



# Putting Families First Playbook

## An Orientation to Child Welfare

The child welfare system is complex and can be confusing for stakeholders who are not familiar with how families become involved in the youth justice and child protection systems. The below information can be used to assist stakeholders in understanding the basics of the child welfare system.

### Key points:

- The child welfare system is made of two inter-related but distinct systems.
  - ◇ Child protective services (CPS)
  - ◇ Community-based youth justice (YJ)
- Families become involved in these systems when there is a concern related to child or community safety.
  - ◇ **The majority of families who come to the attention of CPS stay together safely.**
  - ◇ In Wisconsin in 2021, only 31% of CPS reports were screened-in for further investigation. Of the children involved in these CPS reports, **92% were not removed in the course of an investigation.**
- Wisconsin's child welfare system is state-supervised and county-administrated, with the exception of the state-administered Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS). DMCPS is responsible for administering child protective services in Milwaukee County.
  - ◇ This means that policy and state-level funding is determined by DCF, while local-level policy, implementation, day-to-day service delivery and local funding is administered at the agency level.



- Tribal child welfare agencies, as sovereign nations, provide their own child welfare services that are governed by their unique tribal codes. Tribal child welfare agencies may have access to different resources or have different strategies to support families, which is one of many reasons that partnership between agencies is extremely important.
  - ◊ DCF values partnership between the state and tribal nations. DCF consults with tribal nations regarding potential policy and legislative changes, as well as provides support to tribal child welfare programs as requested.

To help aid conversations with stakeholders about the front-end of the child welfare system, two infographics were created that showcase how cases flow through the child welfare system:

- [Access](#)
- [Initial Assessment](#)

