



Putting

Families First

Family First Newsletter | April 2022 | Issue 9

Putting Families First

Have you seen our new look? We collected feedback on how our partners, shareholders, agencies, and co-workers were referencing our child welfare transformation efforts, and the feedback was clear. We are “Putting Families First” in Wisconsin.

We're working hard to put all Families First. To review, in 2018 the department began supporting agencies across the state in transforming the child welfare system. The goal of these efforts is to serve more children and families safely in their homes and communities. Research shows that children and families have better results when supported together in their home. Putting Families First is focused on keeping families and children together by serving them in-home with resources and services.

Putting Families First encompasses all areas of the child welfare system. This includes child protective services, youth services and youth justice efforts. Whichever way children and families enter the child welfare system, we want to empower families and communities.

To serve more families in-home, the child welfare system shifted its strategy to focus on strengthening families with supportive services. The DCF, county agencies, tribes and stakeholders are all working as a team to help keep more families and children together.

We look forward to continuing our transformation efforts by Putting Families First.

Connect with Us!

We would love to hear from you! In the May issue of this newsletter, we would like to highlight what Putting Families First means to you, in your own words. Please send a quick note to FamilyFirst@wisconsin.gov with your thoughts.

Some examples we have heard are:

1. Putting Families First means we're supporting families within their communities.
2. Families First means families are a priority and we want to help them thrive.
3. We have been putting families first, by wrapping services around them and keeping them together, we're happy to continue this work and highlight creative ways to do it.





Putting

Families First

We're eager to hear your personal thoughts on this effort.

Agency Spotlight: Rock County Family Support Unit Success!

This month, DCF connected with Jamie Proctor and Terra O'Connor at Rock County Human Services to learn a little more about their family support unit. Their efforts are another great example of how agencies are creating unique programs to put families first. In their own words, they explain how the Family Support Unit focuses on the family and their needs.

At Rock County Human Services, we have created a Family Support Unit within our CPS team. Through changes in our approach and unique programming, we can focus on providing support that families need. Parents Supporting Parents Program (PSP) is part of this unit that is being piloted in a few counties in Wisconsin. Parents with CPS lived experience are hired and supported through our partnership with Professional Services Group (PSG) to become mentors for parents who currently have their children removed from their care. In this role, the parent with prior lived experience (Parent Partner) can support the parent currently navigating the system during court hearings, before and after visitation, during family team meetings, as well as overall general support as requested by the parent. We then have a PSP Coordinator within CPS that also helps support the parent partners and connects this program with CPS staff. While this program is new, feedback received from parents has been positive.

In addition to the PSP Program, we have Family Team Meeting facilitators. In 2021, Rock County decided to create a more structured and consistent approach to family team meetings with families in CPS, using the wraparound philosophy and Coordinated Services Team (CST) approach. A neutral facilitator is assigned to a case, prioritizing new out-of-home cases, to schedule and arrange family team meetings, within the first few days of removal, and then at least weekly to begin with, and gradually lessening over time. The FTM is family led, which means the family determines who is on the team, with some help and guidance from the facilitator. Throughout the team process, group agreements are made between all team members and a plan of care is developed with specific goals that are developed with the family utilizing various information to inform the goals, such as court ordered conditions, permanency plans, CANS, etc. This process also holds all team members accountable, including family, informal supports, case managers, and various internal and external stakeholders. While this process has only been in place for approximately six months, the feedback from workers and families





Putting

Families First

suggests a greater level of engagement from the parents, a clearer understanding of what is expected of them, improved communication between team members, as well as decreased amount of time in out-of-home care placements.

In the family support unit, we also have two positions that assist workers in providing prevention, preservation, and reunification efforts and help reduce some of the case load size constraints workers are feeling, by completing screened-in child welfare reports, supervising family interactions, and assisting families with transportation and service needs. The family support unit also manages targeted safety service funds to ensure all units throughout CPS has access to funding to keep children in their home safely and prevent removal. Restructuring the way in which Rock County manages and utilizes TSSF has increased our ability to provide in-home services to families to help keep children and families safely together.

A heart-felt thank you to Rock County for taking time to share this story. If your agency would like to share a way you're putting families first, please connect with us at familyfirst@wisconsin.gov.

Safety Planning Revisions Workgroup

Phase 1: June 2022 Changes As indicated in previous newsletters, the first phase of changes to danger threat language will roll out this summer with the June eWiSACWIS release (June 11, 2022). The focus of these changes has been to look at the present and impending danger threats through a race, equity, and inclusion lens. This initial danger threat language update was specific to addressing language in the danger threats that contain buzzwords or perpetuate bias. In addition, there were some threats where subjective language was replaced with objective language, and work was done to ground the danger threats in the parent's/caregiver's behavior and the effect on the child.

The June 2022 update will include language changes to 12 danger threats across both Present and Impending Danger. The language revisions in the June 2022 update **do not change** the original intent or function of the danger threat. DCF does not anticipate a substantive impact on current case practice or documentation. Additionally, there were several danger threats that were initially considered for changes in June 2022, but through the phase 1 process it was determined that they needed more substantive changes that fit within the scope of phase 2 language and process updates.





Putting

Families First

A video overviewing the June 2022 language changes as well as a side-by-side document showing what will be changing will be available and shared with CPS professionals in May 2022. Stakeholder questions are being compiled into an FAQ document that will be updated

periodically and posted on the Safety Revisions website: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/safety-assessment>

Phase 2: 2023-2024 Changes This phase is all about hearing directly from child welfare professionals, youth, parents, tribal partners, and the Professional Development System (PDS) to understand current safety processes, inefficiencies, and providing suggestions for improvement. The Division of Safety and Permanence along with long-time partner CGI, are providing facilitation and workshop delivery. There are still a few final workshops where discussions about the future of safety assessment and planning will take place. Following these last workshops, all the feedback received throughout the process will be analyzed and compiled into recommendations for improvements.

These improvements and changes are tentatively set to occur in 2023 and 2024. DCF is also in the planning process for the next phase of danger threat revisions, building on stakeholder feedback received so far. 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.

Lived Experience Update

On April 14, 2022, the DSP Parent Leader Group participated in a panel facilitated by Bregetta Wilson and Bianca Shaw for the 2022 Children's Wisconsin Together and Connected Conference. Over 219 individuals registered to learn about DSP's efforts to incorporate their perspective within the system. Attendees had the opportunity to engage with parents closely and hear insights and best practices on ways to integrate lived experience voice into system change.

Watch for more engagement opportunities on the refreshed [lived experience webpage](#).





Putting

Families First

Save the Date for April Town Hall Meetings

The Spring Town Halls will cover a variety of subjects related to Putting Families First. Please send questions to FamilyFirst@wisconsin.gov.

Town Hall Meeting for Legal Professionals | April 26, 2022

Held via Zoom | [Zoom invitation](#) Meeting ID: 818 8793 3909 Code: 427475 | 12:00 p.m. - 12:50 p.m.

Town Hall Meeting for CW Professionals | April 26, 2022

Held via Zoom | [Zoom invitation](#) Meeting ID: 862 4805 5176 Code: 427214 | 2:00 p.m. - 2:50 p.m.

For those who were not able to attend the most recent Fall Town Halls, you can view the recordings on the [Family First website](#).

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.

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

