



Putting

Families First





Vision

All Wisconsin children and youth are safe and loved members of thriving families and communities.

A group of five diverse children are shown from the chest up, arranged in a circle and looking directly at the camera. They are all smiling and appear to be looking up at something off-camera. The background is a bright, clear blue sky. The children have various hair colors and styles, and are wearing casual clothing. The overall mood is joyful and optimistic.

2025 is

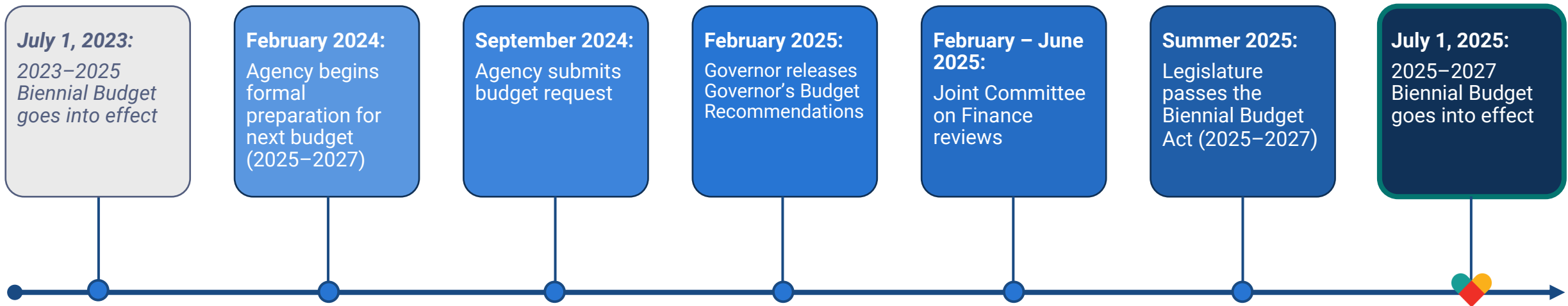
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The national landscape

Wisconsin's budget timeline

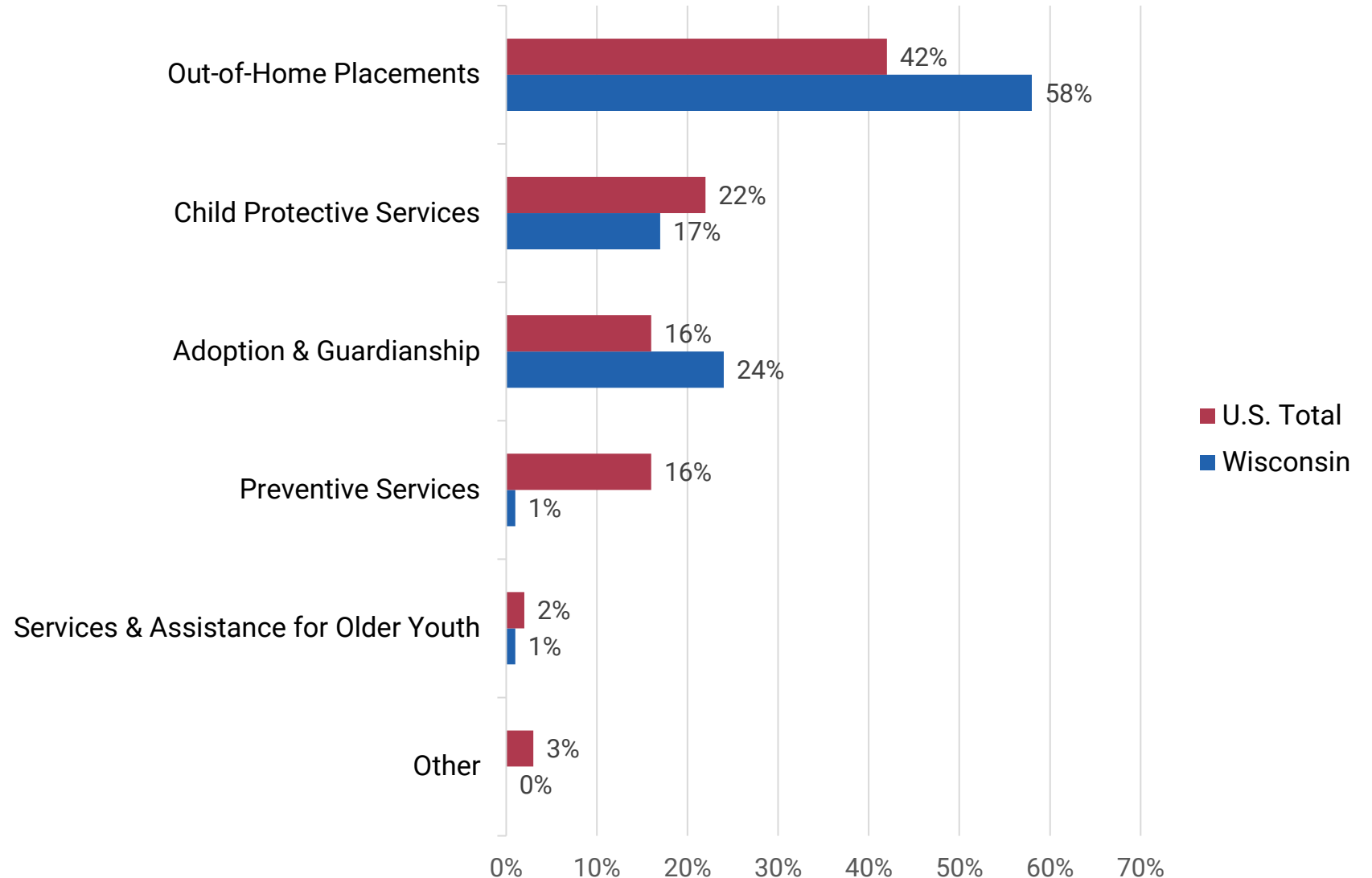
2025–2027 Biennial Budget



Current funding landscape

Wisconsin uses its **state/local** funds differently than the national pattern.

Wisconsin spends a larger proportion of funds on out-of-home placements and a smaller proportion on preventive services (and, to a smaller extent, services and assistance for older youth).



Source: Child Trends' "Child Welfare Financing Survey SFY2020."

Budget priorities



Getting key investments directly to families and local agencies.



Setting youth up for success.



Supporting families in their homes.



Supporting children with complex needs.



Keeping children in family settings.



Implementing evidence-based youth justice system changes.





- **Getting *key investments* directly to families and local agencies.**

2025 – 2027 Biennial Budget:

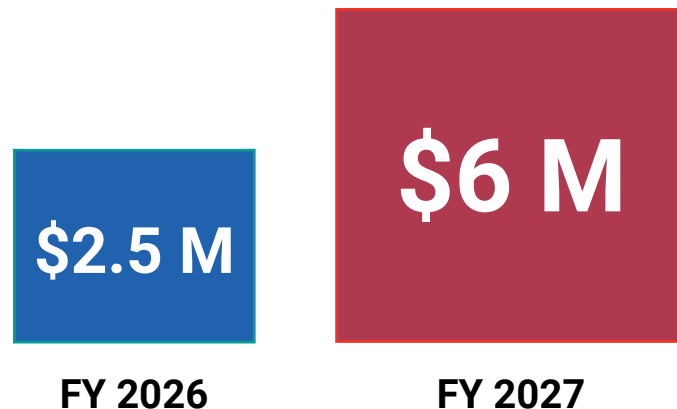
Key investments directly to families and local agencies



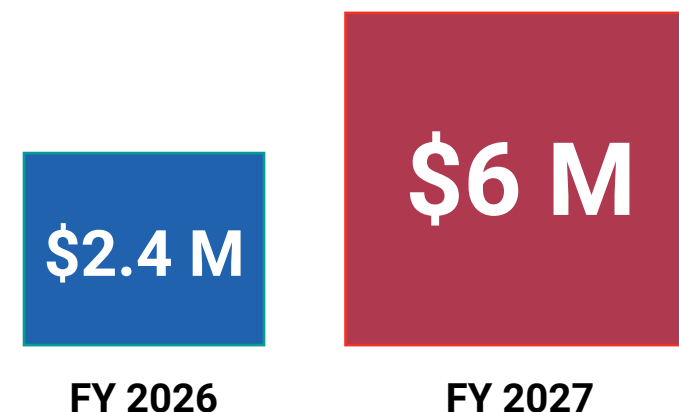
Recommendation: Increasing flexible funding for services and supports for children, youth, and families.

- Children and Family Aids (CFA) and Community Youth and Family Aids increases.

Children and Family Aids



Youth Aids



2025 – 2027 Biennial Budget:

Key investments directly to families and local agencies



Recommendation: Community Youth and Family Aids funding modifications.



Modifies statutes and appropriations to make Youth Aids funding more flexible for local agencies.

- Current funding and statutory authority for youth-serving programs is siloed and fragmented.
- These funding modifications restructure multiple youth-serving appropriations to allow for a **more flexible, coordinated, and youth- and community-driven approach to service provision.**

2025 – 2027 Biennial Budget:

Key investments directly to families and local agencies



Recommendation: Protecting Social Security benefits for children in out-of-home care (OHC).

- Protects the property rights of children in OHC by preserving their Social Security or Supplemental Security Income funds in an account for their use following their exit from OHC.

\$3 million in FY 2027 to fund the management of the trust accounts.

2025 – 2027 Biennial Budget:

Key investments directly to families and local agencies



Recommendation: Limiting child support collections for OHC.

- Modifies the requirement that child welfare agencies collect child support from families with children who enter certain OHC placements.
 - These financial resources staying with the family supports reunification and family stability.



\$1.8 million increase to Children and Family Aids in FY 2027 to address the reduction in local funding.

Child support collection while a child is in out-of-home care **directly** and **negatively** impacts child and family outcomes.



Reduces family income.



Decreases family stability by making it harder to secure safe and stable housing, transportation, etc.

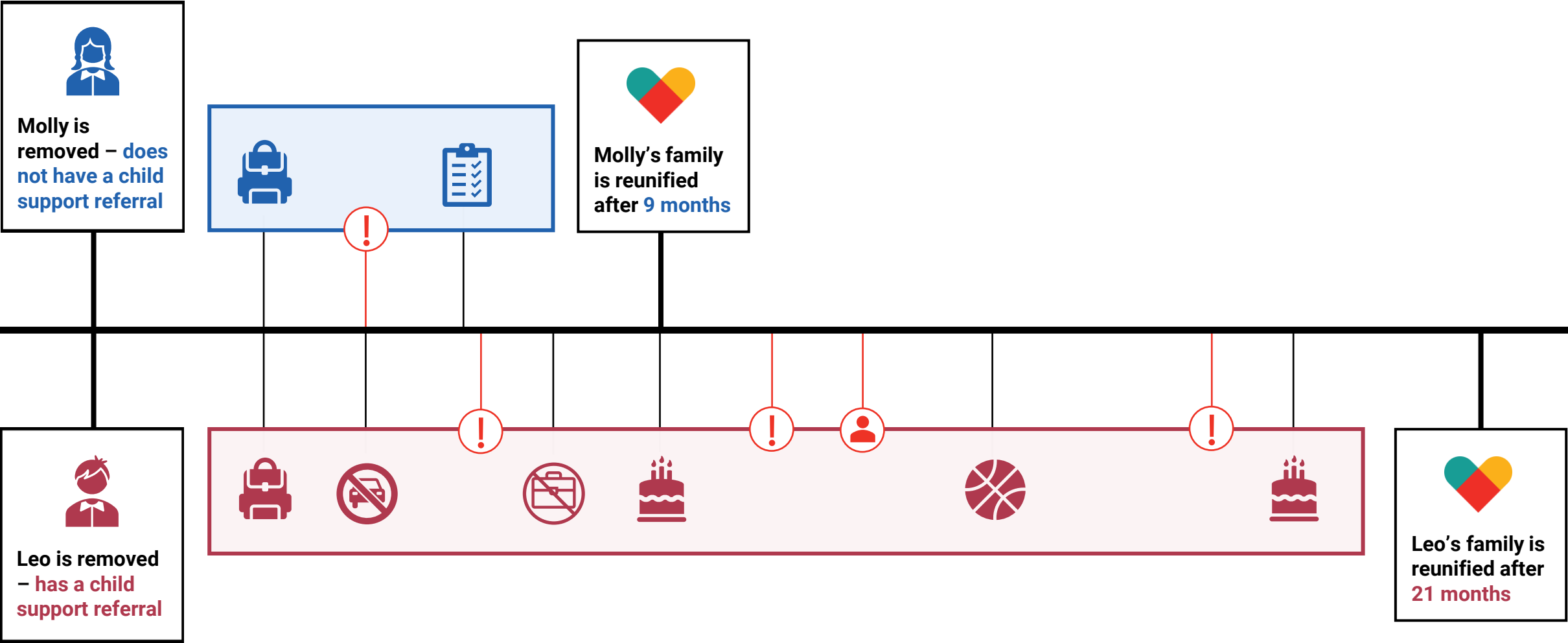


Increases time to reunification (and decreases likelihood of permanency).



Two years, two families

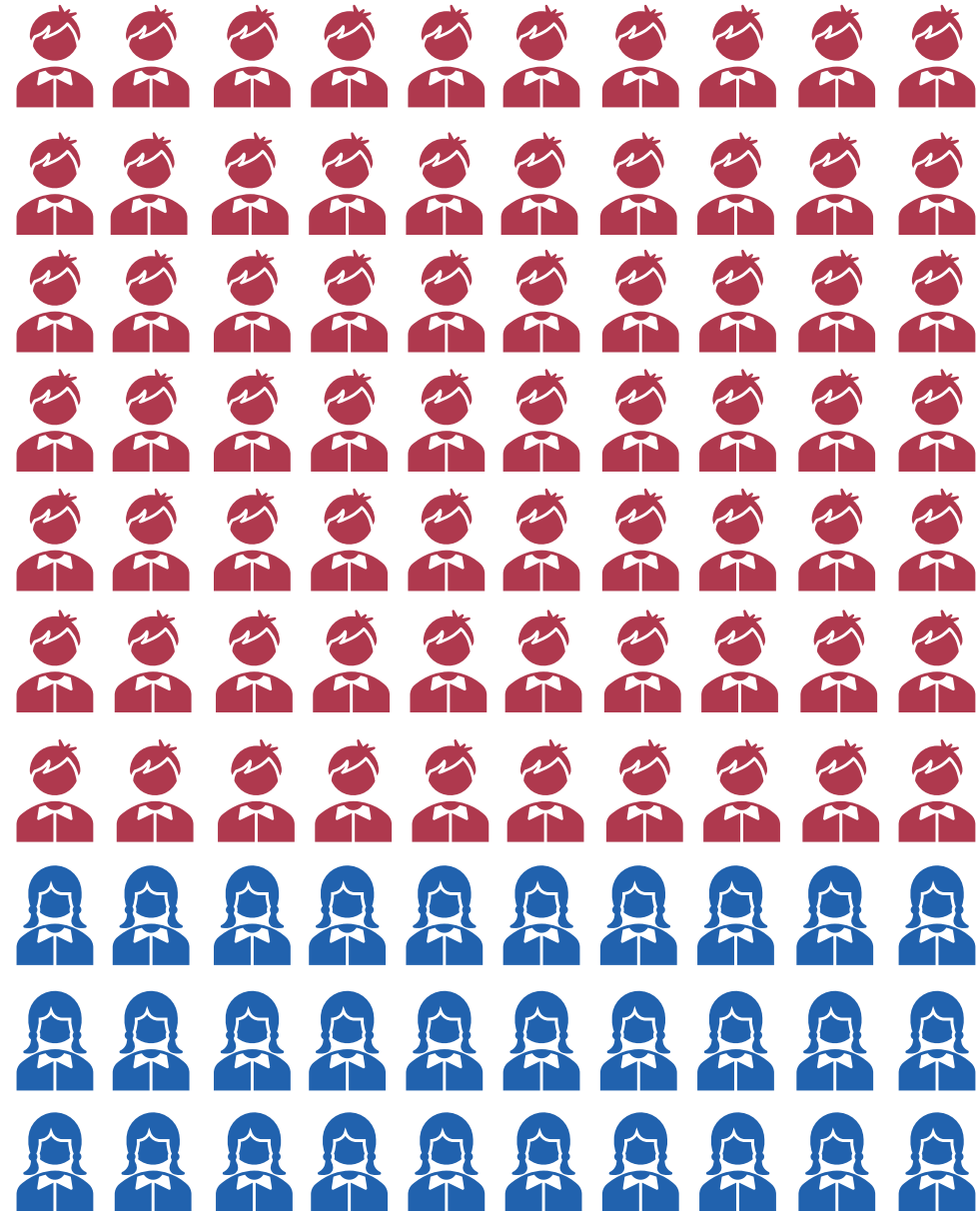
⚠ Placement change 👤 Worker change




Over 70% of children in out-of-home care have child support referrals.*

More than 70 of every 100 children who enter out-of-home care live **Leo's** story – not **Molly's**.


* 2018 data




Two years, two agencies



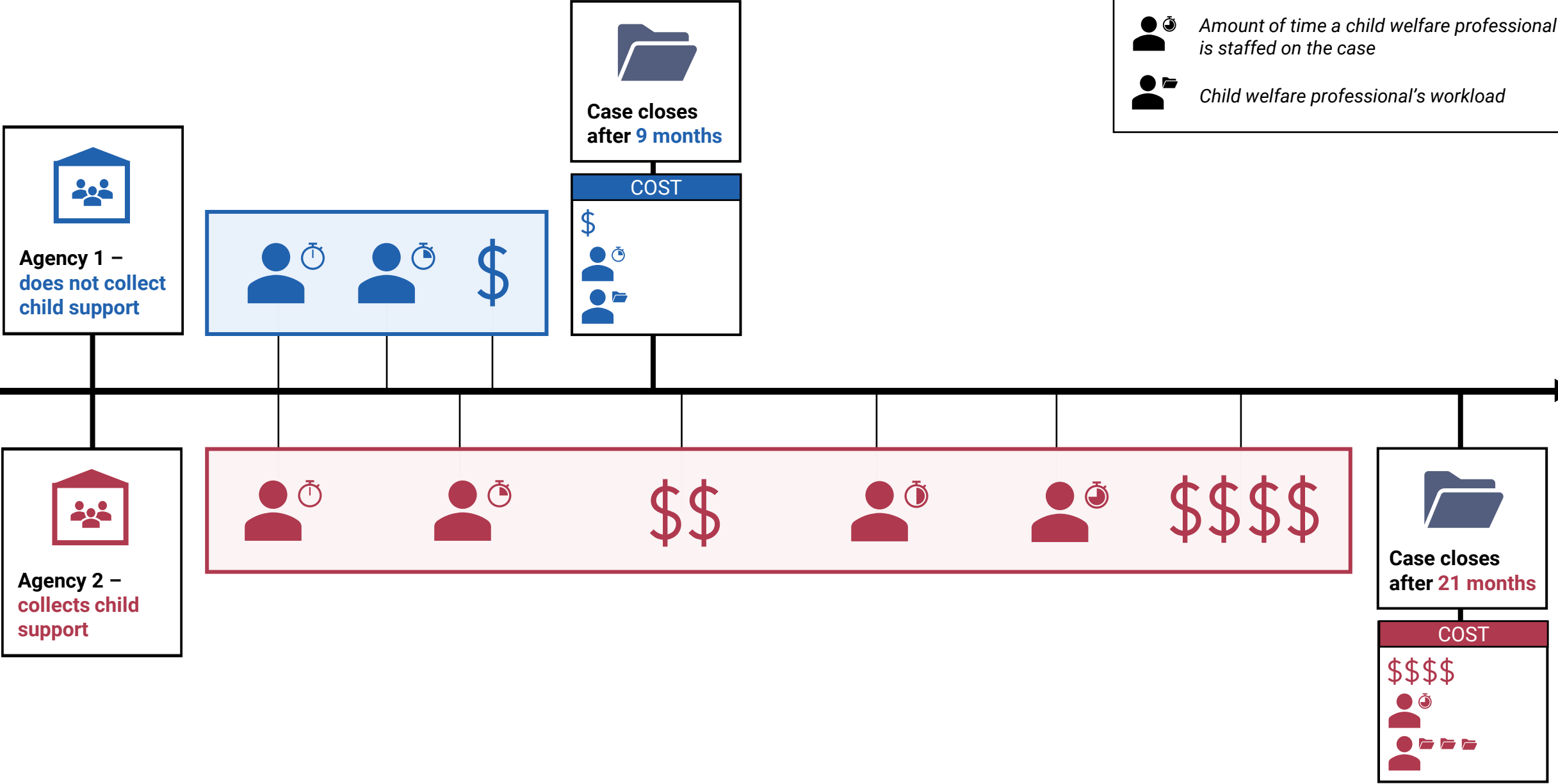
Placement costs (which do not account for additional worker costs)



Amount of time a child welfare professional is staffed on the case



Child welfare professional's workload





- **Strengthening local communities and building services that support families *in their homes.***

2025 – 2027 Biennial Budget:

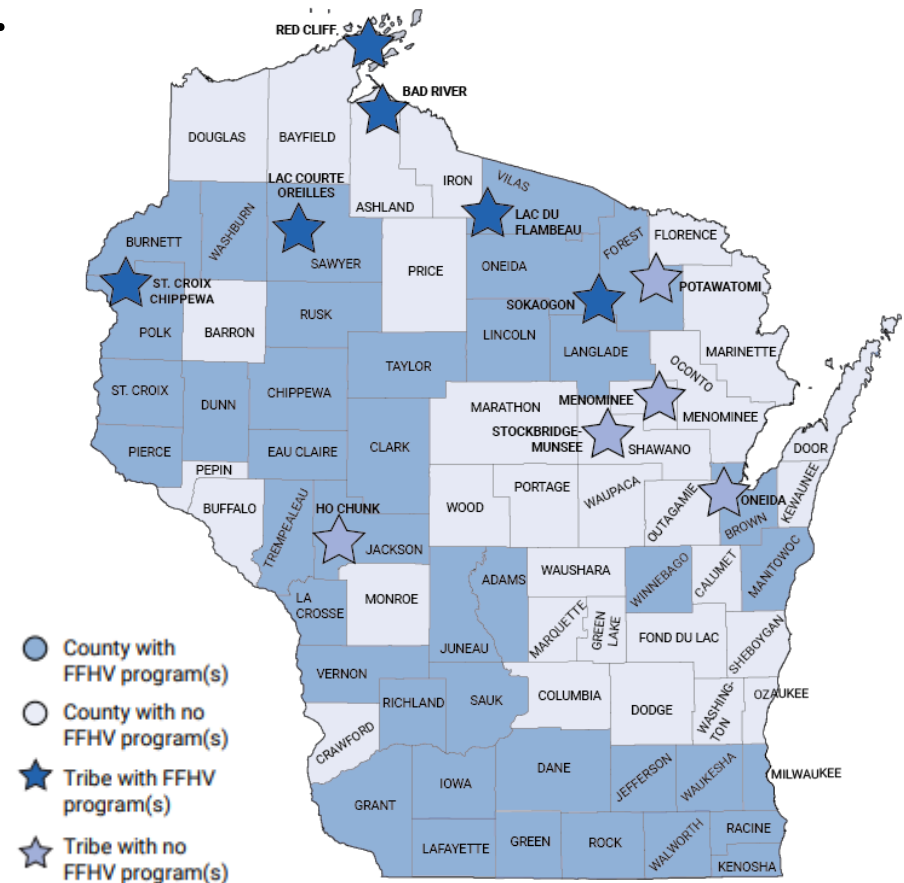
Supporting families in their homes



Recommendation: Home visiting expansion.

- Expanding home visiting services to additional counties and tribes.
- Expansion funded by:
 - **\$1.2 million** in FY 2026.
 - **\$4 million** in FY 2027.

Also: **\$1.5 million** in funding in FY 2026 and FY 2027 for online, evidence-based parenting programming.



2025 – 2027 Biennial Budget:

Supporting families in their homes



Recommendation: Increased funding to family resource centers in all regions of the state.

\$9.7 M

over the biennium.

- **\$4.8 million** in FY 2026.
- **\$4.8 million** in FY 2027.

2025 – 2027 Biennial Budget:

Supporting families in their homes



Recommendation: Creation of a crime victim services grant program.

\$66 M

over the biennium to
**support services for
crime victims**
statewide.



Helps critical service providers stay afloat after recent significant federal funding cuts.



Ensures domestic violence agencies across the state have the resources they need to serve families in crisis.



- **Keeping children in **family settings** whenever possible.**

2025 – 2027 Biennial Budget:

Keeping children in family settings whenever possible



Recommendation: Strengthening state support for tribal child welfare.

- Increasing funding for tribal family services and high-cost OHC placements for Native American children.
- Increasing funding to:

\$3.8 million in FY 2026.

\$3.9 million in FY 2027.

2025 – 2027 Biennial Budget:

Keeping children in family settings whenever possible



Recommendation: Foster care and kinship care rate changes.

- Increasing foster care age-based payment rates by **5%**.
 - Ensures that both Level 1 and kinship caregivers receive these increased age-based rates.
 - Qualifies Level 1 and kinship caregivers to receive additional sibling exceptional payments and one-time clothing allowances.
- Funded by more than:
 - **\$700,000** in FY 2026.
 - **\$1.4 million** in FY 2027.



• **Setting youth up for success.**

2025 – 2027 Biennial Budget:

Setting youth up for success



Recommendation: Subsidized guardianship and kinship care eligibility.



Making technical modifications to statute to ensure children and youth in the youth justice system can qualify for subsidized guardianship and kinship care placements.

2025 – 2027 Biennial Budget:

Setting youth up for success



Recommendation: Independent Living supports.

- Expanding eligibility and funding to support Independent Living services for youth aging out of care.
 - **\$5.2 million** in additional funding in both FY 2026 and FY 2027.



Recommendation: Runaway and homeless youth supports.

- Providing additional position authority and increased funding for programs that serve runaway and homeless youth.
 - **\$3.7 million** in additional funding in both FY 2026 and FY 2027.



- **Supporting youth with **complex** needs.**



Julie H.

Mother of seven, Taylor County

“You have Madison, you have Milwaukee, you have Green Bay, and you have Eau Claire, and the Twin Cities, and the rest of the state is just this huge, empty void when it comes to mental health and behavioral health care.”

“I didn't know where to reach out . . . I knew of the two counseling offices that were available in town. I had called the hospital. They were booked. So, it was, like, ‘Okay, what do we do?’ So, you know, we very much felt like we were drowning in nothing. There was nothing we could do.”



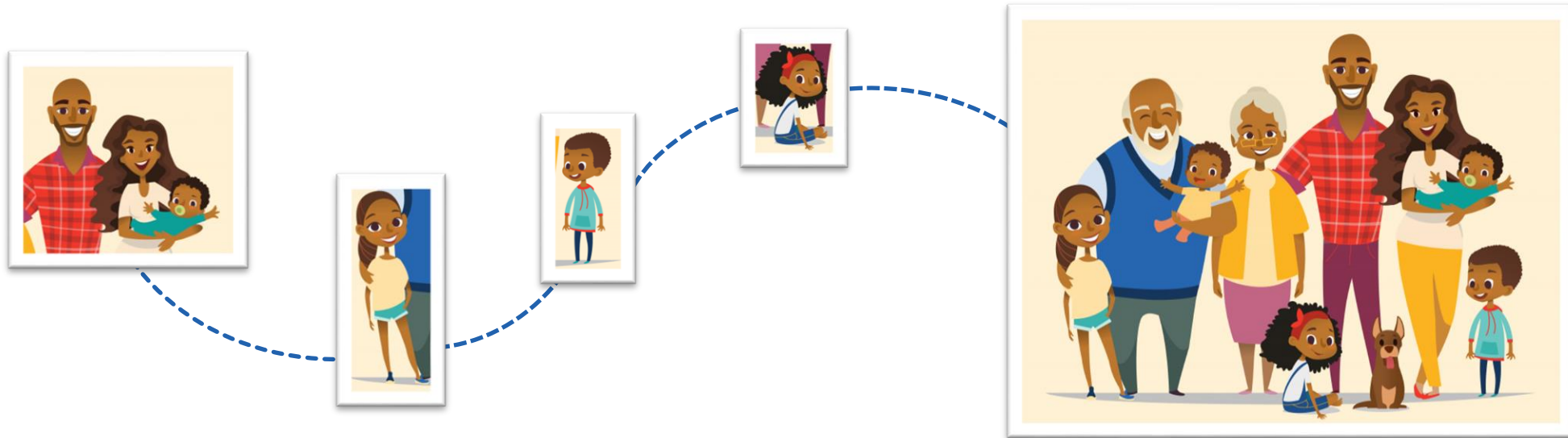
2025 – 2027 Biennial Budget:

Supporting youth with complex needs



Recommendation: Wisconsin Wraparound.

- Developing a federal Medicaid waiver to create a children's behavioral health specialty managed care program.



2025 – 2027 Biennial Budget:

Supporting youth with complex needs



Recommendation: Psychiatric residential treatment facility (PRTF) grant program.

- Establishing a 25-bed PRTF for children and youth under the age of 21 who have complex behavioral health conditions.
- Expanding Medicaid benefits to include a PRTF benefit.

\$1.8 million in FY 2027.

2025 – 2027 Biennial Budget:

Supporting youth with complex needs



Recommendation: Specialized congregate care.

- Continued funding to support the existing pilot program at Chileda.
 - Chileda provides uniquely focused OHC for children and youth with complex needs and other mental and behavioral health conditions.



\$2.6 million (approximately) in funding in both FY 2026 and FY 2027.



- **Implementing evidence-based youth justice system changes.**

2025 – 2027 Biennial Budget:

Evidence-based youth justice system changes



Recommendation: Additional funding for juvenile court jurisdiction.

- Returning 17-year-olds to the youth justice system aligns with best practice and research on adolescent brain development.
- Wisconsin is currently one of five states that consider 17-year-olds to be adults in the justice system.

\$5 M

in both FY 2026 and FY 2027 to reimburse counties for increased court costs associated with raising the age of adult court jurisdiction from 17 to 18.

2025 – 2027 Biennial Budget:

Evidence-based youth justice system changes



Recommendation: Creation of a Juvenile Justice Reform Review Committee.



Committee to make recommendations to DCF and the Department of Corrections regarding certain areas of reform to the juvenile justice system.

Here's how you can help!



Have conversations with your legislators.

Leave a message indicating your support for the child welfare budget items.

Leave a public comment: <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/topics/budgetcomments>.

Attend a public hearing!

Want to testify but not sure what to expect?

Use our resource: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/familyfirst/how-to-testify-at-a-public-hearing.pdf>.



Continue to be advocates!



Visit our budget webpage for more resources: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/budget>.

Upcoming budget public hearings



Wednesday, April 2, 2025

10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Kaukauna High School

Auxiliary Gymnasium (Door AA4)

1701 County Road CE, Kaukauna

Monday, April 28, 2025

10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Hayward High School

Auditorium

10320 Greenwood Lane, Hayward

Friday, April 4, 2025

10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Wisconsin State Fair Park

Exposition Center

640 South 84th St., West Allis

Tuesday, April 29, 2025

10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Northcentral Technical College

Center for Health Sciences

1000 West Campus Dr., Wausau



For more information, visit: <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/topics/budgetcomments>.

Questions?

Thank you!

Have additional questions? Don't hesitate to reach out!

Putting Families First

Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

www.dcf.wisconsin.gov

FamilyFirst@wisconsin.gov

