

Child Welfare Workload Study

History

In 2017, the Wisconsin County Human Service Association (WCHSA) created a CPS Caseload Study Committee to better understand caseloads across the state. This committee created recommended caseload standards for local agencies and requested that the Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) conduct a comprehensive child welfare workload study.

In response to this request and in collaboration with WCHSA, DSP contracted with ICF, Inc. in August 2019 to complete a workload study examining child welfare professionals' and supervisors' time relating to case work and staffing patterns, identifying manageable caseloads, and sharing system efficiency findings. This work was directed by an Oversight Committee that included DSP and WCHSA representation, as well as local agency leadership and representatives from the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS).




Results

19 agencies participated in the time study, representing agencies across all regions and of all sizes. 33% of all statewide staff participated in the time study, including 589 child welfare professionals across all practice areas and 65 supervisors (17% of statewide supervisors). ICF, Inc. calculated the following suggested caseload standards from the monthly average time per case in each of the practice areas included in this study. These standards were used by ICF, Inc to create the staffing tool, which can assist local agencies in calculating local caseloads and to compare these results to the caseload standards derived from this study.

	Access	IA	Recruitment etc.	Ongoing	YJ Intake	YJ Ongoing
Average Time Per Case	2h: 28m	10h: 20m	5h: 41m	11h: 12m	6h: 21m	7h: 22m
Suggested Caseload Standard	43-52 reports	14-17 IAs	19-23 families	9-11 families	17-20 youth	14-17 youth

Considerations

DSP cautions against utilizing this data in isolation, as these results are just one piece of Wisconsin's caseload and workload puzzle. The following limitations should be considered when using the workload study results:

-  The staffing tool was built using actual time spent per case during the March 2020 time study. Therefore, the model reflects recorded practice at the time of the workload time study and does not necessarily reflect the time required to ensure optimal outcomes for children and families.
-  Wisconsin's child welfare system is county-administered outside of DMCPS. Staffing structures and organizational operations of each agency vary widely across the state. As such, the study's results will not be a perfect match for every agency.
-  These results were calculated using the average time spent on a case and do not account for the high variability in the amount of time spent on cases, especially complex cases with multiple households, or large households.

Youth Justice Considerations

Due to statewide variability in YJ use of eWiSACWIS, less defined standards of practice than CPS, and YASI implementation, the tool is likely less useful at capturing YJ workload than CPS. Youth Justice was included in this study to account for staff with mixed caseloads.



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System Efficiencies

Staffing is an important part of being able to serve all children and families throughout the state. However, the study identified other ways to improve our system. Through all aspects of the workload study, ICF was able to identify system efficiencies for consideration.

These efficiencies are related to:

- Processes and procedures
- Training
- Technology
- Resources
- Staff shortage
- Employee turnover
- Community outreach and education

ICF Inc.'s findings aligned with the goals of our strategic transformation efforts, including streamlining assessment and planning documentation, standardizing new child welfare professional training, and creating training for eWISACWIS documentation.

Resources

More information can be found at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/workload-study>, including the following deliverables:

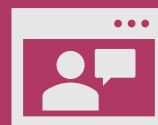
- Executive Summary of Workload Study**
- Workload Study Final Report by ICF**
- Staffing Tool**
- Staffing Tool Tutorial Video**

Staffing Tool



A staffing tool that local agencies can use was created to assist in estimating local level staffing needs. Data from eWISACWIS and internal staffing rosters or the DCF Random Moment Time Study can be utilized with this tool to determine how and where current staffing levels are sufficient for attending to the work required to service a given caseload. The staffing tool should be used in coordination with other sources of information that would affect caseload size, such as agency structure, case complexity, staff experience, equity and diversity, etc. DSP and WCHSA recommend that individual counties are in the best position to determine how the suggested workload standards and the staffing tool best apply to their respective agencies and the caseloads of their child welfare workforce.

Staffing Tool Tutorial



The staffing tool itself was built in an excel workbook. Embedded in the tool are detailed instructions on how to utilize the tool at the local level. Additionally, a tutorial video has been created for local agency use, including instructions for pulling data reports from eWISACWIS, entering agency data into the tool, and interpreting the results.