

Judicial & Legal Stakeholders: Supporting In-Home Planning

Child welfare systems, including child protective services and community-based youth justice, and legal partners have long had to balance the harm of removing a child and the potential risk of a child remaining in-home.

Research makes clear that child welfare systems have a significant responsibility to support children, youth, and families remaining safely together.¹

DCF and local child welfare agencies have increased supports to keep children safely in-home as part of Putting Families First. This has included a renewed commitment to:

- Creative efforts to keep children in-home & prevent removals
- Increased partnership with a family's extended support network
- Renewed emphasis on partnering with community supports

Legal Partners can support in-home planning in several critical ways:



Hearing from Parents

Legal partners have a key role in helping families navigate the system. Hearing directly from parents about what they need to be successful is vital to in-home planning. Ensure parents understand what is needed from them at key points of the case.



Partner With Your Local Child Welfare Agency

Ask your local partners what ways they are implementing efforts to keep more children safely in-home!



Ask Key Questions

Asking key questions during court proceedings has been found to help decrease removals and increase relative placements.

¹ Capacity Building Center for States. (2021). *The evidence for strengthening families*. Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Service. <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/resources/evidence-strengthening-families>. PDF download.

For more information on Putting Families First:
<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/family-first>.

Key questions to support in-home planning may include:



- What does the family think is needed to be successful in home?
- What can be done to remove the safety concern instead of the child?
- Can someone the child knows move into the home to support the family?
- Can the caregiver and the child move together to a relative's home?
- Can public safety threats be reduced by matching services with delinquency-related needs?
- What are you seeing in the home that makes you think this plan will be successful?
- What ensures monitoring/accountability of this plan?
- If the child has been removed, what is the path for this child to go home?

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