



Putting Families First Playbook

Preventing Removals & Investing in Prevention

We know that economic factors are a huge driver in families needing support and that every family needs help sometimes.

Preventing Removals

Once involved in a family's life, child welfare systems and legal partners have long had to balance the harm of removing a child and the potential risk of a child remaining in-home.

Historically, in the child welfare system, the perception of risk for children remaining in home has overshadowed the harm of removal. This fear of risk is often based on public or community reaction to tragedies and perceived ability to prevent them. However, research has shown that removing children from their family and culture also poses significant risk to children. Due to this, the child welfare system has a significant obligation to families to be sure that removal is only used when all other means are not possible or have been exhausted.

Key Talking Points

- Removals, regardless of length, have a profound impact on the child and family and have been long associated with negative outcomes for both children and families.
 - ◇ This was true even when [comparing](#) children who were removed to children who experienced similar maltreatment but were not removed from their parent's care.
 - * One study found that children who were placed in foster care compared to those remaining in home, were **2x** as likely as children who remained in home to become involved in the YJ system and **3x** as likely to be incarcerated as an adult.¹
 - * Children who were placed in foster care were employed and earned 40% less the children who remained in home.
 - ◇ Another [study](#) found that children who were removed from home were at **1.5x** higher risk of mortality between ages of 20-56 compared to children who remained in home.
 - ◇ Studies have also begun to suggest that removal from home should be considered an Adverse Child Experience, which has been linked to numerous negative outcomes.
 - ◇ For justice-involved youth, even short stays in detention [increase](#) the risk of recidivism.
 - ◇ In Wisconsin, the majority of youth are not assessed as high risk, meaning that relatively few young people require intensive interventions, and in fact many can be appropriately and successfully diverted from system involvement.



However, research shows us that involvement with the CPS and YJ systems – particularly removing children from their families – has significant and long-lasting negative effects. Therefore, Wisconsin aims to prevent and limit child welfare system involvement wherever possible.

Investing in Prevention

- [Research](#) is clear that investment in prevention pays off. Increased investment in prevention services has been linked to:
 - ◇ decreased childhood maltreatment;
 - ◇ improved outcomes across a variety of domains;
 - ◇ and decreased downstream costs.
- * One [analysis](#) has found that for every \$1 spent on foster care for a child, there was a negative social return of \$-3.64 and -\$9.55, stressing the importance of supporting upfront investment to prevent removal.
- * Costs may include areas such as health care costs, including mental health and substance use costs, criminal justice and productivity costs.

Make it personal: In 2021, the average cost of using Targeted Safety Support Funding (TSSF) per child in Wisconsin was \$10 a day (or around \$300 a month).

For comparison, in 2021, the average rate for foster home care was roughly \$1,015 per month or \$33 per day, while the average daily rate for RCC/group home placements was about \$320 per day (just under \$10,000 per month) with the highest identified rate being \$690 per day (or \$21,000 per month).

When talking with stakeholders, consider comparing your average out-of-home care costs to TSSF spending. This can help build a compelling argument on the importance of in-home spending. The below table indicates the average monthly placement rate per placement type.

Placement Type	Average Monthly Placement Rate per Placement Setting in 2021
	<small>*Rate assumes placement lasted the entirety of a month.</small>
Court-Ordered Kinship Care	\$253
Foster Family Home	\$873
Treatment Foster Family Home	\$1,615
Group Home	\$7,280
Residential Treatment Center	\$14,075

Out-of-Home Care Impacts

Research alone can't quantify the impact of removal on children and families. Families and youth who come into contact with the child welfare system have indicated that they experience many types of loss and adversity following a removal into out-of-home care. As a result, the goal of the Wisconsin child welfare system is to ensure that placements in out-of-home care are rare and used as a last resort.

Make it personal: *Have a conversation with your team about what types of loss families experience after a removal. This conversation can help challenge the assumption that child removal is the safest or best option for children.*

After the conversation, review the following list Wisconsin's child welfare parent leaders created. What didn't make your team's list?

- *Loss of major family events and milestones;*
- *Loss of ability to build relationships with key caregivers;*
- *Loss of identity and voice;*
- *Loss of connection to community;*
- *Loss of friendships;*
- *Loss of connection to their culture;*
- *Loss of confidence;*
- *and often, a loss of purpose, and for some, a loss of livelihood.*

1 Economics of Child Protection: Maltreatment, Foster Care & Intimate-Partner Violence Joseph J. Doyle Jr.* and Anna Aizer.

