

To: DCF/DMCPS Administrator
DCF Area Administrators
Child Welfare Agency Directors
County Departments of Community Programs
Directors County Departments of Human Services
Directors County Departments of Social Services
Directors

From: Fredi-Ellen Bove 
Administrator

Re: Child Welfare Workforce Survey on Working with Children with Disabilities

PURPOSE

The Division of Safety and Permanence within the Department of Children and Families has partnered with the University of Wisconsin-Madison Survey Center (UWSC) to issue a “FLASH” survey to child welfare workers to gather information on how Child Protective Services (CPS) currently responds to working with children with disabilities and how we can help strengthen this response.

BACKGROUND

Recent legislation, 2015 Wisconsin Act 365, requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to develop and implement a plan for identifying and addressing areas in which there is a need for improvement in the practices used to investigate reports of suspected or threatened abuse or neglect of a child with a disability. The text of 2015 Act 365 is available at:

<http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2015/related/acts/365/4>. Wisconsin Statute Chapter 106 defines “disability” as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a record of having such an impairment or being regarded as having such an impairment. This includes but is not limited to cognitive disabilities, hearing impairments, speech or language impairments, visual impairment, emotional behavioral disabilities, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injuries, other health impairments and learning disabilities.

As required by Act 365, DCF is using an open public participation process to develop the plan that includes input from broad range of stakeholders. Input from child welfare workers will help build our understanding of how CPS currently responds to working with children with disabilities and how we can help strengthen this response. To obtain the broadest possible input from child welfare workers, DCF partnered with the University of Wisconsin-Madison Survey Center (UWSC) to develop and administer a brief survey of the child welfare workforce regarding on this subject.

INFORMATION SUMMARY

Within the next two weeks, all front line staff engaging in child welfare work will be sent an email with an explanation of, and a link to, the survey on how CPS currently responds to working with children with disabilities and how we can help strengthen this response. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. All responses are strictly confidential—all responses are submitted to a centralized database managed by the UWSC, where they are aggregated. No information specific to an individual worker/supervisor will be shared with anyone, including staff of DCF, county or tribal child welfare agencies, or the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System. To ensure that the aggregated responses from these surveys are representative of the full child welfare workforce, worker

participation is critical. We will share a report of the findings with all counties.

We ask for your cooperation in encouraging staff to complete the survey as soon as possible, and providing assurances to staff that their individual responses will be handled by a neutral third party, and will remain strictly confidential.

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MEMO WEB SITE: <http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy>