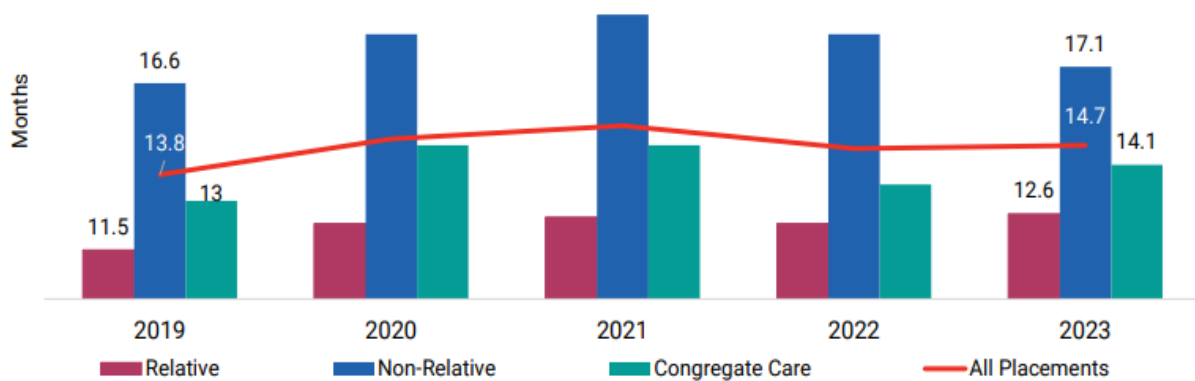
	Youth Discharge Reason Percentage by Calendar Year				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Age Out	4.79%	5.95%	5.53%	4.64%	5.36%
Guardianship	17.47%	17.20%	18.26%	19.32%	19.97%

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.

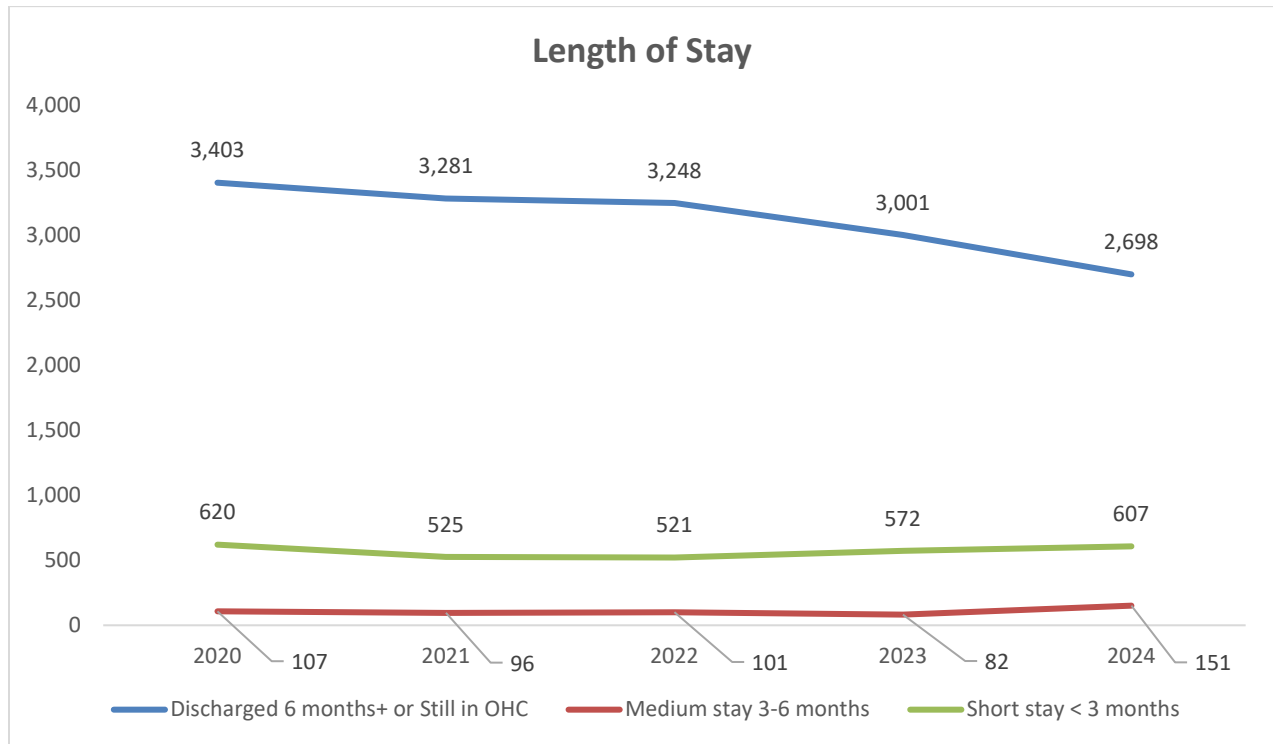


### Median length of stay by placement on 12/31 of each calendar year

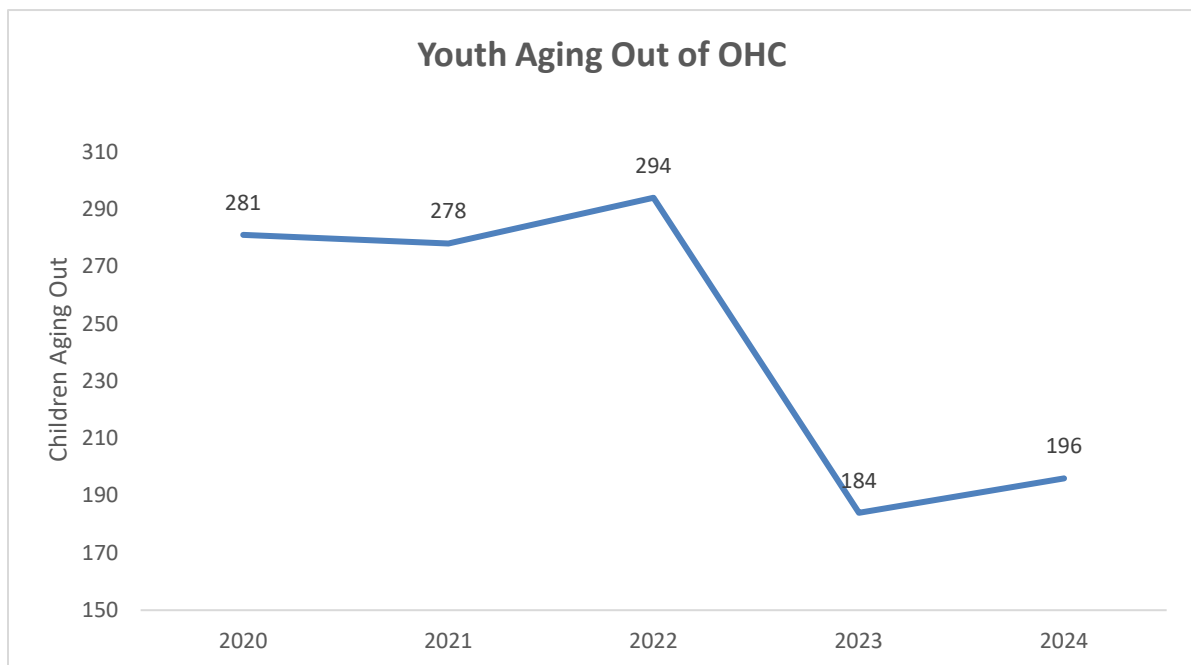
\*Congregate care placements include RCC & Group Homes.  
 \*Other placements include Institutions, Supervised Independent Living, and Missing from OHC.

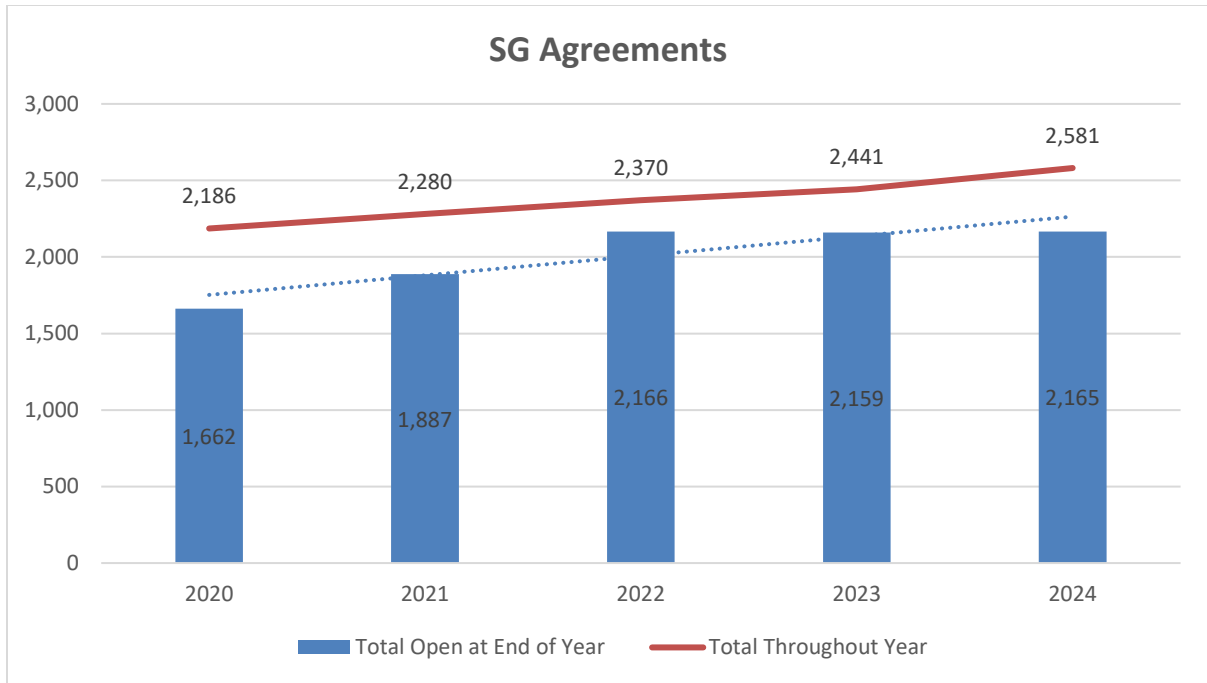


*Length of Stay: Children Entered within CY and Discharged or Remain in OHC at the end of the Year.*



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.





DCF began reimbursing local child welfare agencies for subsidized guardianship payments, including subsidized guardianship payments for Indian children ordered by tribal courts located in the state of Wisconsin starting January 1, 2022.

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

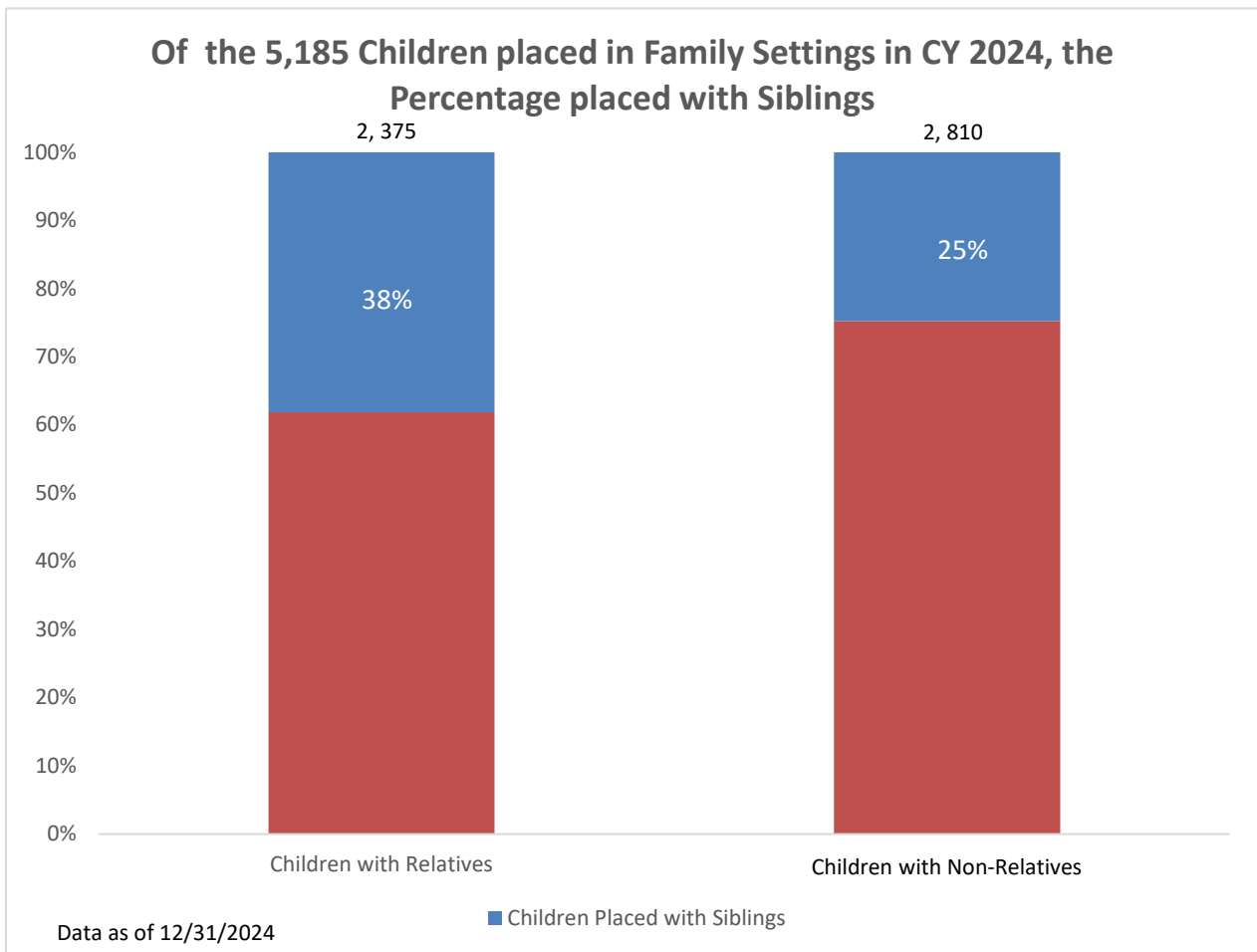
**Item 7: Placement with Siblings.**

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)
<b>Item 7</b>	83%	96%	90%	88%	83%

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

## Administrative Data



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.

### 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)
<b>Item 8</b>	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)
<b>Item 9</b>	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				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Children Removed</b>	3,953	3,758	3,715	3,492	3,332
<b>Total Removals</b>	4,133	3,905	3,874	3,674	3,480
<b>Percentage</b>	96%	96%	97%	95%	96%
<b>Median Distance (miles) from Home</b>	7.13	7.14	6.41	6.77	8.49

## Item 10: Relative Placement.

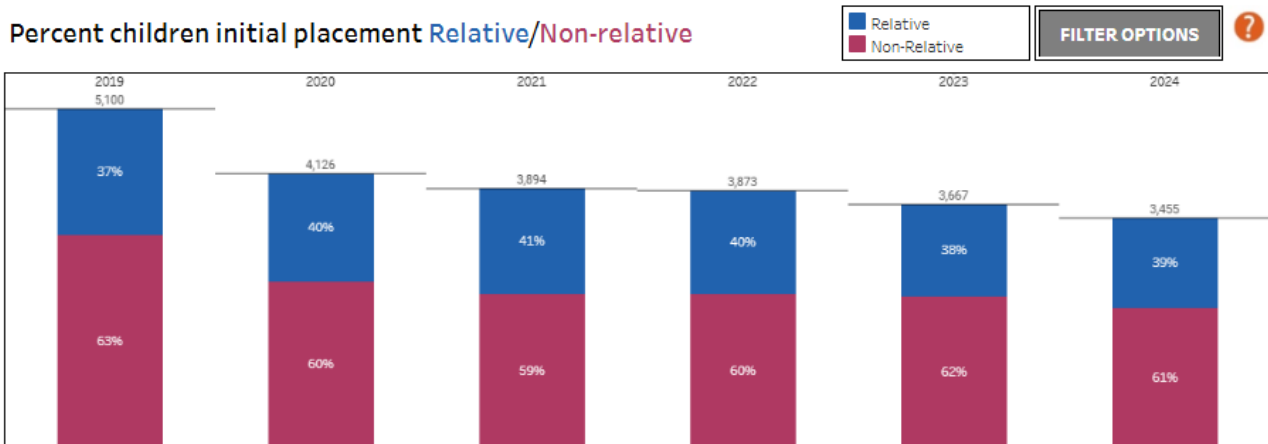
Did the agency make concerted efforts to **place the child with relatives** when appropriate?

	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)
<b>Item 10</b>	68%	74%	79%	83%	80%

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

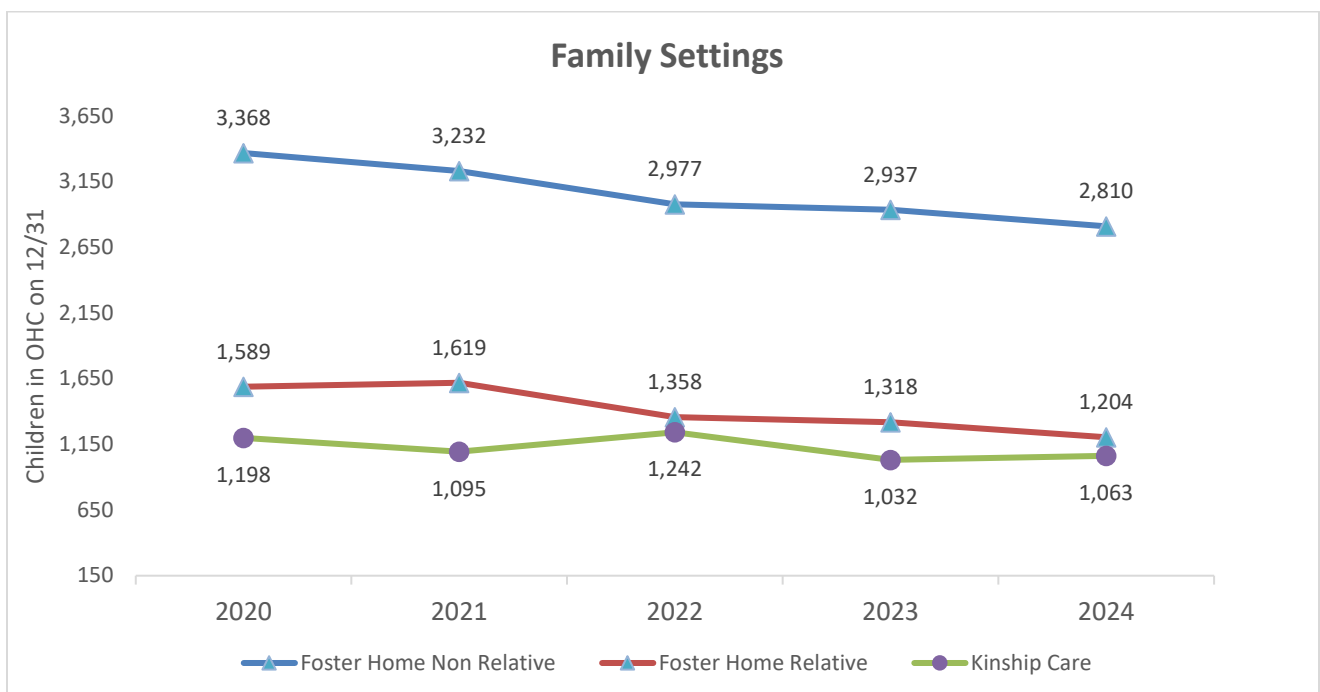
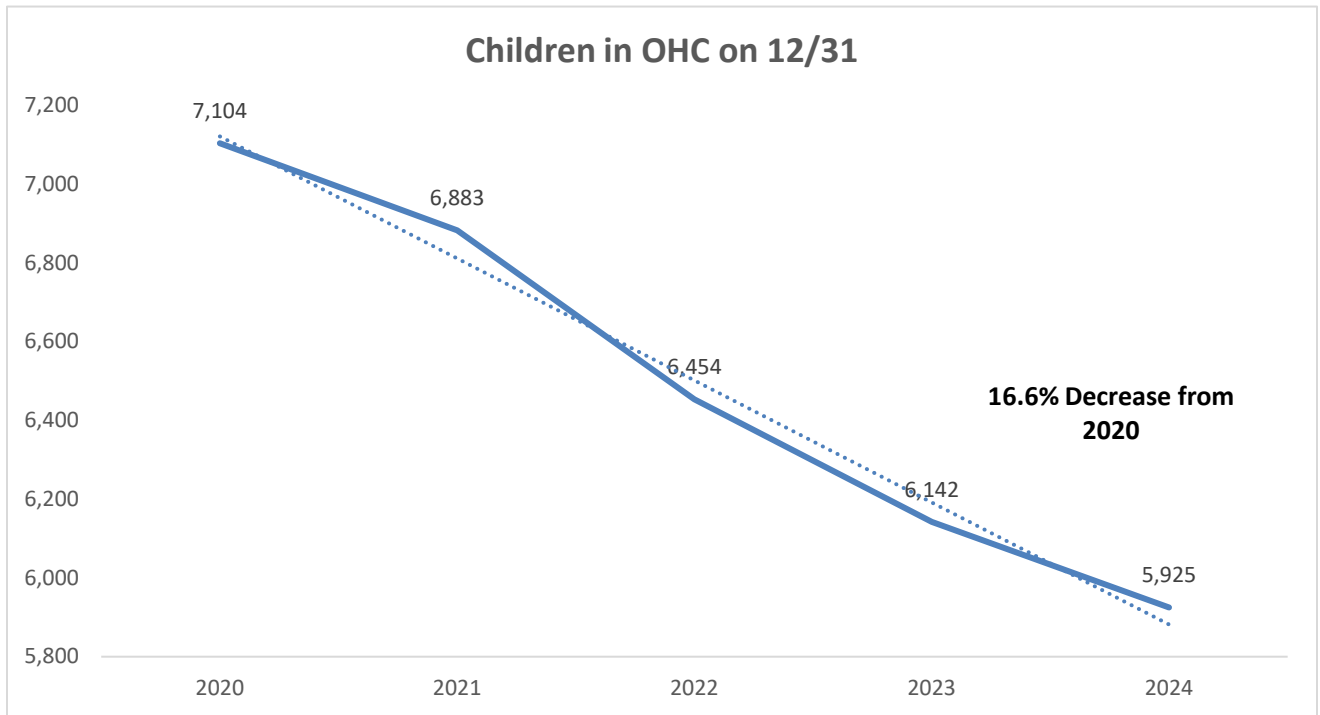
## Relative Placements

Percent children initial placement **Relative/Non-relative**

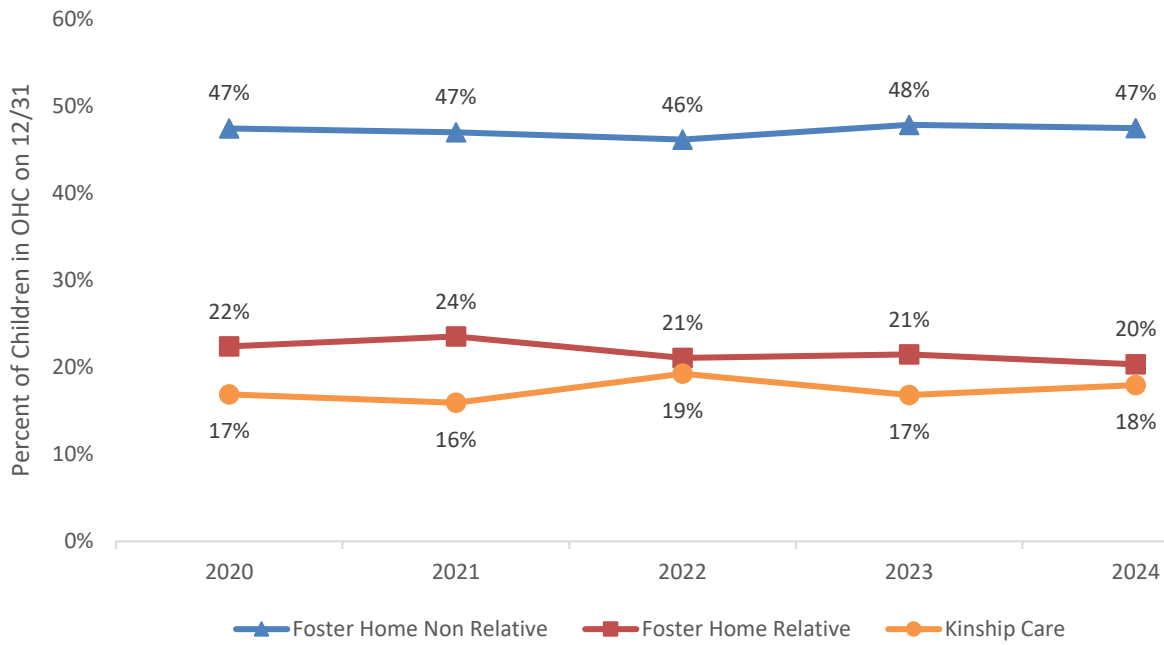


The OHC Initial Placement tab on Wisconsin's Child Welfare Implementation Strategic Metrics Dashboard shows the comparison of children removed into out-of-home care and initially placed with relatives to those placed with non-relatives.

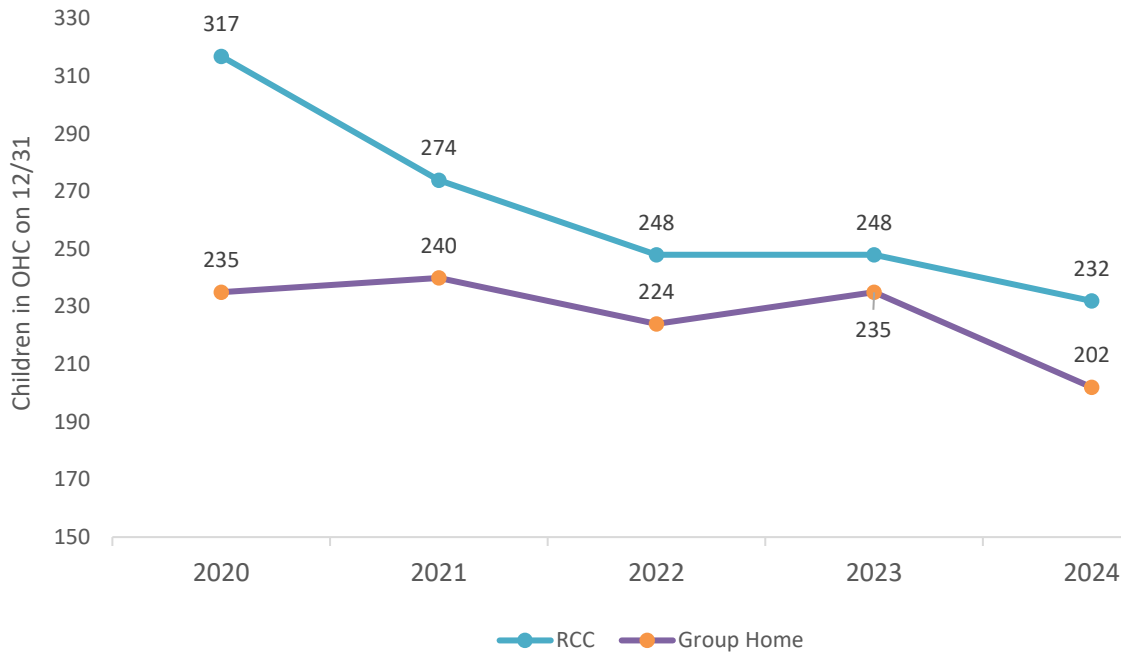
### OHC Trends by Placement Type



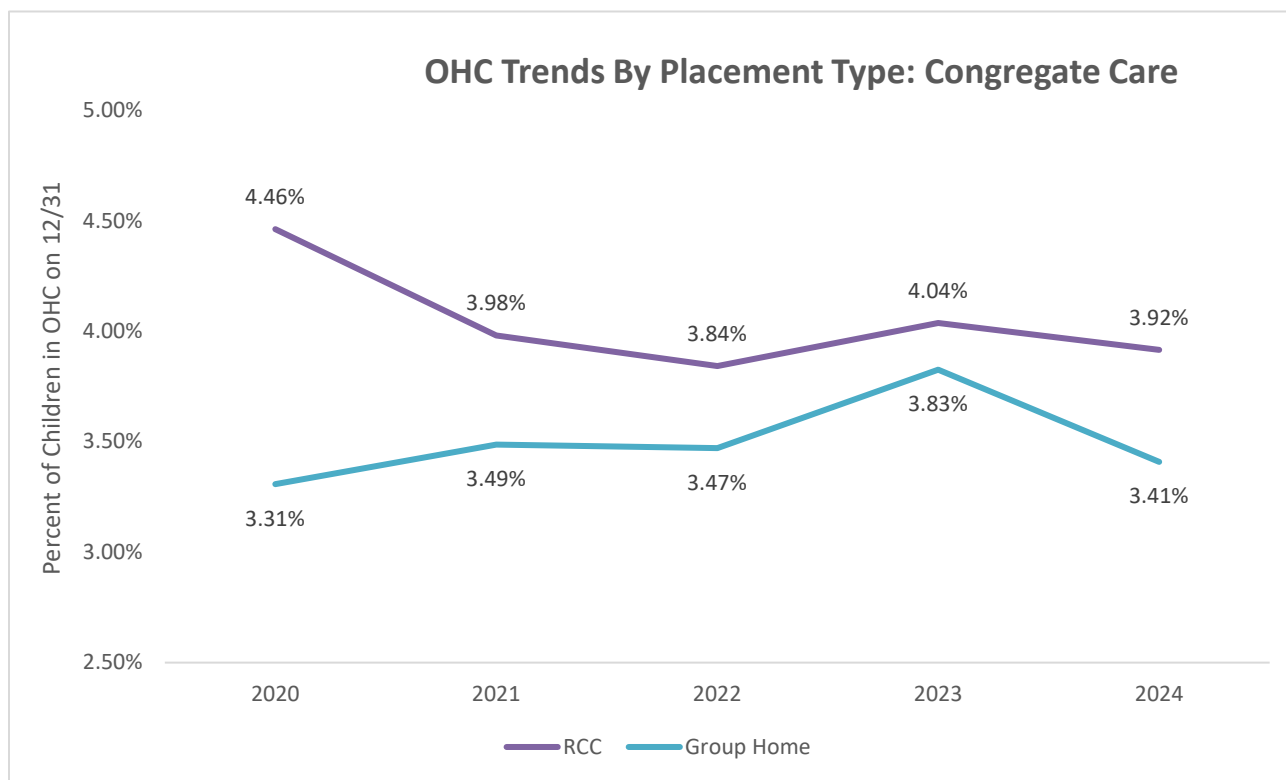
### OHC Trends by Placement Type: Family Settings



### Congregate Care







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 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

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

- DCF implemented state legislation in January 2025 to include “like-kin” within the definition of a “relative.” This initiative supported 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.
- DCF drafted a proposed relative and like-kin foster home licensing rule for legislative review that aligns with Federal Model Licensing Standards and is anticipated to be promulgated in fall of 2025.

### 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.*

In Wisconsin, children in OHC receive a CANS evaluation that requires goals be developed for any identified need(s). More information on the CANS process is detailed under the Service Array Systemic Factor of this APSR.

##### 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.*

In Wisconsin, if the child is 14 years of age or over and has been in out-of-home care for six months, the Permanency Plan must be developed in consultation with the youth and two other individuals selected by the youth who are not the youth's child welfare professional or foster parent.

#### 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, 2023 - September 30, 2024:

	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	8,576	69,993	68,021	97.2%	59,449	87.4%

#### 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. More information regarding efforts to address the educational needs of children is detailed under the Collaboration section of this APSR.

## 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

DCF continues 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>.

---

### Initiatives to Address Well-Being

- 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 Children's Behavioral Health project, or Wisconsin Wraparound, strives to address the children and youth behavioral health crisis before they enter the child welfare system.
    - To achieve this goal, DHS and DCF convened a Steering Committee and workgroup of state program and policy staff.
    - This workgroup engaged 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 were included in the development of behavioral health programs and policies. The workgroup also engaged with Ohio and held a webinar for Wisconsin partners to learn about efforts related to the behavioral health program, Ohio Rise.
    - This effort culminated in a Behavioral Health Proposal, called Wisconsin Wraparound, which requests legislative approval to develop a federal Medicaid waiver. This has been introduced for legislative approval and is currently pending.
- DCF continues 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 even though the funding proposal was removed from Wisconsin's 2025 – 2027 Budget.
- 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 continues 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. For each factor there is a description of what the factor is, 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 Transitional CCWIS 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. As a robust Management Information System (MIS), it is well suited for conversion to a Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) in accordance with DCF's CCWIS roadmap and Annual Planning Document.

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.

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

Throughout the eWiSACWIS system, Wisconsin adheres to CPS practice standards for data entry timeliness and casework requirements. Built-in reminders and other validations throughout the application's various pages and follow-up reminders within and outside the application 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 that are documented on the eWiSACWIS KnowledgeWeb (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. Over 200 operational level reports support the monitoring of state and local program, fiscal, licensing, rate setting and management activities. These reports include summaries and detailed information related to critical child welfare service activity and practice requirements, such as CPS referrals, CPS initial assessment decisions and OHC placements, including client characteristics and location. Other reports in development track certain child well-being data, such as education, medical and dental information and mental health screenings. 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 4 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. This allows 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.

---

### Current Priorities and Initiatives

DCF's over-arching strategic vision, Putting Families First, permeates all current priorities, 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 advance that vision in eWiSACWIS, DCF continues to prioritize system enhancements that support family-centered programs and 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, children, youth and parents who are involved or have experience with the child welfare system and 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 solicits 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 who are involved or have experience with the child welfare system, 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 11 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.

DCF continues 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 over the next year.

---

#### Data Quality Plan

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 to comply with CCWIS requirements.

---

#### 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 robust training, particularly to new child welfare professionals, utilizing asynchronous models 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, and produced 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.

DCF continues to focus on software enhancement projects that achieve 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 will continue to support the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families' efforts around Putting Families First through projects to revise safety analysis, case planning, independent living and a youth portal.

#### *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 (OHC). Case goals focus on enhancing parent/caregiver protective capacities to eliminate impending danger so the family can adequately manage child protection without intervention. In Wisconsin, every child in OHC also has a Permanency Plan, which functions as the child's case plan, that serves as a tool for communicating with parents/caregivers, children, their family members, court parties and other individuals involved in providing supports and services to the family. Process details regarding these plans can be found in Wisconsin's Ongoing Standards:

<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:

- <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 assures 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\* at minimum with the child(ren) and individuals in a caretaking role unless there is an in-home safety plan, which increases the number of contacts needed.
    - a. This data can be collected from the Caseworker Contacts Dashboard within eWISACWIS: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/dashboard/cwcontacts>.
- \*Visits with children placed out of state are only required to be completed by the placing agency once every 12 months.*
- 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.

---

#### 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 the Children's Court Improvement Project (CCIP) to assess, measure and address Item 21 as it relates to processes that occur in the court system but impact child welfare families.

---

#### Available Data or Information That Demonstrates Functioning

In Wisconsin, over half of the jurisdictions utilized an administrative panel for some, or all six-month reviews. In the other jurisdictions, a court commissioner or a judge conducts the 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

DCF continues 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.

DCF ongoing standards require that a child's case plan be developed with the child's parent and copies of the permanency plan are provided to parents/caregivers, tribe(s), Indian custodians and children at least twelve years and older prior to a permanency plan hearing.

Table: DCF Performance Measures by Thresholds

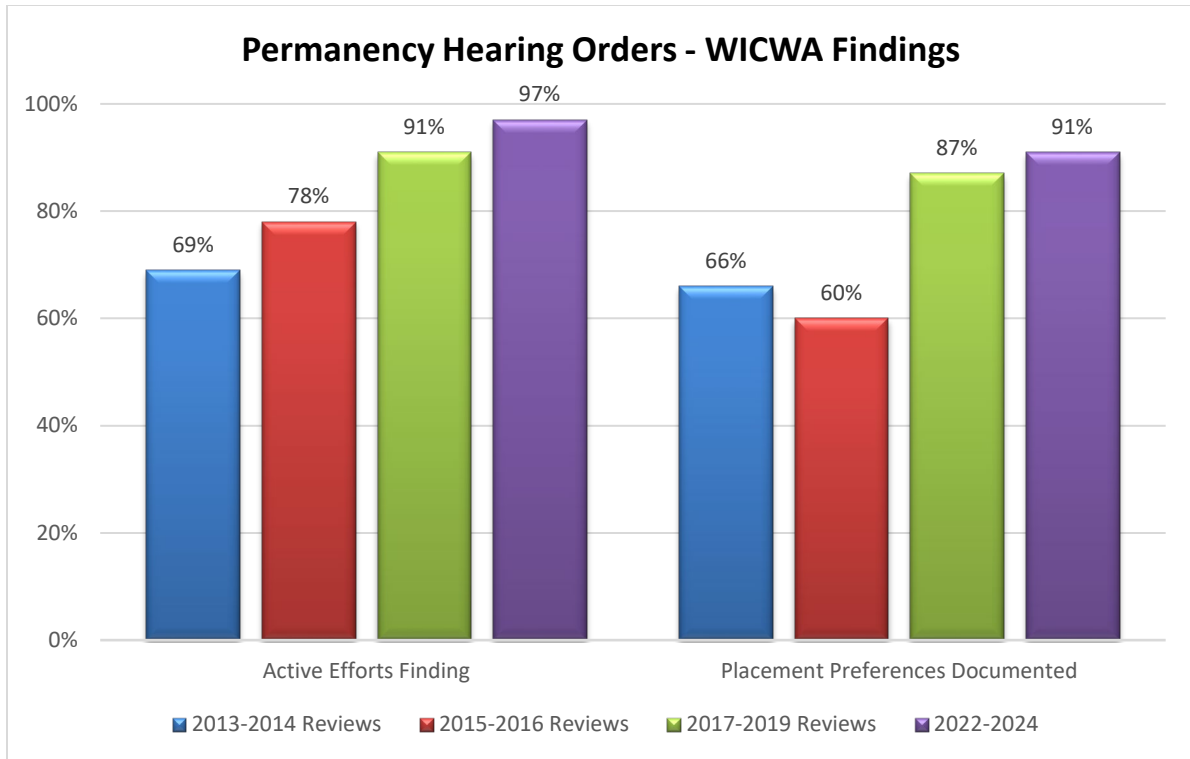
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Children having timely annual permanency review hearing	60.8%	57.9%	56.1%	61.6%	65.2%
Children having timely six-month permanency reviews	79.6%	81.6%	79.8%	81.2%	82.2%
Children having timely 60-day permanency plans	82.5%	84.6%	83.3%	83.2%	82.3%

*\*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.

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 2013-2024.

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.*

Key takeaways from the 2022 – 2024 WICWA reviews:

- Notice of the most recent Permanency Hearing was provided to the child's tribe in 100% of the cases (148).
  - 93% in writing and 7% via eFiling.
- A tribal representative was present at the Permanency Hearing in 95% of the cases.

#### 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)\*

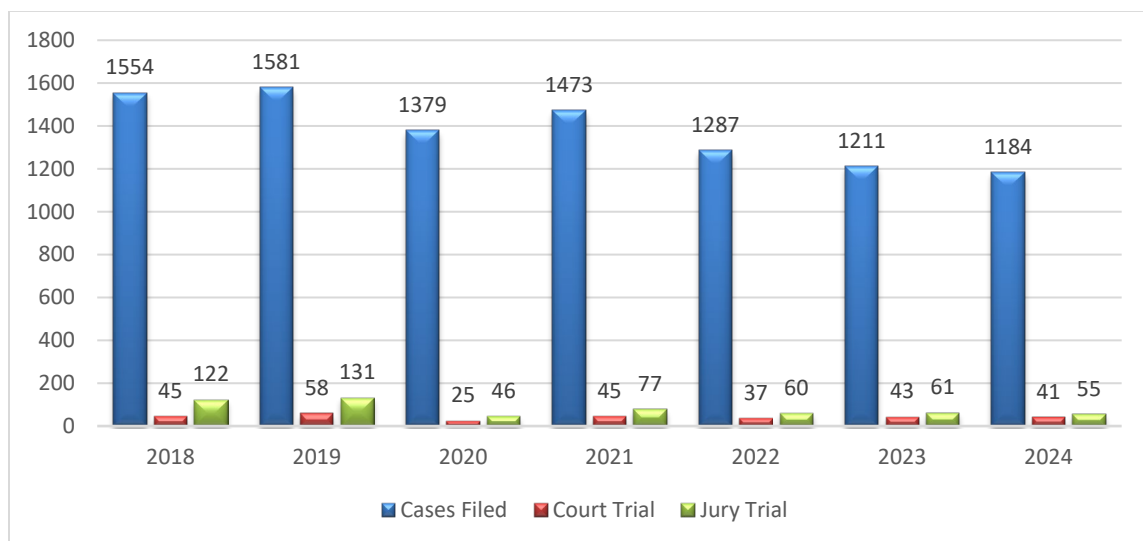
	Time to TPR Petition Filing	Time to TPR Order
2019	711	899
2020	763	956
2021	784	986
2022	808	1,011
2023	833	1,037

\*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

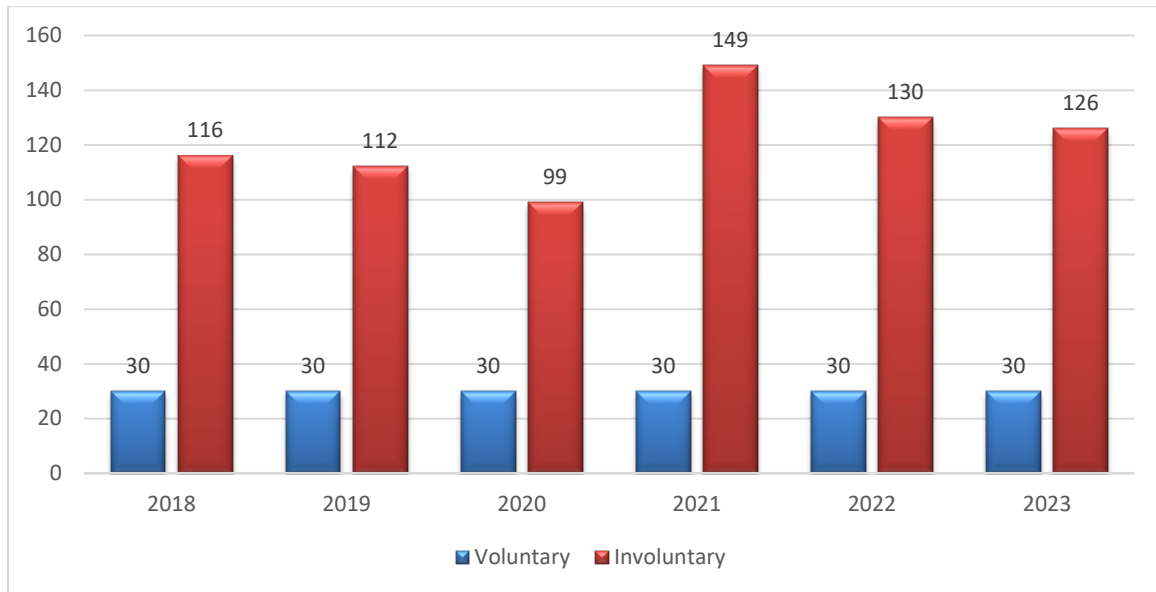
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>1. Time to TPR petition</b>					
Children with TPR petition filed within 15 months of removal	23%	20%	20%	18%	18%
Children with TPR petition filed within 24 months of removal	47%	45%	43%	49%	49%
<b>2. Time to TPR order</b>					
Children with TPR order within 15 months of removal	9%	9%	9%	9%	11%
Children with TPR order within 24 months of removal	25%	22%	21%	31%	31%

### TPR Caseload Summary Statewide (CCAP Statistical Reports)\*



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

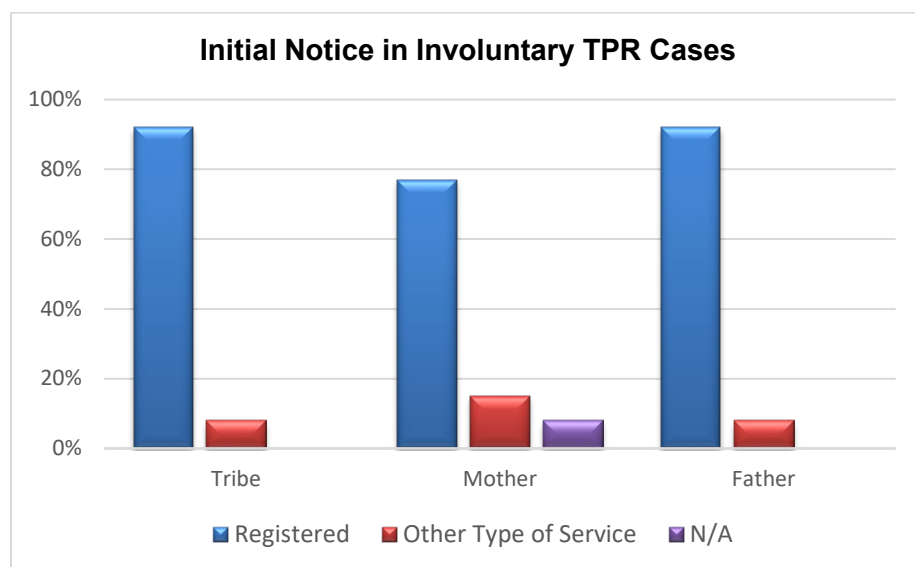
### Median Days from TPR Petition Filing to Disposition (CCAP Statistical Reports)\*



### Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA) Data

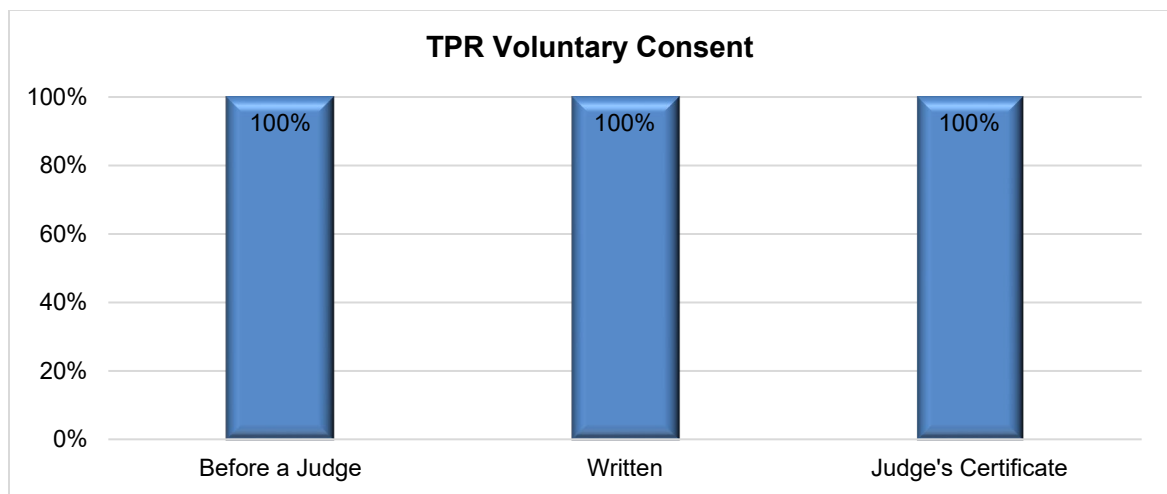
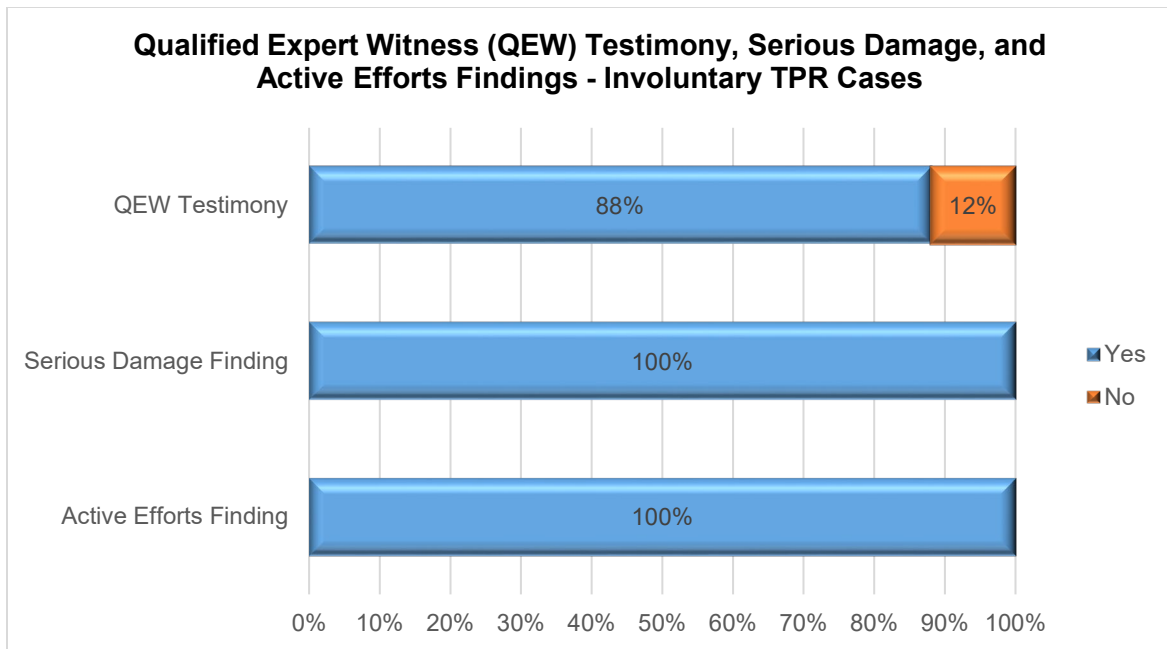
An additional source of CCIP data is through the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA) Continuous Quality Improvement Project. It measures compliance with key WICWA requirements in CHIPS, JIPS, TPR, Adoption and Guardianship cases. In 2022 – 2025, CCIP and DCF staff conducted onsite reviews in the 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. 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

DCF and CCIP continue to provide training and technical assistance related to TPR proceedings. 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.
  - The 2025 Conference will have a workshop on TPR case law and practice updates.
- 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.
- CCIP staff provide legal trainings four times a year through DCF's contracted Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS) on Termination of Parental Rights to county and tribal child welfare professionals and supervisors.
- The CCIP E-Learning Project includes modules on the key hearings in TPR cases, which is accessible to judicial officers, child welfare professionals and attorneys.

#### NOTICE OF HEARINGS AND REVIEWS TO CAREGIVERS (ITEM 24)

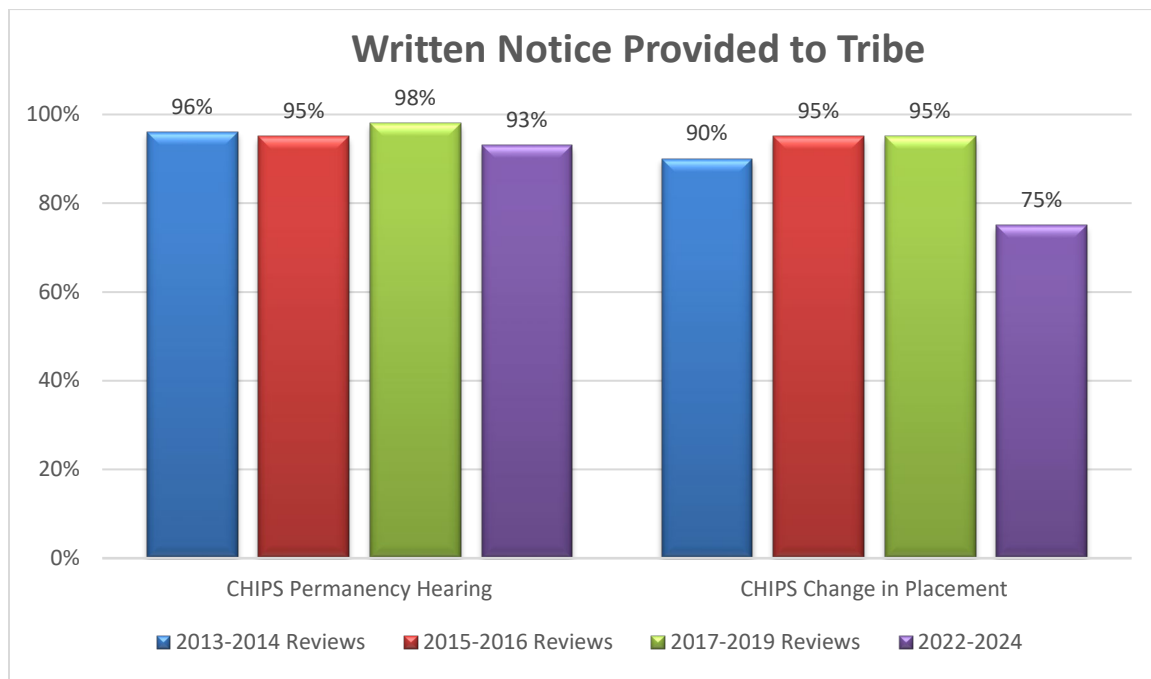
How well is the case review system functioning statewide to ensure that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents and relative caregivers of children in foster care are **notified of, and have a right to be heard** in, any review or hearing with respect to the child?

#### 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.wiccuptraining.com/>) related to parent and caregiver engagement in court proceedings. CCIP staff presents at the annual Families Like Mine conference (Wisconsin's annual Relative Caregiver Conference) and provide online training to foster parents on court procedures, including the caregiver's role and rights.

---

### 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 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 seek to support moving forward are continued meaningful and systematic involvement of children, youth and parents who are involved or have experience with the child welfare system 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.

---

### Initiatives to Address Case Review Systemic Factors

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

#### *Ongoing Collaborations*

- DCF continues 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, including the newly convened Family Engagement and Representation Subcommittee.

### *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. It also features a Parent and Caregiver Panel where they discuss the importance of, and better ways to, have judges and court commissioners engage parents and caregivers in court.

### *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 continues 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 current 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 a uniform and consistent training process for OSRI utilization.

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 and after a pause in 2024 to transition to CFSR Round 4, DCF will resume conducting ongoing case reviews 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, monitor agency performance and include interviews with key case participants with family voice and experience with the child welfare system. Due to these factors, DCF is well positioned to conduct a state-led CFSR Round 4 review.

In addition to the ongoing case reviews, DCF also conducts Targeted Case Reviews (TCRs) to conduct ad hoc/special case reviews targeting specific domains when analysis of other data or feedback warrants 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 most recent TCR was completed in June 2025 and focused on the intersect of families involved in child protective services and home visiting. Objective 1.2 of the Wisconsin's Plan for Enacting the State's Vision section of this APSR highlights other efforts supported through the TCR process.

## *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.

---

### **Child Welfare CQI Advisory Committee**

This committee is comprised of DCF staff, county leaders and representatives from the Children's Court Improvement Program, Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System and University of Wisconsin School of Social Work, 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. The committee formulates CQI data analysis guidance and key takeaways related child welfare practice core areas. For example, the Child Welfare CQI Advisory Committee provided feedback on the initial assessment case review process and assisted in determining which key outcomes to review.

This committee meets on a quarterly basis and is routinely brought into discussions about areas of DCF practice to ensure a strong feedback loop with counties and 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 under 45 CFR § 1355.52 (d)(5) and will continue to partner with the title IV-E State Agency (DCF) and the Wisconsin County Human Services Association (WCHSA) over the next year.

---

### **Additional System Quality Improvement Initiatives**

DCF uses data on a regular basis to assess, inform and request feedback to analyze for implications/improvement to child welfare policy and practice. 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. It continues to increase collaboration and cooperation among the circuit courts, tribes, county child welfare agencies, attorneys and other external partners utilizing data from court file reviews, focus groups and surveys.

#### *Child Welfare Performance Dashboards*

In addition to qualitative and output/operational reporting data that is available, a wide range of visual child welfare dashboards provide statewide and local agency child welfare performance summary data as a key component of DCF's child welfare CQI system. DCF continues to enhance these dashboards based on input from internal and external partners and are updated daily to 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 Wisconsin's dashboards are shown on the following page. All dashboards can be found at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/reports>.

### Child Protective Services Reports

CPS Report Overview | CPS Report Trends

**Child Protective Services Reports**  
Screen In: 72,954  
Screen Out: 21,329  
Reported Maltreatment: 51,625

**Screening Decisions**  
Screen In: 72,954  
Screen Out: 21,329

**Reported Maltreatment**  
Neglect: 33.85%  
Physical Abuse: 24.17%  
Sexual Abuse: 15.55%  
Emotional Damage/Child: 6.42%  
Unlabeled Child: 9.83%

**Response Time**  
Screened w/in 24 hrs: 64.18%  
Screened w/in 30 days: 12.29%  
Screened w/in 60 days: 12.40%

**Reporter Relationship**  
Law Enforcement: 13.38%  
Social Worker: 13.18%  
Healthcare Provider: 12.35%  
Parent of Child: 8.86%  
Individual: 8.05%  
Other: 4.47%

**% Screen-In by County**  
Map showing screen-in rates by county.

### Initial Assessment

IA Performance-PUBLIC

Approved Initial Assessment: 7,744  
Completed-Timely: 6,116 (79.0%)  
Completed-Late: 4,373 (82.3%)

**Median Days to Complete Initial Assessment**  
7,744 Completed  
50.00 days

**Completed-Timely**  
List of counties with bars representing completion rates.

**Contacted-Timely**  
List of counties with bars representing completion rates.

### Out-of-home Care

Open OHC - Public | Removals - Public | Discharges - Public | Year Over Year

**Open Out-of-Home Care**  
Children in OHC: 6,180  
Female: 3,009  
Male: 3,171

**Children by Placement Type**  
Foster Home: 4,404  
Court-Ordered Residential Care: 558  
NCC: 262  
Group Home: 239

**Child Current Age Group**  
Age 0-4: 2,176  
Age 5-11: 2,099  
Age 12-14: 808  
Age 15-17: 1,100

**Race**  
White: 3,171  
Black: 2,099  
Hispanic: 1,100  
Asian: 808  
Other: 262

**Case Type for OHC Children**  
CPS Family: 4,404  
CPS Family: 443  
CPS Family: 443  
CPS Family: 443  
CPS Family: 443  
CPS Family: 443  
CPS Family: 443  
CPS Family: 443  
CPS Family: 443  
CPS Family: 443

**No. of Placements in OHC Episode**  
Bar chart showing the number of placements in OHC episode.

**Length of Stay (months)**  
Bar chart showing the length of stay in months.

### Older Youth Outcomes

Older Youth Outcomes (Age 15 and Older)

**Number of Youth Exiting Out-of-Home Care**  
1,179  
Female: 511  
Male: 668

**Median Months in OHC, By County**  
Map showing median months in OHC by county.

**Median Months in OHC (LOS Final episode)**  
Bar chart showing median months in OHC (LOS Final episode).

**Discharge By Reason**  
Adoption: 1.3%  
Aged Out: 15.0%  
Reunification: 88.7%

**Youth Discharges by Reason and Age**  
Bar chart showing youth discharges by reason and age.

### Worker Dashboard

Caseload Overview

**Open Cases**: 12,267  
**Closed Cases**: 32,522  
**Adult Cases**: 65,673  
**Adolescent Cases**: 25,900  
**Out-of-Home Cases**: 7,160

**Months Open**  
Bar chart showing months open.

**Case Traits**  
Bar chart showing case traits.

**Case Types**  
Bar chart showing case types.

### Caseworker Contacts

Caseworker Contacts with Children in Out-of-Home-Care

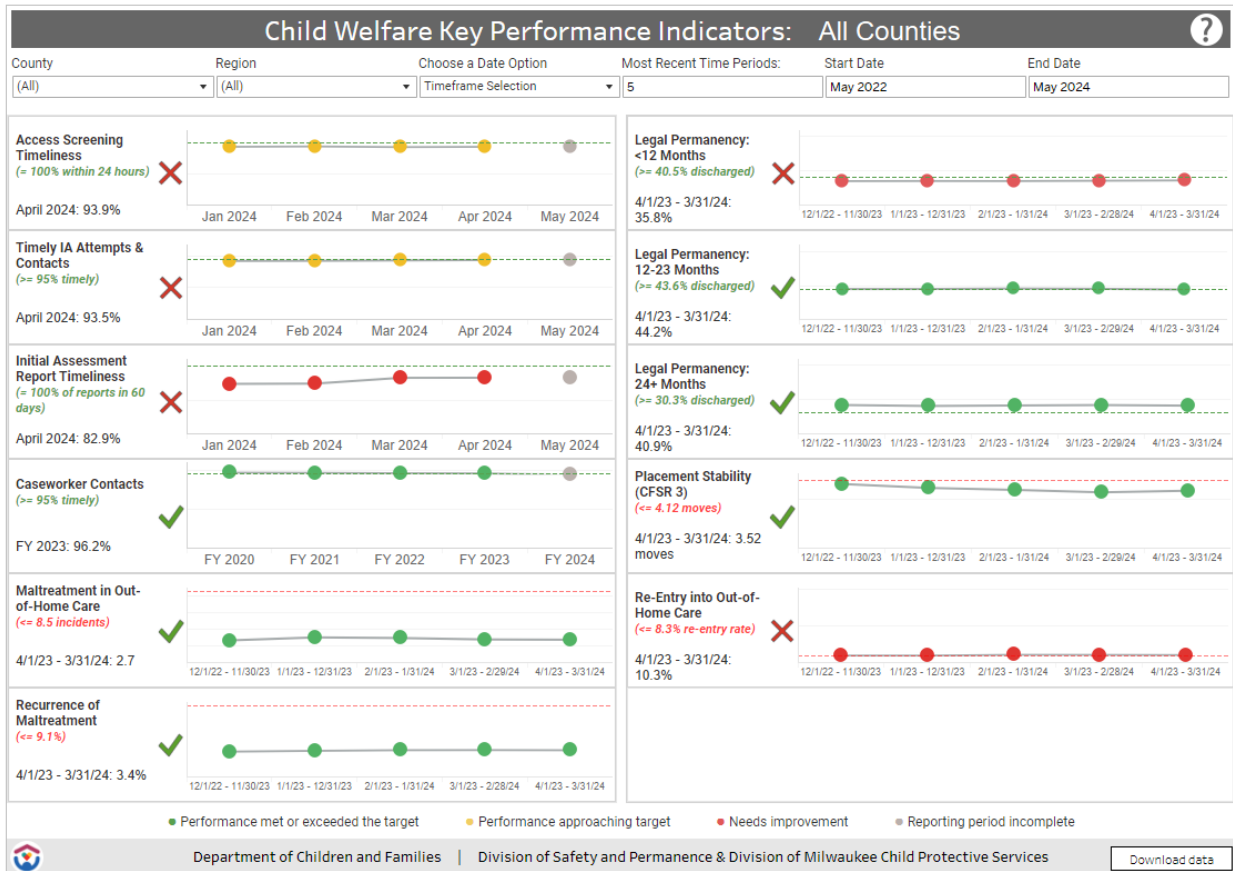
**Number of Children**: 10,811  
**Statewide Performance for FFY2019**  
97.4%  
**Percent Contacted, by County**  
Map showing percent contacted by county.

**County Performance**  
Bar chart showing county performance.

**Monthly Performance for FFY2019**  
Line chart showing monthly performance for FFY2019.

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>.





## 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 10,123 state, county, tribal and private agency child welfare professionals and over 7,347 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, 2023, to June 30, 2024 (SFY 2024). Additional data is provided with respect to areas of training described under initiatives.

*SFY 2024 Data:*

<b>Total Trainees</b>	<b>20,304</b>
Case-worker trainees	13,947
Foster-parent trainees	6,357
<b>Total Professional Development Opportunities Provided</b>	<b>1,089</b>
Case-Worker professional-development opportunities provided	544
Foster-Parent professional-development opportunities provided	545

---

#### 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.
- WCWPDS continues work on enhancing its evaluation process for the initial in-service training program, as well as other prioritized areas. This includes measures to quantify worker knowledge gain with pre- and post-test components, participant interviews to determine fidelity to the programmatic model and surveys to determine fulfillment of local agency responsibilities to both the participants and supervisory staff. A dedicated .5 Full Time Employee (FTE) position has been created to oversee this endeavor and to ensure a continued focus on the evaluation priorities. Results from this process will determine future modifications and enhancements to worker training.

---

#### WiLearn System Enhancements

- Quarterly compliance reports to counties and private providers to inform them of staff compliance with DCF foundation and ongoing training requirements.
- Provision of compliance reporting for foster parent licensure and delivery of those reports to DCF staff to address with providers.
- Proxy enrollment of all required participants in initial in-service training and foundationally required courses.

- Cohort initiation of Applied Learning Communities (ALC's) to support local implementation of policy and practice focused on strengthening families and in-home safety planning.
- Development and roll out of Youth Justice Philosophy and Case Process training to encourage youth justice professionals to align their vision and enhance the consistency of professional decision making across the state.
- Continued enhancement of the statewide calendaring system.
- Enhanced coordination of Organizational Development activities with CQI processes.
- Development of multiple eWISACWIS asynchronous training modules to facilitate greater accuracy in data entry within that system.

---

## 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 professionals and supervisors to complete the caseworker pre-service training as part of their initial development. The web-based training offered by WCWPDS, combined with the agency-specific orientation plan that may include job shadowing, agency orientation and other related activities, introduces new professionals 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 professionals 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, professionals 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 professionals 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. Most of a learner's time is spent on nine Foundational Elements which are comprised of synchronous classroom-style learning paired with asynchronous learning activities and courses they complete on their own. Foundational Elements are organized into a sequential order with each element building off the one before. DCF and WCWPDS collaborate 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 virtual Community Huddles.
  - 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

### WiLearn Compliance

In 2024, of the 17 WiLearn cohorts, five represented cohorts of workers hired in the Milwaukee region, and 12 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.

	<b>CPS Professionals who Completed WiLearn (<i>active and employed in CPS role at the end of the cohort</i>)</b>	<b>CPS Professionals who did not Complete the WiLearn Capstone but were Required to (<i>active and employed in a CPS role at the end of the cohort</i>)</b>	<b>CPS Professionals who did not Complete the WiLearn Capstone but were no longer Required to (<i>no longer employed in a CPS role at the end of the cohort</i>)</b>
<b>BOS</b>	159 (100%)	0	17
<b>Milwaukee</b>	73 (100%)	0	9
<b>Total</b>	232 (100%)	0	26

---

### Additional Foundation Training

In addition to the WiLearn requirements, DCF 43 requires new child protective services professionals 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 professionals 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

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 to learn

and practice service matching. The 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.

Between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024, 283 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

Program evaluation is conducted in a variety of ways, including 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.

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.

Finally, state licensing rules require licensed social workers to complete four hours of Ethics and Boundaries training during each two-year licensing period through WCWPDS.

Additional training offerings can be found at <https://wcwpds.wisc.edu/web-based-courses/>.

---

#### 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.

---

#### 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, offered statewide on a regular basis and 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 WCWPDS and the University of Wisconsin-Madison to plan, deliver and support several conferences. These include the Public Child Welfare Conference, Child Welfare and the Courts Conference, Youth Services Conference and the Adoption Professional Conference.

---

## 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*

In October 2024, DCF worked with WCWPDS to expand the existing data exchange to send foster and adoptive parent training data from WCWPDS to eWiSACWIS. Additionally, over the past year DCF and WCWPDS have collaborated to prepare to transition the required initial licensing training

curriculum to the National Training and Development Curriculum (NDTC) in late summer 2025. This will allow foster parents to have updated and consistent training material. The access and availability of material offered with this new curriculum is anticipated to better meet the needs of providers; through updated and consistent training, ideally leading to increases in compliance and timeliness.

#### *Required Training by Level of Care Certification*

		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<b>Pre-Placement Curriculum</b>	Foster Care Overview	<b>Pre-Placement:</b>  6 hours	<b>Pre-Placement:</b>  6 hours		
	Expectations of Foster Care				
	Caring for Children in Foster Care				
	Developing and Maintaining Family Connections				
	Foster Family Self-Care				
<b>Foundation Curriculum</b>	Permanency	<b>Initial Licensing:</b>  Not Required	<b>Initial Licensing:</b>  30 hours (to be done in first licensing period)	<b>Pre-Placement:</b>  36 hours	<b>Pre-Placement:</b>  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				
					<b>Plus 4 hours of Child-Specific Training</b>
<b>Various curriculums</b>	i.e. Crisis Management, Building Life Skills and Birth Family Connections, etc.	<b>Not Required</b>	<b>Topics Not Required</b>	<b>Initial Licensing:</b>  24 hours	<b>Initial Licensing:</b>  24 hours
					<b>Plus 6 hours of Child-Specific Training</b>
		<b>Ongoing:</b>  Not Required	<b>Ongoing:</b>  10 hours each year of licensure beyond the initial licensing period	<b>Ongoing:</b>  18 hours each year of licensure beyond the initial licensing period	<b>Ongoing:</b>  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 which will transition to NDTC 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.

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. Forty-eight counties utilized pass-through funding in CY 2024 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.

### *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.

### *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/>.

### *Initial Licensing*

DCF 56 specifies the initial licensing training topics that must be covered, all of which are provided through 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 through their agencies. This training process will continue through the summer of 2025.

#### *Foster Parent Foundation Training*

Numbers reported are for the number of instructor-led training seats taken between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024. 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.

<b>Foster Parent Foundation Training</b>	<b>Total Participants in SFY 24</b>
Foster Parent Foundation Module 1: Partners in Permanency	632
Foster Parent Foundation Module 2: Healthy Identity Development	566
Foster Parent Foundation Module 3: Maintaining Family Connectedness	675
Foster Parent Foundation Module 4a: Dynamics of Abuse and Neglect Part 1	562
Foster Parent Foundation Module 4b: Dynamics of Abuse and Neglect Part 2	535
Foster Parent Foundation Module 5: Impact of Maltreatment on Child Development	588
Foster Parent Foundation Module 6: Attachment	504
Foster Parent Foundation Module 7: Separation and Placement	511
Foster Parent Foundation Module 8: Guidance and Positive Discipline	599
Foster Parent Foundation Module 9: Effects of Fostering on the Family	614

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/>.

---

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

DCF continues to work with WCWPDS to address compliance with training requirements and tracking issues. 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 (DMCPS). 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.

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

DCF provides 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 professional gathers and documents information pertaining to child and caregiver needs and strengths, develops 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 professional must determine whether a child can safely remain in his or her familial home or must be removed 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 to control 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.

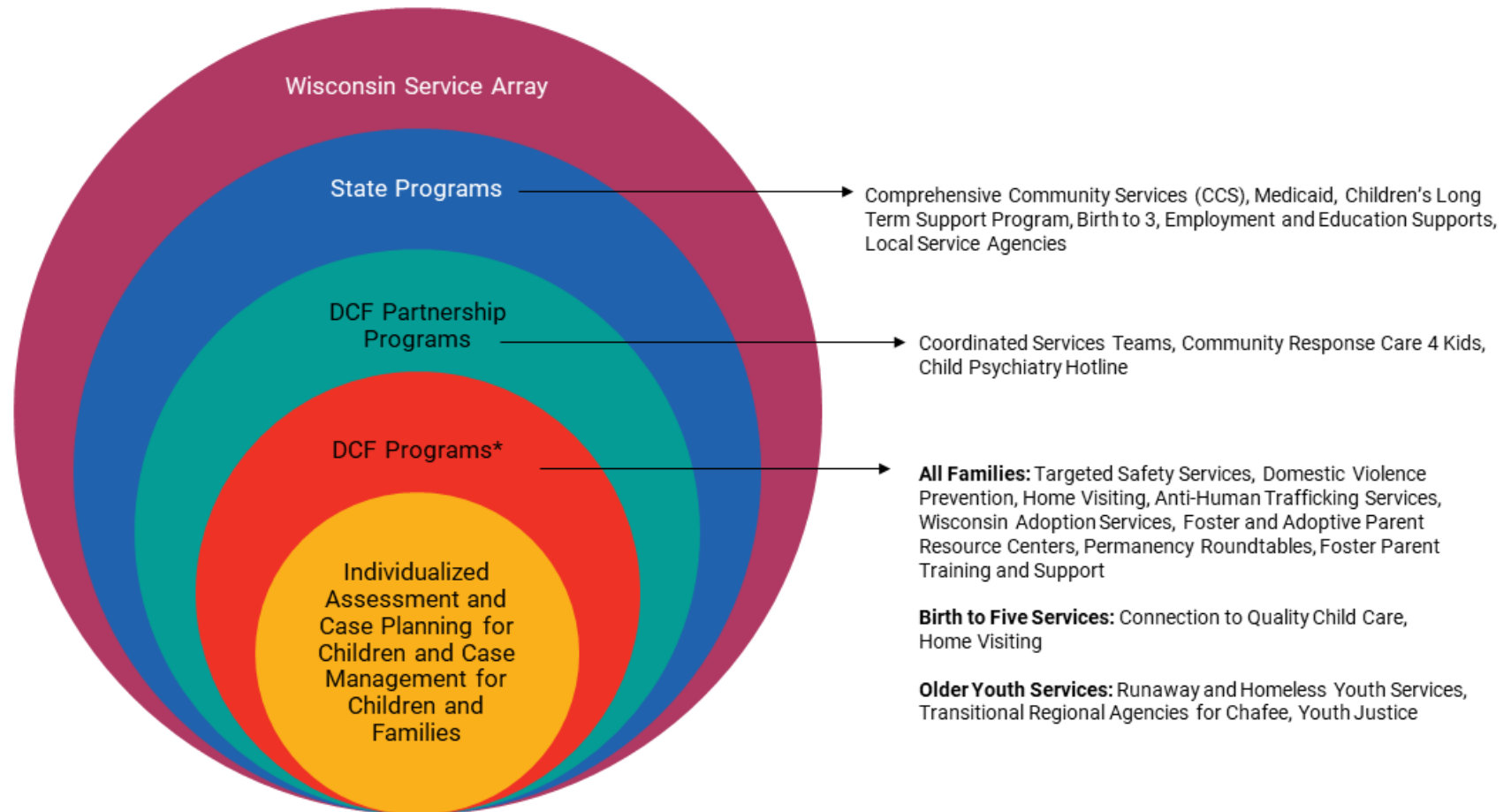
DCF's Ongoing Services and CPS Intervention Standards are available at:

- <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](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 risk fear is often based on public or community reaction to tragedies and the perceived inability to prevent them. However, research has shown that removing children from their family also poses significant risk to children. Child welfare systems have a significant obligation to families to be sure that removal is only used when all other means 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 the next year, DCF will continue to evaluate additional evidence-based services for implementation in Wisconsin.

The Services for Children under the Age of 5 section of this plan 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 as part of Wisconsin’s in-home service continuum.

---

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

DCF continues 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 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 CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL PARTNERS

Extensive collaboration remains a hallmark of DCF policymaking and program development while Wisconsin's Putting Families First approach has further reinforced agency responsiveness. Data and information regarding specific performance and initiatives that address Item 31 are described in detail under the Collaboration section of this APSR.

#### 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 have 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. To support the use of high-quality programs, DCF established a policy that requires foster parents to only use child care rated as three stars or higher by YoungStar, the state's quality and rating improvement system, 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 if they are receiving in-home services. When a child is temporarily absent from the home due to being in an OHC placement, Wisconsin policy allows the family to 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 eligible families.

---

### 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 Health Services (DHS), the child welfare professional can 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 APSR.

---

### 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, four 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), Transitional Jobs (TJ) and Wisconsin Works (W2) to seek out opportunities to access and retain sustainable employment. Although the other three regional IL providers are not workforce development board partners, they also prioritize these employment services for the youth they serve.

---

### 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 an automated information link between child welfare and the Birth to 3 programs.

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 the 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.
- Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development - information regarding a youth's participation in out of home care to help streamline program eligibility determinations.

A future interface regarding Kinship payment information to inform eligibility for tax credits with the Department of Revenue is currently under consideration.

---

### 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 will continue to maintain ongoing relationships with other state agencies to facilitate coordination around families' access to benefits and services with the goal of serving more children in-home over the next year.

### *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 establish standards that each licensing agency must follow.

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.

To ensure that all licensors receive adequate training and support on licensing requirements, DCF holds mandatory quarterly trainings pursuant to Ch. DCF 56, the administrative rule for foster homes. 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. SAFE includes a two-day Initial SAFE Training and SAFE Supervisors Training that are required for anyone that administers, approves or supervises the SAFE home study. 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.

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: contains information related to licensing decisions and the timeliness of those decisions, information regarding all decisions for initial and renewal license applications that are due within the reporting period and information regarding licenses that are revoked, closed or expired within the reporting period.
- 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.

---

#### 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 and licensing agencies must conduct the background checks prior to foster and adoptive parent licensure and re-licensure. These checks must be run for foster parents, any non-client residents of the home who are 10 or older 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.

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.

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 Wisconsin Stat. § 48.685 (5m), the licensing agency must review the circumstances of any offense conviction 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 and 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. § 48.988. The Wisconsin ICPC specialists work with other states as well as Wisconsin's local agencies to process these incoming and outgoing requests. A new ICPC statute was passed and codified in state statute (Wis. Stat. § 48.99) in 2020 as part of overall federal ICPC requirements, though it will not go into effect until 35 states codify the new provisions in their state statutes.

---

### 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 47 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 clean up data in an effort improve the quality pulled from the system and has identified this system as mutually beneficial to Wisconsin and other states who use this platform as an exchange.

Local agencies are required to submit any outgoing ICPC requests through eWiSACWIS with all necessary information and documentation. This reduces the time ICPC specialists spend explaining and acquiring ICPC documents to process the requests. 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 requestions. Policy and procedures for the workforce are documented in Wisconsin's Ongoing Services Standards.

Additionally, ICPC desk guides and brochures are available to help both the workforce and families and caregivers understand the process and requirements by ICPC regulation type.

---

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

DCF has established comprehensive standards that comply with federal guidelines to address this area and ongoing monitoring initiatives 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 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 to serve additional 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.

Wisconsin's 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. Research shows 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. DCF continues 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.

## **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.
  - TSSF is currently operating in all 71 county child welfare agencies and the 11 federally recognized tribes in Wisconsin. Milwaukee county (DMCPS) has a similar but distinct program called Intensive In-Home Services.
- 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>
  - DFC hosted a Prevention Summit in April of 2025 with local agencies, external consultants and children, youth and parents who are involved or have experience with the child welfare system. The goals were to reinforce joint partnership and investment and explore new prevention areas as Wisconsin prepares to submit its first title IV-E prevention program five-year plan renewal in 2026.
- 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.
  - TSSF served 3,825 children in CY 2024.
  - HV served 2,461 families in CY 2024 (a 12.4% increase from 2023).
- Evaluate total TSSF funding usage and local agency creative approaches.
  - The top three service utilization areas in 2024 were Supervision/Observation (34%), Basic Parent Assistance (13%) and Basic Home Management (8%). While the top

three area types remained consistent, each saw a relative percentage increase from 2023.

- Ensure ongoing feedback loops with local agencies to expand collaboration and share best practices.
  - They have reported this funding keeps more children in their homes, quickens reunification, increases engagement with families and provides staff fulfillment.

#### Staff Training, Technical Assistance and Evaluation:

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

#### Implementation Supports:

- DCF continues 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.
  - DCF seeks to expand HV through Wisconsin's 2025 – 2027 Budget to areas of the state where the services are not yet available and fund the Triple P program that provides parents strategies to help them build healthy relationships with their children through personal consultations, group courses, public seminars and online self-help tools.

*Objective 1.2: Clarify and streamline case practice to increase statewide uniformity and family engagement.*

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.

#### 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.

IA documentation and workflow was streamlined in eWiSACWIS in June 2024 to meet the goals listed above. Information about CPS and the IA was also created for parents/caregivers.

### *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.).

In Spring of 2025, DSP established the Quality Case Planning Design Group to steward the case plan redesign and updated to standards.

### *Revise Safety Standards*

*Goals of this project include:*

- Revise the current danger threat lists by updating language and combining into one list.
- Elevate 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.

The danger threat list and the safety assessment, analysis and plan have gone through initial revisions to meet the goals lists above and the most recent changes were released in February 2025.

### 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).
- DCF implemented 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 through the June 2024 and February 2025 eWiSACWIS releases.

- 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.
  - The QCP changes are scheduled for the February 2026 eWiS release.

*Objective 1.3: 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 family.

Key Activities:

- Continued coordination with the Children’s Court Improvement Project (CCIP) to identify the most effective implementation approach.
- Solicit local county agency feedback as needed.
  - The UW-Madison Family Legal Advocacy & Support Clinic (FLASC) which uses a multi-disciplinary approach to assist families who are at risk of becoming involved in the child welfare system also provides key implementation insights.
- 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.
  - DCF will continue advocating for this change even though the funding proposal was removed from Wisconsin’s 2025 – 2027 Budget.

### Measures of Progress:

- Increase in the number of kinship care providers and children placed with relatives/like-kin caregivers.
  - Item 10: Relative Placement provides Wisconsin data on this objective.
- Monitor the ratio of unlicensed to licensed providers and length of time to licensure.
- Continued discussions with tribal partners on any impacts seen to ICWA’s required placement preferences for Indian children since implementation.
  - Increased ICWA compliance monitoring will become possible once Wisconsin implements the Final Rule on Adoption and Foster Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) that requires states to collect and 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.
  - DCF seeks to increase the minimum payment rates for foster and kinship care providers through Wisconsin's 2025 – 2027 Budget and allow level 1 providers to receive age-based rates, exceptional payments and one-time clothing allowances.

#### *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 evaluated 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.
- Ongoing collaboration with relatives/kin and organizations that support relative/kinship caregivers through the development of separate licensing standards in Wisconsin for relatives and kin.
- In August of 2024, DCF approved a draft relative and like-kin foster home licensing rule, that aligns with Federal Model Licensing Standards, for legislative review with an anticipated promulgation date in fall of 2025.

#### 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.
  - The standards revisions are tentatively set to be reviewed by the Wisconsin County Human Service Association (WCHSA) in July of 2025 with a planned publication date of October 2025 depending upon legislative timelines.
  - DCF seeks to increase the minimum payment rates for foster and kinship care providers through Wisconsin's 2025 – 2027 Budget and allow level 1 providers to receive age-based rates, exceptional payments and one-time clothing allowances.
- Develop recommendations for improving the foster care program.
- Update administrative rules and policies as informed by external partner needs and wants.
  - The DCF 56 Advisory Council and Steering Committee met a combined 13 times in 2024 to guide this process.

#### Measures of Progress:

- Issuance of updated standards and administrative code.
- Increase the number of licensed foster family homes.
- Monitor how provider demographics reflect the 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:

- A DCF Advisory Council was established in May of 2024 inclusive of local agencies, 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 (CPS or YJ), 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.
  - In February of 2025, a one-day Youth Justice Philosophy and Case Process (YJPCP) training was released as an introductory course for YJ professionals designed to talk about the “why” behind their duties so they have a more holistic understanding of how the Wisconsin YJ system can impact families. Learners are introduced to legislation, standards and case flow, as part of this foundational course. They learn common language used in the YJ system, uplifting youth stories, adolescent brain development and evidence-based practices and philosophies consistent with Putting Families First.
- 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.
  - Through a competitive Innovation Grant process, DCF learns about service array gaps in the state through county applications. Successful grant applicants receive short-term start-up funding from DCF to implement new evidence-informed practices or programs. Grantees are required to attend quarterly meetings where child welfare professionals learn about other grant programs and the strategy human service agencies have used to implement new interventions at the local level.

### Measures of Progress:

- Continued solicitation of external partner feedback, including youth served throughout the process.
  - See the Youth Leadership Team efforts under the Collaboration section.
- 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 through WiLearn.

### Key Activities:

- DCF continues 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.
  - 81% of WiLearn participants feel confident applying the knowledge and skills they learned to their job and 96% believe they have the skills they need to do their job with their supervisor's support.
- 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.
  - 242 WiLearn Participants completed the program from September 2023 – August 2024 with two primary job roles: CPS Ongoing Professions (47%) and CPS Initial Assessment (43%).
  - 100% of new CPS professionals required to complete the WiLearn Program did so, with a median length of time of 5.32 months for Balance of State and 3.43 months for Milwaukee.
  - The knowledge test (taken before and after) showed an increase to the average score for each Foundational Element ranging from 4.3% - 13.3%.
- 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.
  - See the Youth Justice Philosophy and Case Process efforts under Objective 3.2.
- 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.
  - A WiLearn YJ FAQ was published in 2025 highlighting its importance to youth justice professionals: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/familyfirst/wilearn-for-yj-faq.pdf>
- Develop a statewide Youth Justice data system to implement case planning, manage workloads, perform quality assurance and publish public-facing data products to promote accountability and systems change.
- Streamline and simplify youth justice funding.
  - DCF will continue advocating for this change even though the funding proposal was removed from Wisconsin's 2025 – 2027 Budget.

#### 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: 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, monitoring practices and space for exploration of current practice, including championing connectedness using data.
  - In August of 2024, DCF launched the Child Welfare Implementation Support Metrics Dashboard to strengthen local efforts, understand where and why counties diverge from statewide trends and assess system change efforts over time. The goals of support metrics are to keep children in their home, center relatives and promote effective justice system response.
- 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.
  - The Support Metrics Dashboard also provides regional and county financial child welfare data allowing DSP to target technical assistance to specific counties.
- Utilize existing data to support Wisconsin's Putting Families First strategic efforts to dramatically reduce the number of children in out-of-home care.
  - Child removals per day have decreased from 15.1 in 2017 to 10.1 in 2023.
- The Child Welfare CQI Advisory Committee continues 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 4.4: 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.
- Ensure alignment with the nine strategies of Wisconsin's National Youth in Transition Database Review Improvement Plan that was approved on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
- 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.
- Develop a secure web portal for youth that supports messaging, collaborative planning activities and demographic and contact information updates.
- Continued enhancements to the Supporting Youth and Children (SYNC) group care provider referral website.

Measures of Progress:

- Expanded SYNC usage to Child Placing Agencies (CPAs) for foster care placement referrals.



- Developed a plan to share data garnered through SYNC with providers and CPAs.
- DCF will provide regular updates as initiatives are prioritized, based upon available funding, and implemented through eWiSACWIS releases during the Annual Progress and Services Reporting (APSR) process.
- Implementation of initial roll out of youth portal.

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.

### 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 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 that is responsive to the unique needs of RHY population subsets 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, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and other service providers who can meet presenting needs.
- *Homeless Youth without Families*  
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 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.
  - 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, previous sexual exploitation/trafficking and previous criminal records were commonly reported among those served and will remain an area of focus.
  - In 2024, the two PATHS programs served 64 youth, 23 of whom were pregnant and/or parenting.
  - PATHS expects to serve 60 youth in 2025 and 2026.
  - 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 includes 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 1,009 new and unduplicated youth in calendar year 2024 and provided 336 formal shelter.
  - DCF estimates the RHY programs will serve over 800 youth in 2026 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

DSP maintains a limited role in international adoptions. Parents adopting children internationally can access services through their county department of human services, their private insurance and 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/>.

### *Adoption Disruptions and Dissolutions*

There were 11 international adoptions finalized in fiscal year 2024 and zero children entered OHC due to the disruption or dissolution of an international adoption.

### **Services for Children under the Age of Five**

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. Wisconsin's Act 181, "Best Outcomes for Children" legislation, continues to support case planning and reduce the length of time that children under the age of five reside in foster care without a permanent family by requiring child welfare agency to determine whether concurrent planning should be used in a particular case.

This section describes Wisconsin's ongoing efforts 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.

### *Planned Activities to Address Developmental Needs*

---

#### **Training**

DCF ensures Initial Assessment and Ongoing staff receive two days of training on the child development effect maltreatment has. Participants 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 establishes a framework to recognize potential developmental problems early, thereby enhancing their ability to develop appropriate family service plans.

Wis. Admin. Code s. DCF 51.05, implemented in 2018, requires that adoptive parents receive at least 25 hours of training. Six of these must be in person, though in 2024 legislation was passed allowing the in-person training requirement to be met via live virtual instruction. Training topics are relevant to the needs of young children and help them adjust 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.

In August of 2025, DCF will implement a new foster and adoptive parent National Training and Development Curriculum (NTDC) which was developed by Spaulding for Children and funded through the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). The training is guided by various

perspectives of foster and adoptive families and experts across the country. It also streamlines the process for a foster parent to adopt. Core training courses provide information on required topics, while the elective courses allow foster and adoptive parents to prioritize options that best serve their current role and the children under their care. This personalized training approach meets specific caregiving needs and supports permanency achievement while still meeting the training topic requirements outlined pursuant to Wis. Admin. Code DCF 56 for foster parents and Wis. Admin. Code DCF 51 for adoptive parents.

---

### Improving Support for Foster and Adoptive Parents

DCF continues 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 utilizes 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 is put in place to support the specific placement of that child. 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.

Lastly, the Wisconsin Family Connection Center (WiFCC) provides services and support to individuals, families and caregivers with past or present involvement with foster care, adoption, reunification, kinship and guardianship. It serves as a centralized agency to facilitate resource access based upon an individual's needs. A foster parent may start their connection with WiFCC and continue as an adoptive parent or guardian. Additional programs include family connection events statewide, books and training resources and a free short-term case management program designed for caregivers who have adopted, or become a permanent guardian for, a child with high supportive service needs.

### *Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA)*

The 2024-2025 PDSA collaborative focused on the topic of improving professional collaboration between child welfare agencies and behavioral health partners to improve communication and increase effective cross-program collaboration between the two systems, including programs such as Birth-to-3, Children's Long-Term Support (CLTS) Programs and Comprehensive Community Support (CCS) Programs. There were two cohorts for this PDSA, with a final one scheduled for completion in early 2025.

Many of the children served by these local human services programs are under the age of 5. Improving the partnership between the child welfare system and these agencies can help to ensure young children are served more appropriately and efficiently. Increased supports for the

family can support their ability to serve children in-home and prevent long out-of-home care placements and/or placement altogether. Local level feedback, key takeaways and other learnings will be shared with the state-wide Child Welfare CQI Advisory Committee for future system improvement considerations.

### *Applied Learning Communities*

In 2025, Wisconsin will offer an applied learning community focused on families with young children (ages 0-5). The objective is to provide local child protective service agency professionals and supervisors comprehensive support to effectively assess and safety plan for the unique vulnerabilities and needs of young children, who are disproportionately affected by CPS involvement. This population is more likely to be referred to CPS, found to be maltreated, have maltreatment result in death and placed in foster care. Once in foster care, these children have longer durations of stay, are less likely to exit to a parent's care and, if returned home, face a higher risk of re-removal. These factors underscore the heightened vulnerabilities of this age group and the critical need for special attention to the assessment and planning for the family's needs.

The assessment of safety for young children in the CPS system requires a nuanced and ongoing approach that accounts for their unique developmental vulnerabilities. DCF will offer two cohorts to engage as many local agencies as possible. Through an asynchronous/synchronous learning approach, participants will complete five modules over the course of approximately three months that address assessment and planning practice specific to families with children under the age of 5. Upon conclusion, around fall of 2025, the participants will collaborate to identify recommendations for local and state policy and/or practice improvements opportunities.

### *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.

DCF continues 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**

DCF continues to make a concerted efforts to connect children in OHC with high quality options using Wisconsin's Child Care Quality Rating System.

To support the use of high-quality programs, DCF established a policy that requires foster parents to only use child care rated as three stars or higher by YoungStar, the state's quality and

rating improvement system, 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.

---

#### Coordination with Head Start

DCF continues 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)*

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 continues to support and monitor the contracted agencies to ensure high-quality services are available for Wisconsin's most vulnerable 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 which evidence-based home visiting models 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) or Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP). Each model has standards and guidelines that programs follow to ensure that they implement the models with fidelity. Additionally, all models include some type of individualized family goal plan that the home visitor and the client develop together to guide the work with the individual family.

DCF continues 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.

FFHV will continue the early childhood collaboration efforts described earlier in this section and remain an instrumental component of DCF's Putting Families First work. This includes discussion and planning on 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 has developed 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) help increase training timeliness and reduce training costs and travel burden on the contracted agencies.

The Wisconsin Professional Development Network (PDN) located at the University of Milwaukee continues to sponsor multiple trainings throughout the next five years to support the development of highly skilled home visiting professionals. PDN, DCF, external evaluators with

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and local contracted agencies also participate in continuous quality improvement projects to improve their processes and outcomes with families over this period.

### *Collaboration with Birth to 3 Program*

DCF continues to collaborate with the Department of Health Services (DHS) to identify and mitigate the barriers that prevent families involved with CPS from engaging with Birth to 3 and with the Birth to 3 Program to review data, referrals, consent for services, screening and enrollment. As a member of the Wisconsin Birth to 3 Interagency Coordinating Council, DCF helps identify patterns and potential next steps to improve screening and referral practices to best serve families and their needs.

### *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.

In January of 2023, the Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health was awarded funding from the Lead Agency through a one-time sub-award from the American Rescue Act (ARPA) with the goals to:

- Develop and administer a statewide Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation System (IECMHC).
- Build the capacity of all professionals in early childhood systems and settings to strengthen children's social and emotional well-being and improve outcomes for all children.
- Create a detailed sustainability plan for a statewide IECMHC system.

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation is a prevention-based approach that pairs a mental health consultant with adults who work with infants and young children in different settings. Consultants have deep expertise in early childhood, social and emotional development and mental health for children ages birth through five and teach caregivers to facilitate children's healthy social and emotional development.



During the contract timeframe (January 2023 - June 2024), the following outcomes were reported:

- 16 mental health consultants were trained and onboarded to provide services.
- Services were provided to 34 programs, impacting 2,045 children.
  - An additional 1,509 participants through community level consultation events.
- 153 Social & Emotional Kits were given to Early Care and Education programs participating in consultation or attending outreach events.

Although the federal ARPA funds were short-term, the ongoing program vision is to leverage the initial investment while working with partners and external partners to establish a long-term, coordinated and comprehensive continuum of IECMH supports for infants, toddlers, young children, families and the adults who care for them.

### *Connection to Primary Prevention Programs*

DCF provides prevention programs and services specifically focused on families with children prenatal to five years of age and funding for local prevention innovation services (one program in each of the six Wisconsin DCF regions) to serve families with young children. Program services include parent skill building and parent groups, basic needs and employment support services, family stabilization supports and other in-home 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 an 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 outlined in Wis. Stat. §§. 48.981 (7) (cr) (a), (b), (c), (d), (e) and (f) via eWiSACWIS to DCF within two working days.

DCF's Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) has the primary responsibility to review and analyze these submissions, specifically 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: Summary and Practice.

---

#### Summary Review

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

DCF uses a methodical approach called the Systems Change Review process to analyze cases assigned to a Practice Review. The Systems Change Review steps 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*).
- Recommend program and practice improvements for the Wisconsin child welfare system.

Systems Change Review results are shared with the state's Child Welfare Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Advisory Committee. This advisory committee uses the information, along with other inputs such as administrative and case review data to identify and determine opportunities for state-level child maltreatment prevention and protective services practice improvements and child welfare system change.

Information regarding Wisconsin's Systems Change Review process is 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, 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 38 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.

## **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 with the requirement to fund 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 in two ways. One is to support the public adoption program, which is responsible for finalizing adoptions of children post TPR, through recruitment activities and training requirements for prospective 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. Agencies are encouraged to align PSSF program outcomes with other county or state initiatives to improve coordination of efforts and 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. For example, agencies use PSSF funds to support local home visitation, child abuse prevention efforts, coordinated service teams, family resource centers, community response programs and reunification services. Over the next year, DCF plans to work closely with local agencies to further support Family Resource Centers to serve families who may be at risk of formal child welfare involvement.

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

- Brown County utilized PSSF funds for a unique program called the Family Unification Voucher Program. It has been instrumental in supporting families achieve housing through additional case management and one-on-one support, which has led to expediting reunification as well as allowing families to remain together. The program was able to serve 118 families with 87% successfully retaining housing.
- In Fond du Lac County, PSSF funds are used for the Healing, Opportunities, Preservation and Enrichment (HOPE) program to keep families together and avoid formal system involvement. It offers voluntary case management and prevention services, which include family training, parenting support, home management skills, mentoring and independent living. The services are delivered in home or in a community setting using a strength-based practice to identify family services and supports which can be sustained long term. The county was able to serve 87 children and 39 families.
- Manitowoc County used PSSF funds to support the Family Support Program, a preventative service offered to parents/caregivers identified in an Initial Assessment but not opened for ongoing case management services. The program has parent coaches who spend significant time with families to provide parenting education and support. It was able to serve 53 children and 23 families, with 96% of the families not requiring additional child protective services.
- Pierce County utilized PSSF funds for several vital services in their child protection unit including Family Resource Workers and flexible funding to support families. Families who received flexible funding were able to resolve safety and well-being concerns, maintain stability in the home and expedite reunification. As a result, 90% of the families served remained together.

Pierce County also uses part of their allocation to provide financial support to their local Family Resource Center to provide in-home visiting programs, group connections, play and learn groups and welcome baby visits.

- Outagamie County used PSSF funds for Parent Connection, a voluntary evidence-based Parents as Teacher (PAT) model home visitation program. PAT provides supportive services and education to first time parents presenting with at risk factors. It served 72 children and 71 families.

In addition to PAT, Outagamie allocated PSSF funds to support a Home Consultant program that provides a wide range of services to prevent child abuse and neglect. Consultants partner with parents to develop mutually agreed upon goals to increase engagement and achieve positive outcomes. This program served 18 children and 10 families who did not have any new Access reports while working with the consultants.

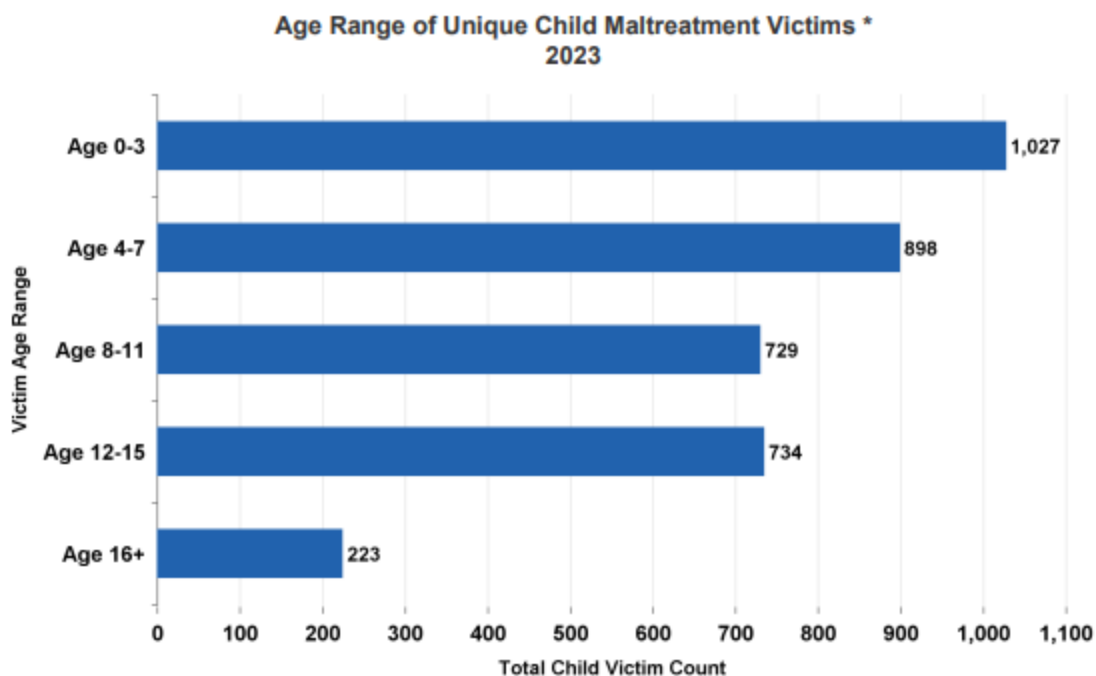
- La Crosse County utilized PSSF funding to create a full-time Community Response Social Worker in their agency. This position reduced administrative burden to assist families with comprehensive wraparound support and efficient use of prevention resources. The funding also helped remove reunification barriers for families through intensive parenting support, transportation assistance and housing assistance. The worker served 85 families, meeting 96% of their presenting needs.

Estimated number of individuals and families to be served in FY 2026:

- County agencies statewide serve over 8,000 children and 6,000 parents/caregivers annually with this funding. DCF estimates these numbers to be consistent in FY 2026.

### **Population at Greatest Risk of Maltreatment**

Under section 48.47(8) of the Wisconsin Statutes, DCF provides an annual Child Abuse and Neglect Report to the governor and legislature. The report includes information about which populations are at the greatest risk of maltreatment, as identified by substantiated maltreatment claims, and available services. The report can be found at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/5693.pdf>. In 2023, children under age three accounted for largest number of victims and 53.3% 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 describes how DCF and its partners 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.

## Kinship Navigator Funding

DCF was awarded \$177,212 from the Children’s Bureau to continue developing, enhancing and evaluating the state’s IV-B Kinship Navigator Program for FY 2025. Attachment 1 of this report describes Wisconsin’s Kinship Navigator program design and how DCF used the Kinship Navigator funding during the past five years to achieve the program goals of connecting relative caregivers to resources available to them. DCF has only applied for title IV-B, subpart 2 funding for FY 2020 – 2025 to continue the resources and services under this program and does not intend to apply for funding under title IV-E Kinship Navigator program at this time.

## Monthly Caseworker Visits

Over the last year, Wisconsin used the Monthly Caseworker Visit Grant (MCV) to support ongoing WCWPDS system efforts that include training on standards and frequency of caseworker visits. The Department of Health Services (DHS) received a portion of MCV to fund Coordinated Services Teams (CST) Initiatives that provide a complete, personalized system of care that focuses on children with complex behavioral needs.

In FFY2024, caseworker contact requirements remained consistent and were met for 97.2% of the children subject to this measure which exceeds the federal regulation requirement of 95%. Of these contacts, 87.4% 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.

### **Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive Payments**

DCF intends to continue providing services that were provided last FFY in the coming FFY.

Specifically, using these resources for the following activities:

Annual membership dues and conference participation, including:

- American Association for the Interstate Compact for the Protection of Children (AAICPC).
- National Electronic Interstate Compact Enterprise (NEICE) project.
- Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA).

Participation of DCF staff in leadership meetings and conferences, including:

- Deputy compact administrator attending the annual ICAMA conference and board meeting.
- Deputy compact administrators attending the annual ICPC conference and board meeting.
- Adoption and Post-Permanency Supports Section staff attending the National Adoption Conference.

Supporting program functions including:

- The statewide Wisconsin Family Connections Center (WiFCC) to support post-adoption and guardianship placements.
- Internet searches for the Family Find and Engagement programs.
- Portions of the Kinship Navigator Program and relative caregiver supports.
- Contract support to determine Adoption eligibility.

Supporting DCF conferences and training:

- A bi-annual Wisconsin Adoption Professionals Conference for professionals that work in the area of adoption. Approximately 150 professionals attend the conference every other year.
- SAFE trainings for licensors and supervisors.
- The ongoing statewide rollout of the Family Find and Engagement training.

In FFY 2026, DCF will participate in a cohort, organized by Spaulding for Children, that includes assessment and technical assistance aimed at improving post permanency supports in Wisconsin. Participation provides additional resources, such as data analytics, and offers a small amount of time limited funding (\$100,000) to supplement or improve the structure of post permanency services.

### ***Adoption Training Program***

The Public Adoption Program recognizes that there are several options for families to receive adoption training and, when possible, gives credit to a family completing training through another avenue. This limits the number of required extra training hours that a family must complete while allowing the Program to advise them on the required training topics.



## Adoption Savings

In the next year, Wisconsin expects to continue the use of Adoption Savings funds for services provided under the Wisconsin Family Connections Center (WiFCC) and Public Adoptions contracts.

DCF contracts with agencies under WiFCC to provide statewide and regional services to support Wisconsin adoptive and guardianship families. Family service needs following adoption finalization or guardianship vary, so WiFCC provides a continuum of post-adoption and post-guardianship services, such as support and networking groups, referrals to mental health providers and therapists and access to training opportunities, among other supports.

The Public Adoption services contracts support permanency for children and youth under the guardianship of the State of Wisconsin. Services for pre-adoptive families include information meetings, supporting training requirements, completing screening, home studies, licensing, providing case management and completing adoption assistance agreements and amendments.

### *Challenges in Accessing/Spending Previous and Future Funds*

DCF is currently meeting the federal Adoption Savings spending requirements and received additional state funding in the current 2023 – 2025 biennial budget to support these services. Wisconsin does not anticipate having any unspent Adoption Savings funds. DCF continues to request from the Legislature sufficient state funding for these services to meet the federal requirements.

## Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) Transition Grants

DCF continues to make significant progress towards its Putting Families First child welfare transformation and FFPSA Transition Grant funds were a critical resource to build that culture for change, gather implementation information and support leadership efforts. Wisconsin priorities for FFPSA implementation were focused on transforming the child welfare system to serve more children in-home, identify needed workforce and training improvements, expand meaningful and systematic involvement of children, youth and parents who are involved or have experience with the child welfare system and develop Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP).

### *Wisconsin FFPSA Transition Act Grant Funds Programs, Services and Operational Costs*

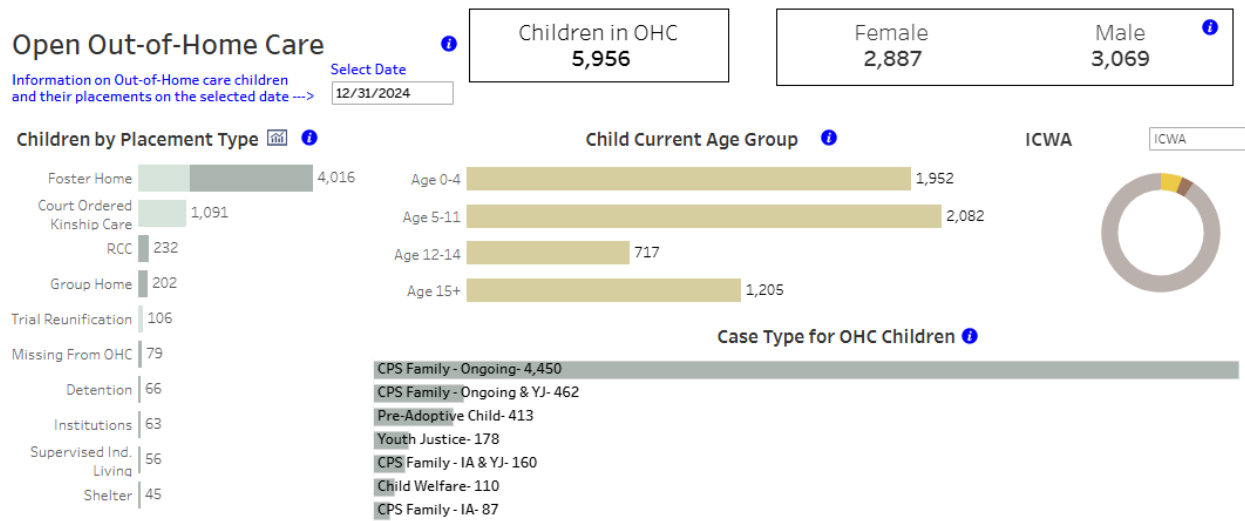
The specific programs, services and operational costs\* DCF funded through the FFPSA Transition Grant are:

- DCF Program Staff
- Consulting for Rate Regulation and New Worker Training
- In-Home Supports Toolbox
- Family Keys Project
- QRTP Consultant
- Project Management Staff
- Family Legal Advocacy and Supports Clinic (FLASC)
- Telehealth Nursing Contract
- Provider Portal
- Local Agency Support

- Consulting for Rate Regulation and New Worker Training
- Youth and Worker Surveys
- Centralized Resource Connection for Children At-Risk of Out-of-State Placement

\*Initiative specifics can be found in Wisconsin's historical federal reporting: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cfsr>

Wisconsin received and obligated the entirety of its \$8,747,420 in FFPSA Transition Act funding to support these initiatives and the children DCF serves:



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

### Agency Administering Chafee:

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

In addition to the 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.

### Description of Program Design and Delivery

DCF utilizes Chafee funds to operate a regional TRA model. DCF staff support county child welfare agencies' IL efforts and provide direct funding, oversight and technical assistance to

seven tribal IL programs across the state. 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 with resources in a timely and comprehensive way.

DCF continues to support county, tribal and TRA IL efforts to increase engagement with, and retention of, youth and strengthen existing service provider partnerships to better “right size” resources to address youth needs.

---

## YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

The state’s Chafee Plan is directly informed by youth input through the local and statewide Youth Advisory Councils (YACs), collaboration with youth consultants, service partners, directly through program visits, participation in DCF events or meetings, ongoing consultations and technical assistance. DCF is committed to compensating youth people for their time and contributions, though amounts vary 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 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 contract to elevate not only the state YAC but DCF’s other youth voice 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. Recently DCF also implemented a monthly touch base meeting with TRAs that specifically focuses on YAC efforts, initiatives, opportunities and needs. Over

DCF staff, in collaboration with Public Knowledge, compensate state YAC members for their meeting attendance, which included a 2024 hourly rate increase, 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), though provision is the norm. All entities also commonly provide food or other items to support and incentive youth’s involvement.

---

### Partner Agencies

Young adults, that are unable or unwilling to participate in YAC and/or share their feedback directly with DCF, can relay information and feedback to their local IL service providers for provision to DCF. This is accomplished via email communication, phone calls, standing meetings dedicated to IL program oversight, support and information sharing, scheduled consultations and touch-bases and direct requests from DCF.

---

### 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.

DCF continues 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. Their input has been crucial to the development of key resources.

---

### 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. DCF's commitment to, and incorporation of, this philosophy throughout its guidance and training materials, contract documents and overall approach to its work with, and on behalf of, young people demonstrate PYD's significance to IL service providers.

---

### 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. Wisconsin's first NYTD Improvement Plan (IP) progress was submitted in June of 2025 which highlighted the significant progress made to address some of the federal findings, particularly those related to the survey tool. DCF will continue these efforts to strengthen the state's NYTD data collection and reporting over the next year.

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](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 during the youth's transition from care and in the years immediately after discharge, regardless of where the youth resides.

DCF IL staff worked closely with eWiSACWIS team members to enhance key parts of the database's IL page in 2025. This work, which included an overhaul of the state's Independent Living Transition to Discharge (ILTD) plan that is required for youth who will discharge from care on or after age 18, was directly informed by young adults, child welfare agencies and TRA partners. To support utilization of the new ILTD, DCF developed Writing (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/5844.pdf>) and accompanying Desk Guides (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/5846.pdf>) and will provide additional guidance to partners about IL assessments and plans required earlier in a youth's IL eligibility to support their work.

DCF is also developing and implementing an information portal, with a 2026 anticipated statewide rollout, accessible to young adults ages 14-23 who are or were involved in the state's child welfare system that will include:

- Ability for youth to update their contact and demographic information to assist with NYTD and TRA service outreach and communications;
- A document library that provides youth access to information specific to their child welfare involvement;
- A message center where youth can directly communicate with members of their care or service team;
- A youth resource inventory;
- Ability for youth to provide input about, make corrections to, and reflect on, their ILTD plan; and
- Youth reminders of specific actions to complete within the portal or important deadlines (e.g. NYTD survey due date, FAFSA deadline).

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.

Seven tribal agencies also operate their own IL programs as the 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.

---

#### Data

IL service data resides in DCF's eWiSACWIS system, which has a report that details what and when 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. DCF will continue to 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 IL eligible 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 state's 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 qualifying youth ages 18 to 23.

---

#### 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 qualify for services via the TRAs or tribal IL program just as younger IL-eligible young adults do. These IL partners follow the youth's lead to identify the key areas of need and support targeted to address the unique needs of an older population, though there doesn't appear to be a large variance. A key focus for older youth is making sure they have a robust plan following their discharge from IL services to ensure awareness about and referrals to other benefits and services for which they qualify beyond the IL program.

All TRAs administer ETV funds in addition to IL supports and services and are responsible for building a pro-youth network of partners who can help meet youth's wants, needs and goals. Many also administer other young adult programming as well to further support expansive service provision.

---

### 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 complies 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>.

---

### 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.

DCF partners with agencies to address this issue through:

- 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, which is often used to address a qualifying youth's housing needs.
- TRAs have close working relationships with other housing assistance programs and partners, including the state's four Continuum of Care organizations, housing assistance programs, private landlords and developers.
  - In Dane and Milwaukee counties TRAs partner with local housing developments to offer priority housing to young adults former in foster care.
- Provision of financial and other assistance directly to young adults to support their housing search, acquisition and stability.
  - State funding that does not have the Chafee room and board restrictions, when available, allows TRA agencies additional flexibility.
- TRAs often secure external grants specific to supporting youth's housing costs and provide letters to housing partners on behalf of the youth they serve. This affirmation of



a youth's IL eligibility and engagement can assist the process if the youth lacks a co-signer.

- 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>.
  - TRAs have entered into MOUs with participating Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) across the state, enabling IL clients to access FYI vouchers.

---

## COORDINATION AND CONSULTATION WITH TRIBES

Seven of the 11 federally recognized tribes headquartered in Wisconsin operate an IL program. They are the Bad River, Ho-Chunk, Lac Courte Oreilles, Menominee, Oneida, St. Croix and Red Cliff.

DCF continues 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, though they 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, even if their tribe has an IL program. TRA supports for the qualifying youth 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 policy coordinator helps facilitate connection and collaboration between tribal IL and TRA partners through standing meetings that include all tribal IL partners and TRA partners who serve their area. Additionally, the DCF policy coordinator is engaged in Department-wide efforts led by the Department Tribal Liaison to ensure tribal fiscal agents are knowledgeable about DCF programs and funding opportunities. This effort provides crucial support and clarity to tribal IL partners and helps them maximize their Chafee allocations to best meet IL-eligible youth's needs.

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 other programs they administer or 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.

DCF is considering an expansion to its IL program eligibility to include more youth who discharged from court-ordered OHC to guardianship on or after age 16. Currently, IL program eligibility for youth in guardianship is limited to those who discharged to Ch. 48.977 guardianship on or after age 16 following time in court-ordered OHC. However, Wisconsin is evaluating how to expand eligibility to include youth who discharged from court-ordered OHC to Ch. 48.9795 guardianship on or after age 16. DCF will update all relevant resources and guidance documents if/when this change goes into effect.

DCF ensures fair and equitable service provision and treatment through a continued commitment to PYD and aiding and empowering youth with foster care experience who have increased risks and vulnerabilities in key areas like education, health, housing and employment. This approach is reflected throughout IL service provider program requirements:

- Consider and incorporate youth's strengths, needs, short- and long-term goals, preferences, communication styles and community throughout the process.
- Meet youth "where they are at" as unique individuals to ensure they are understood and served within the context of their family, creed, community (as defined by them), tribe, history, culture and traditions.
- Provide services that are rooted in PYD, allow for youth choice and self-determination, promote social and community integration, have a healthy balance of collaboration and are individualized based on the youth's needs and desires.

### *Cooperation in National Evaluations*

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 is called Brighter Star and 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 Brighter Star Guidelines: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youthservices/pdf/bs-funding-guidelines.pdf>.

TRAs continue to 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 each individual youth's attendance cost. Embedding ETV service provision in the state's regional IL service model prevents providing ETV funds that duplicate other benefits or are beyond the student's cost of attendance and allows TRAs to strategically support qualifying youth in combination with other IL supports and services.

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 remain key focus areas for the department and its IL partners.

CWAs lay the groundwork for a youth's educational and employment plans and goals by assisting with initial requirements, helping the youth identify and develop goals related to finishing secondary school and considering postsecondary training or education options, sharing information about Brighter Star and taking the youth on school tours.

TRAs build upon these efforts though routinely assisting 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. This program was developed in collaboration with TRAs and the youth they serve to provide valuable insight about students with foster care experience and the role TRAs can play as important service partner.

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*

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 over the next year. This includes

ongoing IL 101 trainings, DCF IL office hours to support county and tribal IL partners, TRA IL Coordinator and leadership meetings and expanding information sharing efforts with groups involved with adolescents during their time in care, notably, out-of-home care providers.

DCF commits to the continued identification of learning and training opportunities within other state agencies and external partners. Exact future topics will be informed by direct requests or identified through program need areas. Recent trainings have focused on BadgerCare+, FoodShare, youth strengths, PYD, FYI vouchers, Wisconsin's budget cycle and process, 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 through continued collaboration and ensuring lines of communication remain open.

As sovereign nations, tribes establish and administer their own codes, policies, procedures and programming related to child welfare. Because of their sovereignty, these 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 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.

---

### Funding

DCF provides limited child and family service (child welfare, child care, 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:

- 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 tribal nations and provide reimbursement for eligible subsidized guardianships (SG) ordered by a tribal court

under tribal law. The Oneida Nation was the first tribe to implement this process and Ho-Chunk Nation recently signed an agreement.

## **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's tribal consultation policy commits 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 2025 annual consultation occurred on April 16<sup>th</sup>.

Aside from annual consultation meetings, DCF staff 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 policy and procedure changes and development. These meetings allow virtual attendance which has resulted in increased participation and allows workers/supervisors to attend specific

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 has 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 and state and county agencies have no role in these reviews.

## **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>.

Increased ICWA compliance monitoring will become possible once Wisconsin implements the Final Rule on Adoption and Foster Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) that requires states to collect and report additional ICWA information.

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 FY 2026 Annual Progress and Services Report and provide electronic access once posted.

# CAPTA State Plan Requirements and Update

## 2024 Annual CAPTA Report

*Substantive changes, if any, to state law or regulations that could affect the state's eligibility for the CAPTA State Grant*

There have been no new substantive changes to state law or regulation that would affect Wisconsin's CAPTA grant eligibility.

*Significant changes from the state's previously approved CAPTA plan*

There have been no significant changes from the state's previously approved CAPTA plan in how the state proposes to use funds to support the 14 program areas enumerated in CAPTA.

*How CAPTA Funds Used*

In the last year, DCF continued to support the Parents Supporting Parents program to comprehensively and systematically incorporate the voices of children, youth and parents who are involved or have experience with the child welfare system and two annual conferences related to child maltreatment, child development and child and family well-being: Together for Children (described further below) and Circles of Life.

DCF regularly interacts with various partners including the Child Welfare Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Advisory Committee, Indian Child Welfare (ICW) Directors Committee and Child Welfare Parent Leaders related to program opportunities and funding needs. These collaborations identify and prioritize which initiatives and projects receive CAPTA funds. DCF will continue to gather input regarding funding usage with partners during regularly scheduled meetings over the next year.

Additional uses of CAPTA funds in FFY 2024 consistent with the purpose of CAPTA include the following:

---

### WISCONSIN ACT 78 AND SYSTEMS CHANGE REVIEW

CAPTA funds to support the Wisconsin Systems Change Review process that is detailed in the "Efforts to Track and Prevent Child Maltreatment Deaths" section of this APSR.

---

### WISCONSIN CHILD WELFARE MODEL FOR PRACTICE

Funding the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System for its role in the development and delivery of training and professional opportunities that support and advance local practice in alignment with the Child Welfare Model for Practice.

---

### TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN CONFERENCE

DCF regularly sponsors and helps plan the Together for Children Conference, the annual Wisconsin child abuse and neglect prevention conference, to improve prevention, treatment, investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect by providing training that addresses



emerging issues and increases the knowledge and skills of attendees. The conference in April of 2024 highlighting the department's efforts to elevate and amplify effective practice with all populations and leveraging meaningful and systematic involvement of children, youth and parents who are involved or have experience with the child welfare system.

---

#### SUPPORT FOR LEGAL PREPARATION AND REPRESENTATION

DCF is using title IV-E funding for this effort and more information can be found in Section 3.

---

#### CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS

Citizen Review Panels are supported through Wisconsin's CAPTA funding and described in detail in the collaboration section.

#### *Multi-Disciplinary Outreach, Consultation and Coordination*

---

#### CPS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

DCF is a member of the Wisconsin Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (WIDEC) and the DEC Steering Committee. WIDEC is a multidisciplinary partnership, led by the state's Department of Justice, that assists communities in assessing service needs, coordinating efforts and keeping children safe and free from exposure to dangerous drug environments. Efforts are focused on assisting with training development and sharing resources. DEC efforts in Wisconsin exist on three levels - county/tribal, state and national. As a member of the DEC Steering Committee, DCF collaborates with partners from local, state and federal agencies, including child protective services, district attorney offices, prevention services, law enforcement, health departments, American Family Children's Hospital, the WI Department of Justice, WI Department of Health Services and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

---

#### CPS AND HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

DCF uses CAPTA funding to support the Wisconsin Child Abuse Network (WI CAN), an interdisciplinary public-private partnership formed in 2009 and dedicated to improving the accuracy of child abuse investigations. It is led by representatives of The Medical College of Wisconsin; Child Advocacy Centers of Wisconsin; Children's Hospital of Wisconsin; the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault; the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board; and the departments of Children and Families, Health Services and Justice.

WI CAN works to improve interagency responses to child maltreatment through ongoing education and a web-based peer review network. It connects professionals statewide to medical expertise to improve access to medical input in child maltreatment investigations.

The WI CAN Educational Series consists of statewide, web-based lectures and case-based discussions on various topics related to child maltreatment delivered and led by subject matter experts. The target audience consists of physicians, advanced practice providers, nurses, other allied health professionals, law enforcement officials, social workers and attorneys. The goal of the educational series is to help health care professionals improve their recognition of child

maltreatment and management of cases when child maltreatment is a concern. Webinars are held on the third Friday of each month. WI-CAN's website can be viewed at <http://www.wichildabusenetwork.org/>.

---

### CPS AND TRIBAL CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES

Tribal coordination efforts are described in several places throughout this report, though the most detailed description is in the Consultation and Coordination with Tribes Section.

---

### CPS AND THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

The Collaboration Section and case review system descriptions for Items 21-24 provide an update on DCF's collaborative efforts with the judicial system.

#### *Update on the State's Continued Efforts to Support and Address the needs of Substance-Exposed Infants*

The following section describes DCF's continued efforts to support and address the needs of infants born that are identified as being affected by substance abuse or withdrawal symptoms resulting from prenatal drug exposure, or a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. These efforts include:

- Information on the current monitoring processes for plans of safe care to determine whether, and in what manner, local entities provide referrals to and delivery of appropriate services for substance-exposed and affected family members and caregivers.
- Challenges in implementing CAPTA provisions and any technical assistance the state has determined is needed to remove or mediate those challenges.

---

### OVERVIEW OF POLICY AND PRACTICE

Effective June 25, 2004, DCF issued an addendum, "Assessing the Safety of Drug Affected Infants," to the Child Protective Services (CPS) Access and Initial Assessment Standards. This policy required Wisconsin CPS agencies to develop a plan of safe care for an infant born and identified as being affected by illegal substance abuse or withdrawal symptoms. The policy directing CPS agencies to screen in these reports for child welfare services rather than child protective services cases, unless the report is accompanied by allegations of abuse or neglect. The policy also references section 46.238 of Wis. Stats., which states the county department shall offer to provide appropriate services and treatment to the child and the child's mother.

In April 2014, 2013 Wisconsin Act 260 was enacted, requiring a physician to evaluate an infant if there is a serious risk that the infant has fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD). If FASD is diagnosed, the physician is required to report that diagnosis to the CPS agency. In addition, Wis. Stat. s. 146.0255 requires health care providers of substance-exposed infants to notify CPS of the infants' condition. The agency must then offer, provide or arrange for the provision of services and treatment for the infant and the infant's mother.

The CPS Access and Initial Assessment Standards and the CPS Safety Intervention Standards issued by DCF include requirements and guidance regarding CPS agencies' responsibility for the development, monitoring and follow-up of a plan of safe care (safety plan) for a drug-affected infant or an infant with FASD known to the child welfare system. At this time, DCF has not identified any technical assistance required to improve practice and implementation to address the needs of drug affected infants.

Wisconsin's Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems (eWiSACWIS) allows for data collection related to the monitoring of the safe plan of care for families involved in the state child welfare system. EWISACWIS allows agencies and the state to gather information documented in the case record (i.e., Access/Intake Report and Safety Plan) as to the reason why the case is open and service type categories identified for the families. Inclusive of CAPTA monitoring requirements, DCF has conducted case reviews of the state's Access, Initial Assessment and Ongoing Services practices and continues to conduct additional practice or program specific targeted reviews to better understand the reasons for and results related to CPS Interventions. Results of these reviews, including cases which presented with concerns related to caregiver substance misuse, and eWiSACWIS administrative data inform system improvements in the areas of CPS reporting, including refinements to the state's mandated reporter training, Initial Assessment practices and Safety Assessment and Planning decision-making.

---

#### UPDATES TO PRACTICE

Case review and monitoring results continue to inform refinements to the state's safety assessment decision-making practice requirements and guidance, including the assessment factors that are associated with caregiver substance misuse and child vulnerability. Changes to improve safety assessment and decision-making practices were introduced in 2024 with additional changes focusing on enhancing the identification of parent/caregiver strengths and protective capacities in the safety assessment, decision-making and planning processes scheduled throughout 2025.

---

#### MONITORING PLANS OF SAFE CARE

The monitoring processes of plans of safe care continue to be a function that county agencies perform consistently through policy and training support from the state. This function includes determining whether, and in what manner, local entities provide referrals to, and delivery of, appropriate services for substance-exposed infants and affected family members and caregivers.

---

#### CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTATION

As noted throughout this report, the ability to prescribe policy and resulting practice can be challenging. This is especially true in a county-administered, state-supervised state like Wisconsin where implementation relies heavily on individual counties, communities and local service systems. Given this challenge, DCF continues to prioritize high-quality and

comprehensive collaboration with system and external partners, especially children, youth and parents who are involved or have experience with the child welfare system.

#### *Use of CQI*

Wisconsin completes regular and targeted case record reviews related to child protective services practices, including those related to substance exposed infants, and uses the results of these reviews to analyze case practice trends. This analysis, along with feedback from other key external partners including parents, relatives and youth who are involved or have experience with the child welfare system informs discussions related practice improvement through the state's Child Welfare Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Advisory Committee.

## **CAPTA Annual State Data Report Items**

This section provides annual updates to the CAPTA Annual State Report as required Program Instruction 25-05.

### *Child Welfare Workforce Data*

**Table 40**

Target Group	Primary Employees	All Employees
Child Protective Services (CPS)	1,587	3,778
Child Welfare	560	727
Youth Justice (YJ)	551	989
<b>2024 Worker Totals</b>	<b>2,698</b>	<b>5,494</b>

**Table 41**

Function	Primary Employees	All Employees
CPS Access	128	1,288
CPS Initial Assessment	470	973
CPS Ongoing	714	1,109
CPS Supervisor	275	408
Foster Care Coordinator	273	440
Case Aide/Management	287	287
YJ Worker	477	768
YJ Supervisor	74	221
<b>2023 Worker Totals</b>	<b>2,698*</b>	<b>5,494*</b>

\*These numbers are based on data collected by the WCWPDS Online Learning Management System. Not all employees represented are assigned to child welfare related functions full-time, particularly in medium and smaller sized counties; in these jurisdictions some or all of child

welfare staff also perform other human or social service functions not specific to child welfare. Individual professionals may also provide more than one function within the child welfare service array.

### *Information on Child Protective Services Workforce*

Wisconsin is a state-supervised, county-operated child welfare system for all counties other than Milwaukee where the state administers the child welfare system through the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS). As a result, the processes to recruit, hire and make case assignments are based on agency specific human resource policies and procedures. DMCPS must follow the process outlined by the Wisconsin Office of State Employee Relations.

Wisconsin child welfare professionals are not required to have a social work degree hence they possess experience from a variety of fields. To have the title “social worker” in Wisconsin, staff must hold a valid certification through the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services.

Wisconsin does not track statewide data on supervisor to worker ratios, staff turnover, vacancy rates or caseload size for the balance of the state outside of Milwaukee County. As a county-administered state, there are no statutory requirements and CPS Practice Standards do not include requirements or guidance regarding an agency’s staff ratio, caseload or other workload management. Within the county-administered child welfare system, the size and population of each county impacts the local agency’s staffing needs and caseload ratios.

Local child welfare workforce duties also vary based on the needs of the agency and community. For example, in a smaller county, the supervisors, social worker, caseworker and/or other paraprofessional staff are likely to have other child welfare program responsibilities in addition to CPS duties. Workers in a larger county may be assigned to one specific function within the local agency, rather than assume responsibilities across the entire scope of child welfare and/or human service areas. In 2021, DCF contracted with ICF, Inc., to conduct a workload study to better understand local workforce needs and it can be found at: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/workload-study>.

In Milwaukee County, where child welfare services are administered by DCF through DMCPS, a performance monitoring metric per child has been established for Contracted Case Management Agencies where at least 65% of child welfare professionals will have 15 children or fewer on their caseload. Caseload size also depends on the acuity of concerns within the family being served and team composition. The ratio of supervisors to child welfare professionals is 1:6 dependent upon staffing levels.

### *Demographic Information of the Workforce*

WCWPDS collects a wide range of information for the workforce which includes the information in the screenshot on the following page.

## Qualtrics Form Data

Are you required to complete Basic Intake Worker training?: No

Birth to Three: Yes

CPS Access: No

CPS On-going: No

Foster Care Coordinator: No

Home Visitor Supervisor: No

ICW: No

Youth Justice Supervisor/Manager: Yes

Kinship Care Coordinator: No

Certified Licensed SW in WI: Yes

Highest Education Level: Bachelors

Sex: Male

Form Filled - dropdown: Yes

Do you perform after hours/on-call duties that require you to attend child welfare training?: No

CLTS: Yes

CPS Initial Assessment: No

CPS Supervisor/Manager (Access, Initial Assessment, On-going): Yes

Foster Care Supervisor/Manager: No

Home Visitor Worker: No

Support Staff: No

Youth Justice Worker: No

4E Stipend Program: No

Employer Name: Crawford County Health & Human Services

Highest Social Work Degree: BSW

Year of Birth: 1971

Are you a Pre-Adoptive Parent?: No

In 2020, DCF, in partnership with the University of Wisconsin, collected additional workforce information using flash surveys covering a wide range of topics pertaining to caseworkers and supervisors in Wisconsin. Survey responses went to a centralized database managed by University of Wisconsin-Madison Survey Center (UWSC) where they were aggregated and kept confidential.

These flash surveys were intended to be very brief and designed to gauge:

- Workforce knowledge of specific issues or topics.
- Professional needs and challenges.
- Strengths and gaps in practice and policy areas.

The purpose of these flash surveys was to identify:

- Strengths and challenges faced by the child welfare/youth justice workforce.
- Ensure information is representative of the workforce as a whole.

The input and feedback helped DCF:

- Identify and refine priorities.
- Influence policy development and implementation efforts.
- Provide input into developing other initiatives to improve the child welfare system.

### *Youth Justice Transfer*

The CAPTA Amendments of 2003 require states, to the extent possible, to collect information on children under the care of the state child protective services (CPS) system who are transferred to the custody of the state youth justice (YJ) system. In Wisconsin, under the supervision of the Department of Children and Families (DCF), county human service departments and DMCPs operate the child protective services (CPS) system. DCF has programmatic oversight of the county human services-administered community-based youth justice system and is responsible for the development of standards of practice, training of county YJ staff, data collection and analysis, program monitoring, technical assistance to counties and fiscal administration of Youth Aids funding. The Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) retains responsibility for youth correctional facilities as well as aftercare programs for certain youth offenders.

Wisconsin counties are required to use the eWiSACWIS system to record all activity for child protective services cases and information related to YJ referrals, intake and case outcomes. DCF continues to develop youth-specific case management functionality in eWiSACWIS, which will be used for collecting and tracking all youth justice system activity – including youth justice program activity related to the Youth Assessment Screening Instrument (YASI), a risk-needs-responsivity assessment tool utilized during the YJ intake and court process to support case planning for youth on county supervision. Currently, counties are only required to record placements in juvenile correctional facilities in eWiSACWIS when they are part of a broader placement episode.

For a child to transfer from the custody of the state child protection system to the custody of the state youth correctional system, the child would have to be placed in a youth correctional facility immediately after having been in an out-of-home placement in an open CPS case. Most of the children placed in DOC custody have delinquency activity and youth justice-related services at the county level before being transferred from the county agency to youth correctional facilities.

To calculate an estimated number of children under the care of the CPS system who transferred into the custody of the state youth justice system, eWiSACWIS records for Calendar Year 2024 were queried to identify children placed in a youth correctional facility (using the service ending reason in eWiSACWIS) after having been in an out-of-home placement in an open CPS family case. This method identified 10 children that met the federal transfer criteria.

### *CAPTA Contact Information*

Wisconsin State CAPTA Coordinator:

Lisa Hanks, Manager  
Child Welfare Policy Section  
Division of Safety and Permanence  
Department of Children and Families  
201 West Washington Avenue  
P.O. Box 8916

Madison, WI 53703  
Phone (608) 422-6961  
Email: [Lisa.Hankes@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Lisa.Hankes@wisconsin.gov)



# Updates to Targeted Plans within 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](mailto: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). Wisconsin utilizes the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool to assess the child's level of need and determine appropriate placement setting. Children who have an adoption assistance or subsidized guardianship agreement continue to be eligible for Foster Care Medicaid until their agreement expires. A medical and dental examination, in accordance with the schedule of the HealthCheck program, is required within 30 days of a child's placement into foster care. HealthCheck is a Medicaid health care benefit that provides continuous quality health care for individuals until age 21. HealthCheck exams, also known as well-child checks, are scheduled on a regular basis using guidelines developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Well-child checks include comprehensive health screens that identify a child's mental or emotional health concerns and appropriate behavioral and mental health treatment.

Child medical information is maintained in Wisconsin's ForwardHealth Portal. Providers search a child's electronic health record for information about previous HealthCheck exams, completed and scheduled future appointments according to the periodicity schedule and to ensure continuity of health care services. This process helps ensure appropriate diagnoses, if applicable.

Wisconsin's Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (eWiSACWIS) has a section to enter each child's health summary which includes their current physical, mental and emotional health needs; history of hospitalizations, surgeries and significant illnesses; current and historical prescribed medications, health care providers and immunization records. This information pre-fills into the child's permanency plan that is completed by the assigned child welfare professional and reviewed in court within 60 days of a child's placement in out of home care subsequently every six months for additional oversight and coordination.

Through Care4Kids, children in out-of-home care with two or more psychotropic medication prescriptions receive a comprehensive care plan that identifies the names of the lead prescriber and the provider responsible for metabolic monitoring of antipsychotic medication prescriptions. Each child also has a health care coordinator to assure that identification and ongoing oversight of children who are prescribed psychotropic medications is occurring regularly, including recommended metabolic testing for children on antipsychotic medication.

Wis. Admin. Code s. DCF 57.25 (7) and Wis. Admin. Code s. DCF 52.46 (5) describe the procedures for emergency and non-emergency administration of psychotropic medications for children placed in group homes and residential care centers as required by clinically acceptable

standards for good medical practice. These administrative rules also describe the protocols for administering psychotropic medications when consent is revoked by the child (age 14 or older) or their parent or guardian.

Youth 14 and older who qualify for independent living services develop an IL plan with their child welfare professional, which includes information and goals related to their independent living wants and needs. If the youth is likely to age out of care, they also complete an Independent Living Transition to Discharge (ILTD) Plan, part of which focuses on their medical coverage options post-discharge. Their child welfare professional is required to provide them with important documents prior to discharge that will help with their transition to adulthood. Youth age 18 and older (up to 23) can continue to receive independent living services if they discharge in a way that aligns with the state's independent living program eligibility criteria. More information on Wisconsin's independent living program can be found under the Chafee Foster Care Program section of this APSR.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act requires that children under 19 receive an additional 3 to 12 months of continuous Foster Care Medicaid coverage to give families time to find an alternative after exiting out-of-home care or their Subsidized Guardianship or Adoption Assistance Agreement terminates. In Wisconsin, children who were in out-of-home care or under an active Subsidized Guardianship Agreement on their 18th birthday may receive BadgerCare Plus (state Medicaid) benefits until their 26th birthday without income testing, premiums or copayments. Additionally, eligible youth aging out of care in Wisconsin, who move to another state, continue to be eligible for coverage as former foster care youth under the state's Medicaid program. DCF issued an Informational Memo outlining these provisions: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/memos/2022-27i.pdf>.

## **Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment Plan**

- Submitted separately.

## **Disaster Plan**

- There are no updates to the state disaster plan as submitted in the 2025 – 2029 CFSP, nor was Wisconsin affected by a disaster since its submission.

## **Training Plan**

- Submitted separately.

## Financial Information

### Payment Limitations – Title IV-B, Subpart 1:

In FY 2023, 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.

### 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 2024.

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 2023 costs to the FY 1992 base year. The amounts provided in CFS 101, Part II for Adoption Promotion and Support Services are estimates based on contracts. Intervention, Prevention & Support Services and Family Reunification Services are split based on contracted amounts to local agencies.

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 2023, counties reported spending a total of \$296.4 million on child welfare services for children and families, the CY 2024 financial data was not yet available. These expenditures were supported by \$101.9 million from the Children and Families Allocation to counties to support local child welfare costs, which utilizes state GPR and federal title IV-E, IV-B and SSBG funds. The balance, \$194.5 million, was local county funding. The overall increase in expenditures from 1992 to present 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.

### **Chafee**

Wisconsin did not expend more than 30 percent of the FY 2023 allotment of federal Chafee funds for room and board for youth who left foster care after 18 years of age and have not yet attained age 21. Wisconsin certifies that these funds have not and will not exceed this 30% limit in any year for which it receives the award.

## **Attachment 1 – Kin Navigator Annual Report**

Type	Resource	Detail
Information and Referral	<i>Kinship Navigator Portal</i>	With the funding provided in FY 2020 – 2025, DCF developed and launched Wisconsin’s Kinship Navigator Portal ( <a href="https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/kinship/navigator">https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/kinship/navigator</a> ) on January 15, 2020. This online portal provides caregivers with comprehensive information about resources and state-sponsored services based on their specific caregiving situation.
	<i>Relative Caregiver Guided Search</i>	With the funding provided in FY 2022 – 2025, DCF contracted with United Way – 211 Wisconsin to create and support the annual maintenance of a relative caregiver guided search ( <a href="https://211wisconsin.communityos.org/relativecaregiversearch">https://211wisconsin.communityos.org/relativecaregiversearch</a> ). The guided search is an electronic database for caregivers to access information and referral services specific to their family’s needs that are available in their local community.
	<i>Informational Materials</i>	With the funding provided in FY 2020 – 2025 DCF, created and maintained informational materials for relative caregivers including six fact sheets and a Kinship Navigator Guidebook ( <a href="https://wifamilyconnectionscenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/kinshipnavigatorguide7finalweb.pdf">https://wifamilyconnectionscenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/kinshipnavigatorguide7finalweb.pdf</a> ) that outlines common questions and information related to the child’s healthcare coverage, education, permanency options, child care options, child support and legal assistance. Electronic copies of these resources are available on the Kinship Navigator Portal and the Wisconsin Family Connections Center website. Physical copies of these resources have been made available upon request.
Caregiver Education	<i>Kinship Navigator Training for Relative Caregivers</i>	The recorded web-based Kinship Navigator Training course for Relative Caregivers ( <a href="https://media.wcwpds.wisc.edu/related-training/Kin-Nav/Caregiver/story_html5.html?lms=1">https://media.wcwpds.wisc.edu/related-training/Kin-Nav/Caregiver/story_html5.html?lms=1</a> ) is available through the Kinship Navigator Portal, various pages of DCF’s general website and the Wisconsin’s Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS) website. This training seeks to normalize a relative caregiver’s complex feelings about their caregiving role and support them by providing information about available services and resources.
	<i>Families Like Mine: Wisconsin Relative Caregivers for Children Conference</i>	With the funding provided in FY 2020 – 2025, DCF sponsored five conferences for relative caregivers of minor children across Wisconsin consisting of presentations and unstructured time for caregivers to connect with one another. The presentation topics were informed by the Relative Caregiver Stakeholder Workgroup and feedback from previous conference attendees.
Caregiver Support	<i>Relative Caregiver Support Grants</i>	With the funding provided in FY 2023 – 2025, DCF broadened the scope of these grants for agencies to submit proposals with activities that assist relative caregivers throughout the state in learning about, finding and using programs and services to meet their needs and the needs of the children they are raising. DCF

		awarded 21 county, tribal and community non-profit agency grants to fund approved activities including assisting relative caregivers with legal representation, housing concerns and permanency through guardianship and developing community resource and legal clinics, coordinating relative caregiver support groups and providing relative caregivers with concrete supports for food, clothing and transportation.
<b>Professional Education</b>	<i>Kinship Navigator Training for Professionals</i>	The recorded web-based Kinship Navigator Training course for child welfare professionals ( <a href="https://wcpds.wisc.edu/web-based-courses/kinship-navigator-training-for-caseworkers/">https://wcpds.wisc.edu/web-based-courses/kinship-navigator-training-for-caseworkers/</a> ) is available on various pages of DCF's general website and through the Wisconsin's Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS) website. This training seeks to recognize the unique circumstances of relative caregiving and how child welfare professionals can build partnerships with caregivers through supportive and affirming practice.
<b>Outreach and Evaluation</b>	<i>Relative Caregiver Workgroup</i>	DCF created a group of relative caregivers across Wisconsin to advise on the implementation of Wisconsin's Kinship Navigation program in 2018. In the past two years, DCF increased recruitment efforts to include new members and the team now consists of 26 caregivers with various types of caregiving situations and different levels of child welfare system involvement. DCF facilitates quarterly group meetings in which the members offer recommendations, feedback and guidance on DCF's strategic initiatives and evaluate their impact on relative caregivers in Wisconsin.