



Putting

Families First



Welcome!



John Elliott
Administrator



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Deputy Administrator



Who is joining us today?

A top-down view of several hands of different skin tones holding white rectangular cards on a wooden floor. The hands are arranged in a circle, and the cards are also arranged in a circle, some overlapping. The background is a dark, blue-tinted wooden floor.

Vision

All Wisconsin children and youth are safe and loved members of thriving families and communities.

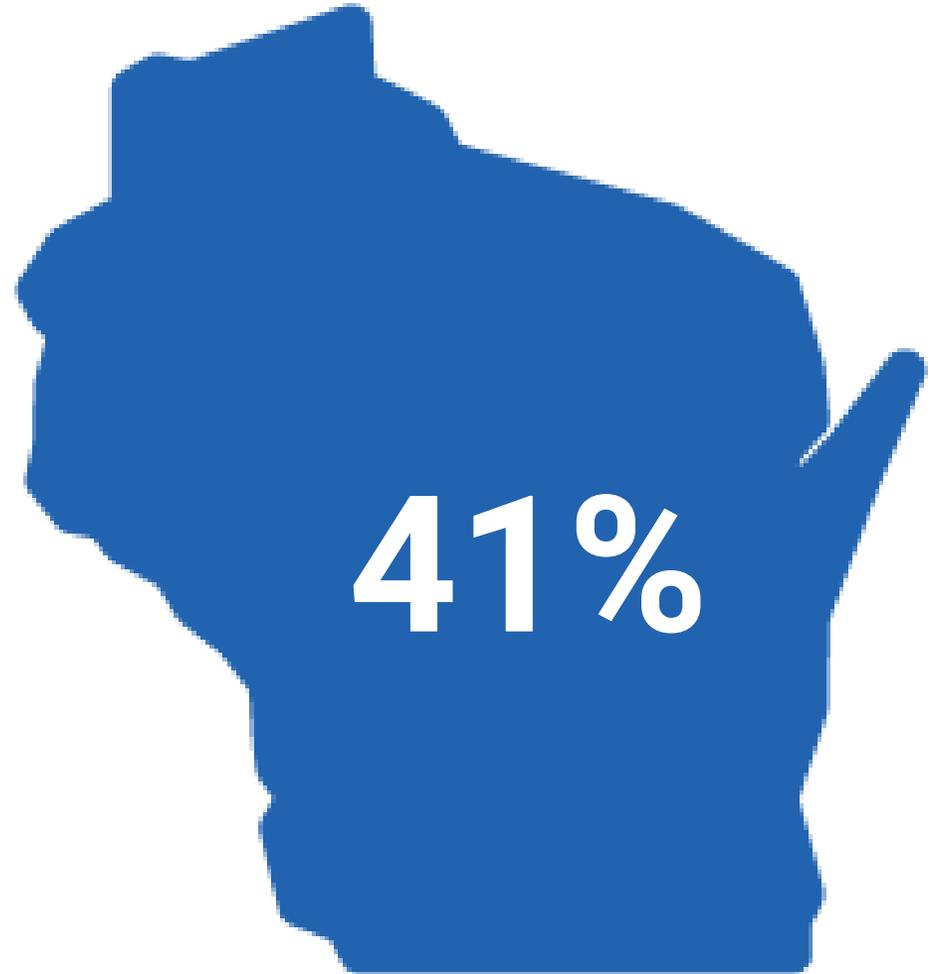
**We strive for justice in the
child welfare system
through addressing
systemic oppression,
inequity and racism.**

A group of five diverse children are huddled together, looking up at the camera with joyful expressions. The children are of various ethnicities and are smiling broadly. The background is a bright, clear blue sky, suggesting an outdoor setting. The overall mood is positive and inclusive.

**Wisconsin is
transforming.**

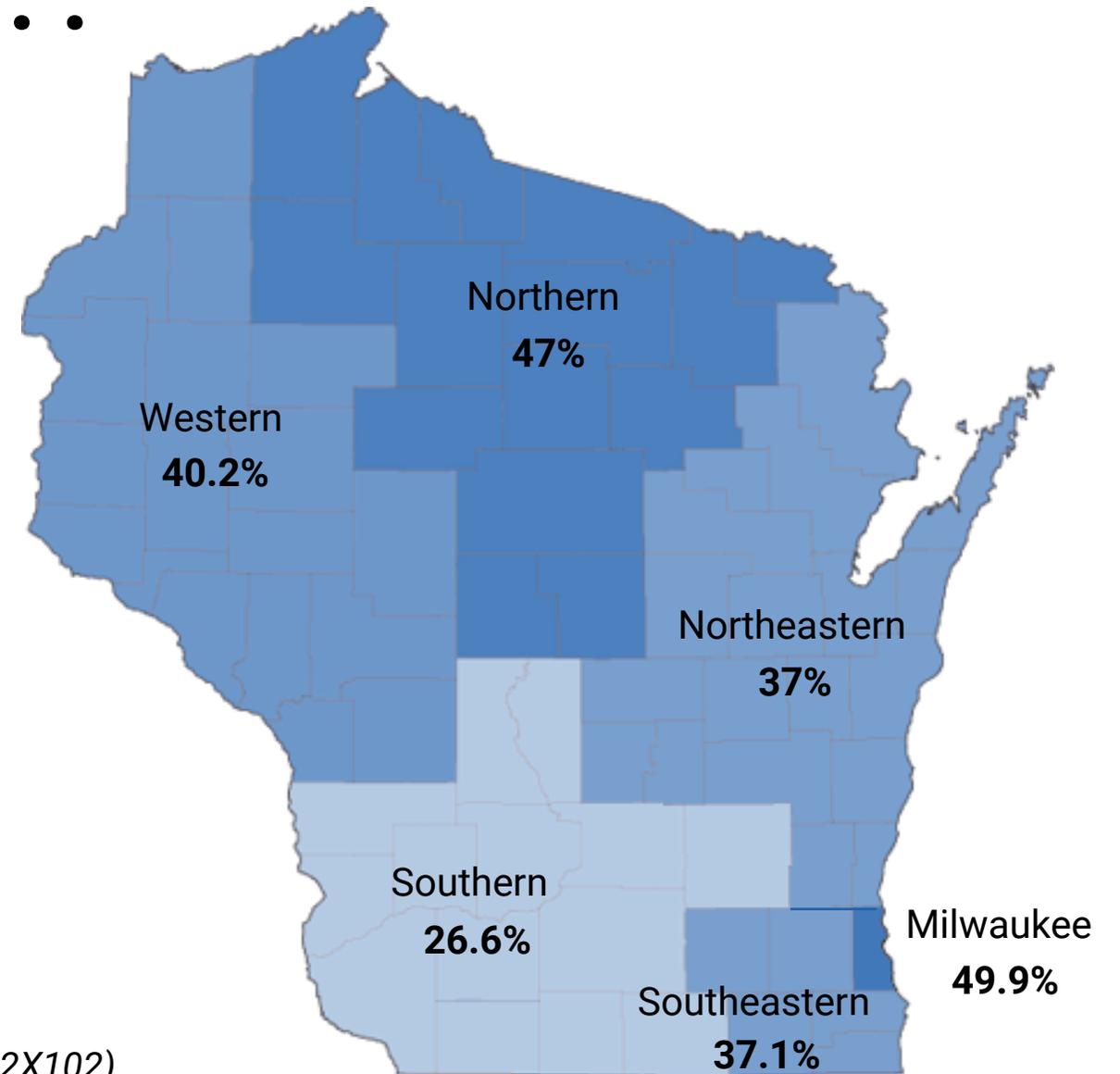
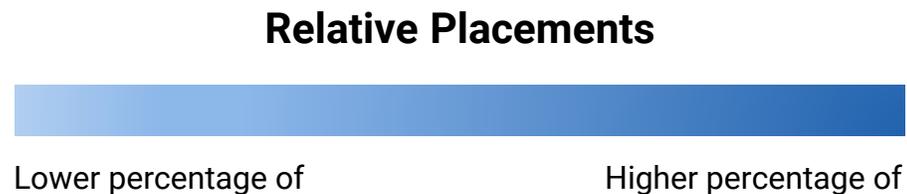
In the first half of 2024 . . .

Of all the children who entered out-of-home care, **41% were initially placed with relatives.**



In the first half of 2024 . . .

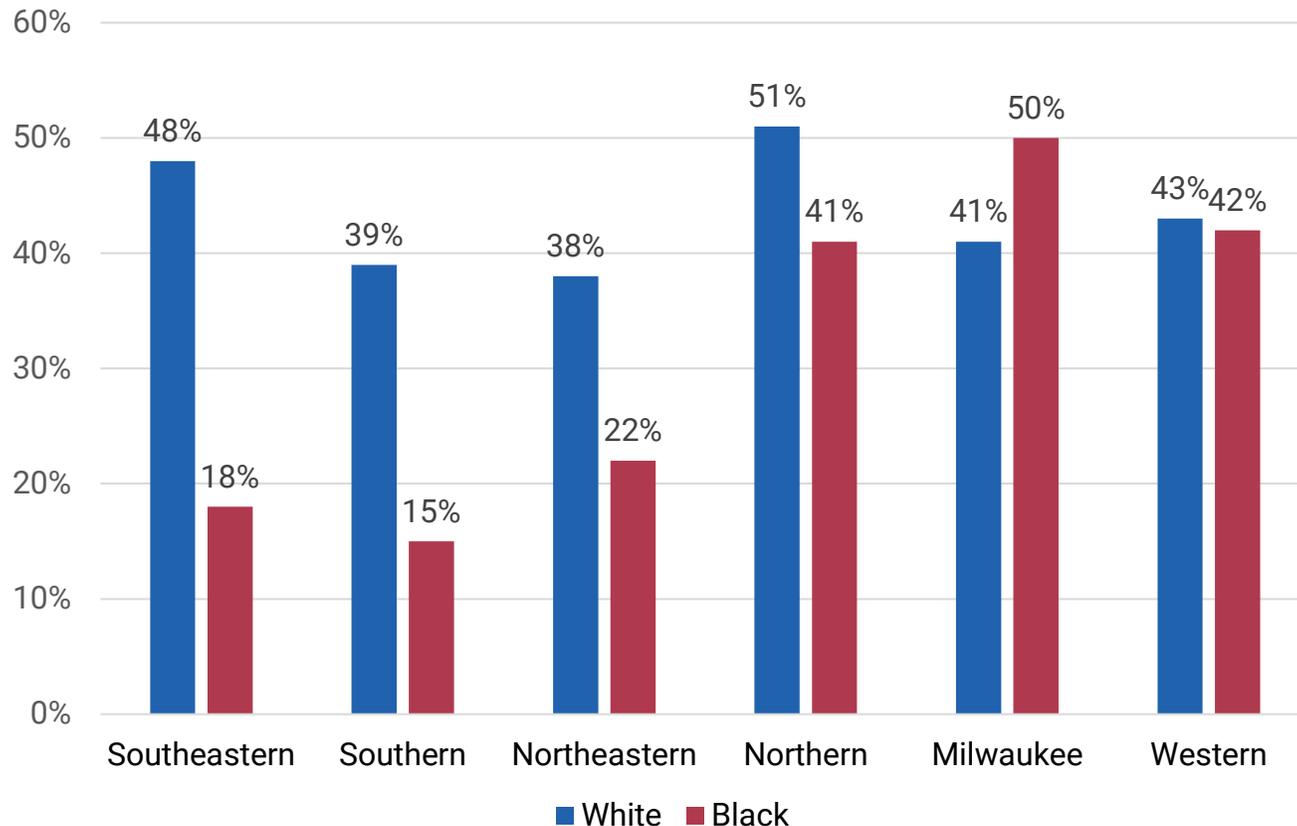
Initial placement with relatives By region



Source: *Child Welfare Implementation Support Metrics Report (CM22X102)*

In the first half of 2024 . . .

Disparity in initial placement with relatives By region



Reading the chart:

*In the Southeastern region, the percentage of white children initially placed with relatives was **48%**.*

*For Black children, this number was **18%**.*

Source: Child Welfare Implementation Support Metrics Report (CM22X102)

**We are in a moment
of opportunity.**





• **Keeping children in family settings whenever possible.**

Like-kin legislation

Supporting families by supporting their people



2023 Wisconsin Act 119 has two impact areas in child welfare:

1. Placement with a like-kin caregiver.
2. Financial support through the Kinship Care benefit program (DCF 58).

Next step:

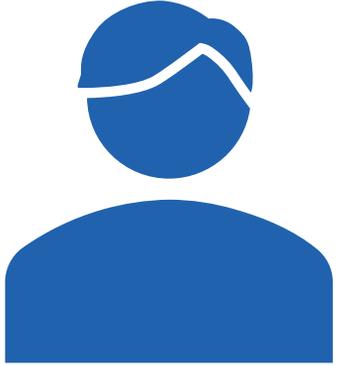
- Establishing a pathway for a January 1, 2025 implementation.



Photo courtesy of the office of Representative Dave Considine.



Informational resource available here: dcf.wisconsin.gov/family-first/toolbox.



Keeping the family together

Christopher – Connor's father – took placement of Connor's half-sibling.

Under previous law, Christopher was not eligible for kinship payments. This caused significant financial hardships for Christopher and the children, and while the child welfare agency assisted him when able, these periods of relief were brief and inconsistent.

Now, caregivers like Christopher will be eligible for kinship support.

This means more families across Wisconsin will have an opportunity to stay together, to see siblings able to grow up alongside each other, and to experience stability.



Chapter 56 Revisions

Foster Care Licensing Rule



Opportunity to **update and align** with federal model standards:

- Removing requirements that are no longer relevant.
- Clarifying the rules (reducing annotations).
- Making it possible for more families to be licensed appropriately to their needs.



Agency authority over placement decisions and safety-related rule requirements will not be changing.

Chapter 56 Revisions

Foster Care Licensing Rule



Relative and like-kin standard in DCF 56:



Promotes first choice decision to place a child with a relative or like-kin caregiver



Promotes prompt licensure of a like-kin or relative foster home at Level 2



Supports diverse like-kin and relative populations



- **Strengthening local communities and building services that support families *in their homes.***



Youth Justice Innovation Grants: Jackson County

What are they doing?

- Enhancing and developing programming based on risks, needs, and responsivity factors, and
- Implementing services to help youth cultivate personal and community connections and build skills.

What are they seeing?

A slight decrease in referrals, better outcomes for youth engaged with programming, and cross-system collaboration.

Putting Families First Grants



Earlier this year, DSP launched a non-competitive application process for a one-time, time-limited funds allocation.

- Can be used to cover costs of providing supports or services, addressing child, youth and family resource needs, and more.
- Contracts are for the July 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025 period.
- Award letters were sent in June.



All 71 eligible counties and 8 tribes applied for and received Family First Funds!



How are agencies using these funds?

Housing, child care, and parenting supports!

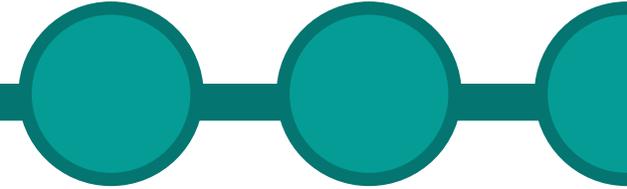


Creating local youth justice groups!



Parents Supporting Parents staff support!





• **Supporting the workforce.**

Improving Child Welfare

Initial
Assessment
Improvement
Project

Streamlining to
support the
workforce and
center families

Safety Revisions

Revising the process
so it is easier to
understand and
implement

Quality Case
Planning

Clarifying and
supporting case
planning so plans
meet needs

Independent
Living Project

Enhancing the existing
Independent Living to
Discharge Plan (ILTD)
template and developing
a youth portal

Streamlined work to increase engagement with families and better support the workforce.



Initial Assessment Improvement Project

Changes went live on June 22! Here's what was updated:

IA template in
eWiSACWIS

Resource for parents
and caregivers

Updated Access and
Initial Assessment
Standards

Updated IA Report

What's next for the IAIP?

- Enhanced practice guidance for collaborating with tribes.



Safety Revisions

February 2025 enhancements

- Small changes, smart incremental steps.
- Tribal collaboration.
- Protective capacities.

Access Response Time Pilot

- Testing a new method to determine response time.
- Using two response times: 24 hours and 5 business days.
- Cohort 1 implementation begins November 1, 2024.



Quality Case Planning

Goals:

- 1 Identify case planning tools that can be utilized consistently across practice.
- 2 Monitor safety and behavioral/condition changes in one place.
- 3 Implement strategies to reduce/fill data gaps.

What's next for QCP?

- Redesigning the eWiSACWIS Case Plan template.
 - Development began in June and is scheduled for a February 2025 release.
 - Future enhancements are planned into 2026.



Independent Living Project

Enhanced ILTD template

More . . .

- User- and youth-friendly,
- Strengths-based, and
- Aligned with key discharge needs and objectives.

Youth portal

Increase and improve . . .

- Youth's access to information about themselves,
- Communication with child welfare professional(s), and
- Involvement with their case management and discharge planning.

What's next for the ILP?

- Updating the ILTD in the February 2025 eWiSACWIS release.
- Completing the youth portal in late 2025 or early 2026.



Engaging Lived Experience

Lived Experience Summit



The Lived Experience Summit was held in May, in partnership with lived experts and the Office of Children's Mental Health.

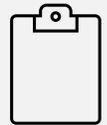
By the numbers:

- **2nd** annual Lived Experience Summit.
- Hosted **8** lived expert stakeholder groups.
- Stakeholder groups included **44** lived experts.
- **6** workshops were held.
- Featured **2** keynote speakers.



Engaging Lived Experience

Updates



Stakeholder survey

We want to learn:

- Understandings
- Efforts
- Challenges

Will be sent to child welfare professionals and community organizations



Public Knowledge

Partnership will support:

- Resourcing and supporting lived experience efforts
- Training, capacity-building and engagement with lived experts
- Engagement with county and state partners



At the Department

Lived experience voice informs:

- Strategic initiatives
- Communications resources
- Internal collaboration

Lived Experience Specialist joined in April

Resources



Information for Parents at the Start of a CPS Initial Assessment

Visit this site for an online version of this document and to gain access to the links:



Or visit:
<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/5776.pdf>

The Department of Children and Families is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access services, receive information in an alternate format, or need information translated to another language, please call the Division of Safety and Permanence at (608) 266-8787. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or speech disabled can use the free Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) – 711 to contact the department.



DCF-P-5776 (06/2024)

Wisconsin Department of Children and Families



A Guide for Youth in Out-of-Home Care Placements in Wisconsin

For youth ages 14 and older placed in court-ordered relative placements, foster homes, group homes, residential care centers, or Supervised Independent Living placements



Putting Families First Playbook Educators

Overview

Educators and administrators are deeply invested in the well-being of children, and they often have more direct contact with a child or youth than any other adult in their life. Because of this, and because of their commitment to the children and youth in their schools, educators are critical partners in the Putting Families First child welfare transformation.



This transformation is focused on keeping children and families together by supporting them in-home with resources and services, because research makes clear that families do best when they are safely together.

By continuing to partner with families, educators are supporting safe and thriving families and communities.

Putting Families First in Schools

- Educators often see when children and families are struggling before they come to the attention of the child welfare system. Because of this unique position, educators and other school professionals play a vital role in supporting children, youth and their families.
- Engaging child welfare may often seem like the right answer, but child welfare is not always best positioned to respond.
 - Child welfare systems have strict statutory guidelines on when they can or cannot intervene in families' lives.
- Child welfare intervention is not always in the family's best interests, either.
 - In Wisconsin, the most common reason for Child Protective Services (CPS) involvement is neglect, which is often tied to economic stressors.
 - Research shows that impoverished families are more likely to be referred to child welfare – and families of color are much more likely to experience poverty than white families. These and other systemic barriers for families of color can disproportionately increase the probability for involvement with the child welfare system.
 - In many cases, families need connection to services and resources – like housing, child care, counseling or other supports – versus intervention.

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Wisconsin Department of Children and Families



Find these resources and more at: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/family-first/toolbox>.

***What are you most
excited about?***

Let's keep transforming **together!**



Check out DCF's communications resources.



Explore the Child Welfare Implementation Support Metrics Dashboard, which offers local data.

Take a look today in eWiSACWIS!



Keep doing the **incredible work** you're doing!



Questions?

Thank you!

Have additional questions? Don't hesitate to reach out!

Putting Families First

Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

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