



Putting

Families First

From the Children's Bureau: May is Foster Care Month

This year, we are spreading the word on the importance of kinship care. The theme, "Relative and Kin Connections: Keeping Families Strong," highlights how maintaining relationships with relatives or other close connections can help young people stay connected to their roots and support families on a path to permanency.

When children and youth cannot safely remain in their homes, placement with relatives is the preferred option because it can minimize the trauma of family separation. Children who stay in their own schools and neighborhoods, thrive living with either relatives or other supportive adults in kinship care.

Kinship care also provides unique benefits to children and youth because it can help them maintain their cultural identities and traditions.

When working with children and families, it is critical that caseworkers ask themselves the following questions:

- How are we honoring this young person's culture?
- How are we strengthening connections to their family and community?
- How can we improve our efforts to engage kin?
- How are we empowering our kinship families?
- Are we providing culturally appropriate services for this specialized population?

This National Foster Care Month, we invite you to support children and youth by continuing to learn ways to improve practices that honor the cultural identity of families and increase supports for those grandparents, siblings, relatives, friends, or neighbors who step in as kinship caregivers. For more information [visit the DCF website](#) or the [national child welfare website](#).

Putting Families First

In the April issue of this newsletter, we asked folks to submit what putting families first means to them, or the agency they work with.



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We heard from a variety of folks, including the Department of Children and Families Secretary Emilie Amundson.

“Putting families first means helping kids stay closest to places and connected to people where they feel most comfortable, accepted and loved. This allows the healing to begin faster. When I talk with children and youth who have been impacted by child welfare, I am constantly reminded that we as humans simply love our families first. It doesn’t mean that we can’t love other folks. It only means that no matter the struggles, imperfections and hardships families face, kids feel a natural and powerful connection to their kin. Putting families first acknowledges that powerful connection,”

--- **Secretary Emilie Amundson**

“Families First for me means to wrap services around the family and put them at the center of building a community of resources to raise them up. Families should be the center of the process not looking in from the outside,”

--- **DCF Area Administrator, Northern Regional BRO Office, Kimberly Edwards**

“Putting families first means our system prioritizes keeping families together by understanding that families is at the heart of what is important,”

---**DCF Division of Safety and Permanence, Deputy Administrator, John Elliott**

“Putting families first means emphasizing connections children have with their parents, relatives, family friends and community, and understanding how deeply a child is affected when they are removed from everyone and everything they have ever known.

--- **DCF Division of Safety and Permanence, Administrator, Wendy Henderson**

The spring [Town Hall meeting](#) highlights the progress of Putting Families First in Wisconsin. Watch the newsletter or check the [Families First page](#) for information on the fall town hall meeting dates.

Thank you for sharing, and please continue to reach out to familyfirst@wisconsin.gov to share your ideas.

Agency Spotlight

This month, DCF’s Lonna Morouney connected with Kenosha County’s Director of the Division of Children, Ron Rogers to talk a little more about Kenosha’s commitment to the prevention of



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child abuse and neglect. To honor this commitment to children and families, Kenosha County has dedicated funds and resources to support agencies that work within the framework of the Prevention Services Network (PSN).

The Prevention Services Network is a community wide collaboration dedicated to strengthening families and helping them become resilient to child abuse and neglect. PSN programs include:

- Service Coordination
- Teen Parent Home Visitation Program
- Family Support Program
- "Nurturing Parent" Classes
- Intensive In-Home Services
- Elementary School Truancy Reduction Program
- Health Services
- School Liaisons (High School and Middle School)
- Effective Black Parenting Program
- Positive Parenting Program to Triple P
- [Prevention Services Network \(PSN\) Family Resource Center](#)

The Prevention Services Network (PSN) provides community-based services that aim to prevent formal involvement in the child welfare and youth justice systems. The Service Review Team, a multi-disciplinary team of supervisory level staff from the agencies and programs within the Network, meets three times a month to review staff cases, provide consultation, and set priorities for services. PSN Service Coordinators provide voluntary case management services to families which includes needs assessments, service referrals, client advocacy and problem solving.

Check out the [most recent newsletter](#) for the latest information on what the PSN Family Resource Center is working on.

A heart-felt thank you to Kenosha County for taking time to share a little more about their family resources and prevention efforts. If your agency would like to share a way you're putting families first, please connect with us at familyfirst@wisconsin.gov.



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What Does the QRTP Landscape Look Like Now?

Facilities who have applied to be certified as QRTP's, have done so with a strong effort to showcase their trauma-informed treatment intervention models, supportive family-based aftercare service provision, and outlined efforts in family engagement and teaming. Many questions have been raised by child placing agencies and community stakeholders regarding the expected changes that may occur when QRTP implementation occurred and the move towards more certified facilities becoming more available. We have developed a [1-pager document that highlights](#) what QRTPs are and what they are not intended to do for our child welfare system.

Lived Experience Update

The Parent Leaders in Child Welfare Stakeholder group have been instrumental in identifying areas where DCF can continue to make changes in order to continue to put Families First. The Parent Information Project is one of those changes. The Parent Information Project will work to elevate resources around the critical topics identified by lived experience partners, and include topics like parent rights, the court process, and child welfare worker roles and responsibilities.

In collaboration with lived experience partners, county stakeholders, child welfare professionals, and tribal partners, the Parent Information Project's main goal will be to develop tools and strategies that support counties by providing consistent, up-to-date information on the child welfare process. The Parent Information Project is an example of how DCF and the lived experience team is working to elevate and implement input received from lived experience partners across Wisconsin.

For more information on DCF's Lived Experience work, or to see upcoming events and meetings, please [visit the webpage](#).

Safety Planning Revisions Workgroup

DCF is just under a month away from the June eWiSACWIS release (June 11, 2022) which will include the first phase of changes to danger threat language. Child Welfare professionals will see the changes that were made to 12 danger threats reflected in updates in eWiSACWIS as well as in the Safety Intervention Standards. An informational memo will be released in early June to accompany the updates – no other changes are being made to standards at this time.

The changes that were made to 12 danger threats did not change the intent nor are any of the changes meant to change the application of the threat. In the coming weeks we encourage



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Child Welfare professionals to start the work of considering the words they are using in their work and thinking about how language can further perpetuate bias. The Safety Planning Revisions Workgroup reviewed this article which discusses buzzwords and why they are harmful in CPS: [Buzzwords: Moving to Behavioral Descriptors](#), and Child Welfare professionals may find it helpful to review it as they start thinking about the language they are using when talking to and about families.

The Safety Planning Revisions work has a dedicated website which is being updated regularly. A video providing an overview of what is changing for the June 2022 update is available on the website, along with a document showing the danger threat language side-by-side with what is changing. [Visit the website](#) for the most up-to-date information.

The next phase of the Safety Planning Revisions includes two concurrent focuses: the Business Process Reengineering (BPR) which is looking at ways to improve how safety planning with families is documented; and the work of making additional danger threat modifications. The BPR has finished conducting their interviews and workshops and are preparing to submit their recommendations for changes to DCF leadership. Additional information on the recommendations from BPR and next steps will be shared with stakeholders in the coming months. The work to modify danger threat language is still in the early stages with changes tentatively set to occur in 2023 and 2024. Additional information, including opportunities for stakeholder involvement, will be forthcoming.

The Safety Planning Revisions work is ongoing – check the [Safety Revisions website](#) frequently for additional information and email DCFMBBSWBCWPP@wisconsin.gov with specific questions or concerns.

Trivia

How Wisconsin are you? The first response back to the [family first email inbox](#) will win a high-five mention in the next newsletter and have the chance to submit a Wisconsin themed question for our trivia section next month.

Q: What is Wisconsin's oldest city?

Clue: Baye des Puants was the original settlement name from the Winnebago tribe.

High-five! The first response to the family first inbox was received from Janet Poff, MSW, from the Dane County Department of Human Services. She guessed correctly with Green Bay.



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Green Bay is located along the banks of the Fox River and was established in 1765. It's home to the Green Bay Packers!

Janet has visited Green Bay. One highlight to her visit was a tour of Lambeau Field with family, even though she did say she's a Bears fan 😊 Thank you for playing along last month. We have a new question for May.

Q: What is the largest inland lake in Wisconsin?

Try not to use Google, best guesses are welcome! Read this section in June to learn the answer and a little more about this lake.