



# Putting

# Families First

## Putting Families First Newsletter | August 2022 | Issue 13

### Mark Your Calendars – Fall Town Halls Are (Almost) Here!

We have a bit of summer left to enjoy, but fall is just around the corner. And you know what that means—fall town halls! More details are incoming; be sure to watch the [Family First webpage](#) and next month's newsletter for Zoom meeting links and other information. For now, save the date!

#### Town Hall for Legal Partners | October 12, 2022

- 12:00 p.m. - 12:50 p.m. | Held via Zoom | Link to come

#### Town Hall for Child Welfare Professionals | October 13, 2022

- 10:00 a.m. - 10:50 a.m. | Held via Zoom | Link to come

For those who were not able to make the virtual spring town hall meeting, the recorded version is now [available here](#). A PDF of the presentation is also available to review [here](#). Questions about the town hall or presentation can be sent to [FamilyFirst@wisconsin.gov](mailto:FamilyFirst@wisconsin.gov).

### Agency Spotlight

2022 Caring for Kids awardee LaTasha Perry is a Community Outreach Supervisor in Wellpoint Care Network's Child and Family Wellbeing team in Milwaukee. She has nearly a decade of child welfare experience as a case manager and mentor—and now supervisor! She leads a team of community outreach specialists who screen all new parents and relative caregivers connected to child welfare case management at Wellpoint. The team assesses families for their unmet health, housing, education, employment, and social connection needs. LaTasha created a streamlined process for



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identifying emergent needs of parents enrolling in child welfare services within the first 30 days of intake. As a result, **over 90 people** were provided financial support for groceries, housing, or home management that allowed them to feel some stress relief and be able to engage in their court-ordered services.

In addition to supervising the community outreach specialists, LaTasha is building a first-of-its-kind birth parent mentoring program at Wellpoint. She has hired and trained a Parent Partner; this Parent Partner has lived experience as a parent who had children in out of home care, with their case being managed at Wellpoint a few years ago. Because of LaTasha's wealth of child welfare experience, wisdom, and energy to improve the well-being of all children and families in Milwaukee, she and the Parent Partner were invited to be the first people from Milwaukee to participate in the Wisconsin model of birth parent support evidence-based intervention training, [Parents Supporting Parents](#).

LaTasha also guides her team and other child welfare professionals in understanding how the life experiences of the people they serve have typically involved significant oppression and discrimination, which results in distrust of systems and the people connected to those systems. She teaches her team and others to understand how this impacts engagement, which helps them give those they serve access to respectful and culturally appropriate resources.

On top of these primary leadership duties, LaTasha has taken the lead on many agency-wide initiatives. She has led several projects within the Historical Trauma Workgroup at Wellpoint; most notably, she created and facilitated the first Brave Spaces event, which has grown to a five-month series where people at Wellpoint discuss race, racial inequities, diversity, and inclusion in an emotionally safe small group setting. These spaces have shown to help people feel more supported and invested in the mission of serving children and families.

The diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives that LaTasha has led have an incredible impact on the people working in child welfare in Milwaukee. Creating an inclusive place to work is one of the most powerful steps towards eliminating the racial disparities we see in child welfare. LaTasha's leadership in this area has undoubtedly improved the lives of children and families and will continue to do so as others follow her lead.



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We're always eager to recognize and celebrate good practice! If your agency would like to share how you're Putting Families First, please connect with us at [FamilyFirst@wisconsin.gov](mailto:FamilyFirst@wisconsin.gov).

## **Public Service Loan Forgiveness Deadline is October 31**

As a Wisconsin employee, you may now be eligible for federal student loan forgiveness for your important public service, even if you were not eligible before.

The Department of Education issued a waiver that allows you to get credit for past payments even if you didn't make the payment on time, didn't pay the full amount due, or weren't on a the right repayment plan. Until Oct. 31, 2022, federal student loan borrowers can get credit for payments that previously didn't qualify for Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF). Many people in the human services sector (including those that work in government and nonprofits) qualify for this program but don't know about it.

The Administration for Children and Families has created a [PSLF landing page](#) that includes more information and resources for you to access and share with your networks. Check it out and see if you qualify for loan forgiveness!

## **Get Involved with Lived Experience!**

Lived Experienced experts have been instrumental and innovative in supporting child welfare system change. The focus of their recommendation—the Parent Information Project—is to develop educational materials about the child welfare process and make those materials available to families. To engage counties about their understanding and access to such resources, we are surveying to learn more about the support for the rollout of materials to counties. Your input is valuable; please consider completing the [survey](#).

DSP staff, in partnership with the Office of Children's Mental Health, hosted Lunch and Learns for counties to learn more about how Lived Experience partners provide invaluable input on ways we can continue Putting Families First. Over 30 child welfare professionals attended to learn how to get families involved and get firsthand feedback from those who have experienced Wisconsin's child welfare system.



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There will be one more Lunch and Learn this summer on Monday, August 29 from 12 p.m.–1 p.m. Please feel free to register [here](#) or share this opportunity with your networks!

Any questions relating to these sessions or lived experience can be sent to [Bregetta Wilson](#).

## **Child Welfare Professional Training Update**

For the last several months, we have been working hard in partnership with the Wisconsin Child Welfare Development System (WCWPDS) to prepare to implement WiLearn, a training program for newly hired child welfare professionals, in early 2023. This work includes exciting enhancements to the learner’s experience with initial training as well as updates to content and language that align with Putting Families First. You can learn more about the WiLearn training model, purpose, and goals by visiting our [website](#).

Project updates will continue to be shared through multiple channels, including this newsletter and the WiLearn website. In the coming months, we will provide multiple channels of communication to assist child welfare professionals across the state in learning about how to prepare for the rollout of WiLearn, what resources are available, and how to access them. Coming soon is a “frequently asked questions” document for quick access to answers to commonly asked questions.

On September 15, an institute will be held on WiLearn at the Public Child Welfare Conference at the Kalahari Resort and Convention Center in Wisconsin Dells. Participants will have the opportunity to experience a demo of WiLearn and learn more about the tools available to individuals who directly provide support to new professionals during training. Finally, information sessions will be held in the fall providing updates, including the transition process, enrollment procedures, and toolkits in development. Event information will be available soon on our [website](#).

## **Safety Planning Revisions Workgroup Update**

The Safety Revisions team will be leading the Safety Revisions institute at the Public Child Welfare Conference on September 15, 2022 . . . and we want to hear from you!



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This all-day institute will be a mix of presentations and large and small group discussions designed to share information and gather initial reactions from child welfare professionals.

The morning session will feature important updates on current efforts towards making strategic revisions to Wisconsin's safety analysis and planning process, including connections to [Putting Families First](#). Additionally, this will be the first of many opportunities to provide high-level feedback that will be used to inform the revisions process. In the afternoon, we will provide an overview of the findings and recommendations from the Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) that occurred in the spring and present data related to Present and Impending Danger Threats from the last five years.

If you're not signed up yet, don't worry, there's still time! Click [here](#) to register for the conference; both in-person and virtual participation options are available. We're looking forward to sharing information and hearing from our child welfare professionals from around the state.

## Upcoming Events

Please join DCF at the 2022 Wisconsin Public Child Welfare Conference: Putting Families First. The conference will be held September 13–15, 2022 at the Kalahari Resort in Wisconsin Dells, but feel free to attend virtually as well. There is no cost to attend the conference. (That's right—it's free!) Register [here](#).

Child Welfare Worker Appreciation Week is September 12–16. It's a time to celebrate and say a heartfelt thank-you to child welfare professionals, who do so much to support children and families. Keep an eye out for more communication from us about this, and in the meantime, check out the [National Child Welfare Workforce Institute](#) for more information about Child Welfare Worker Appreciation Week and Child Welfare Workforce Development Month.

## Let's Keep in Touch!

**Join our mailing list!** Are you interested in receiving monthly Putting Families First updates? Click [here](#) to join our mailing list. A confirmation email will be sent to you, so



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be sure to check your email after you sign up! Any questions can be sent to [FamilyFirst@wisconsin.gov](mailto:FamilyFirst@wisconsin.gov).

**Follow us on social media!** Don't want to wait another month to hear how we're Putting Families First? Follow @WisDCF on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) to see updates, announcements, and more on your timeline.

## 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 themed question for our trivia section next month!

**Q: The United States' first kindergarten opened in Wisconsin in 1856. Where was it opened?** (Bonus points if you know what language the classes were taught in!)

**High-five!** The first correct response to the Family First inbox was received from Andrea Szvec, Parents Supporting Parents Coordinator with Jefferson County Human Services. She guessed Watertown, WI, which is correct!

The building—known as the First Kindergarten—still stands in Watertown today. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1972.

Thanks for participating! Here is the new trivia question:

**Q: Despite having a population of (roughly) 400 people, this Wisconsin village hosts the world's largest cranberry festival. What village is this?**

Your best guess can be sent to [FamilyFirst@wisconsin.gov](mailto:FamilyFirst@wisconsin.gov).