

**MILWAUKEE CHILD WELFARE PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL**  
**Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS)**  
**DRAFT**  
**Friday, August 11, 2023**  
**12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.**  
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The meeting was conducted by Zoom. The Zoom meeting information was made available on the Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council (MCWPC) webpage on May 30, 2023. (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/mcps/partnership-council>).

**Members Present:** At the request of Chairperson Linda Davis, a roll call was taken to identify the Partnership Council members present for the meeting.

Present were:, Linda Davis, Sally Yeldell, Carmen Pitre, Judge Jane Carroll, Milwaukee County Department of Health & Human Services Children, Youth & Family Services Administrator Kelly Pethke, Assistant District Attorney Libby Mueller, Dr. Mallory O'Brien, Bria Grant, James Mietus on behalf on Senator James Knodl, Senator LaTonya Johnson and Supervisor Willie Johnson joined after attendance.

Sarah Henery, DMPCS Administrator introduced Linda Davis as new Partnership Council Chairperson

A quorum of the Council was present on the Zoom meeting.

**Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions Public Notice**

Chairperson Linda Davis reviewed compliance with Open Meetings Law requirements. First, the notice of the meeting was published on the Department of Children (DCF) and Department of Administration (DOA) websites on August 7, 2023, and in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on August 7, 2023. Second, the notice was emailed to the newspaper of record for the State of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin State Journal, on August 2, 2023.

The notice was emailed to the MCWPC stakeholders including any media who had requested such notice on August 7, 2023. Finally, the agenda was posted on the front door of the DMCPS building at 635 N. 26th St. on August 7, 2023. This satisfies the requirements for notice under Wis. Stat. 19.84(1)(b).

Chairperson Linda Davis suggested an orientation meeting for the Partnership Council which would include a case study. If anyone is interested in that, an email will be sent out after the meeting.

Chairperson Linda Davis, Sarah Henery, DMCPS Administrator, and Bridget Chybowski, DMCPS Deputy Administrator have had several meetings regarding mental health services for children in the child welfare system in Milwaukee. They have agreed that the Partnership Council will focus on mental health services and Families First legislation for the upcoming year.

Chairperson Davis restated that the Partnership Council is a federally designated Citizen Review Panel as well as a Council created in Wisconsin state statute.

The Council will have a role in learning about the current mental health services available for children in child welfare, making recommendations to the Division and the Department of Children and Families as well as making recommendations for the Families First efforts. These recommendations will be included in the annual report as a Citizen Review Panel.

### **Review and Approval of Past Minutes**

Chairperson Davis requested the approval of the last meetings minutes. Carmen Pitre made a motion to approve the minutes from the Friday, June 2, 2023, Partnership Council meeting. Libby Mueller seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Administrator's Report**

Sarah Henery shared the state budget was signed, and there were increases to funding for service contracts much of which will modernize pay for case management staff. She shares DMCPS has been looking at front line pay vs other counties, and there have been a lot of changes since the pandemic. Frontline salaries have moved significantly in the last five years. It's internally different at DMCPS since IA staff are tied to the state compensation process. She shares staff may not keep up with their peers. The 2023-2025 State of Wisconsin Compensation Plan includes funding for Initial Assessment staff with the goal to keep pay competitive. This now has to be approved by the Joint Committee on Employment Relations in the state legislature.

Director Henery discussed the challenging issue regarding high needs youth in mental health crises. She noted children are falling through gaps in services, needing services that apparently do not exist in the community and children having complex behaviors. She has been exploring partnerships in the community that could help de-escalate difficult behavioral situations.

Director Henery also shared that child welfare has also seen increases of parents turning to the child welfare system asking for intervention for their children with mental health and behavior issues, outside of neglect or abuse issues. Chairperson Davis also has spoken with staff at Children's Hospital regarding parents essentially relinquishing children to the hospital due to behavioral and mental health issues after running out of treatment options in the community.

### **Case Management Agency Report**

Susanna Leggio of Children's Wisconsin shared a current challenge is placement matching. Case Management were charged with getting placement resources which is challenging for high equity youth and those that need higher levels of care. She shares there is also a lack of treatment beds and treatment foster care (TFC) homes. She shared she appreciates the focus on expanding mental health services, she stated that can position foster families to step-up and take placement. Ms. Leggio appreciates staff being referred to as first responders, as they are often working in times of crisis and ensuring staff safety when work with dysregulated youth has been difficult, as it relates to community violence.

Ms. Leggio shared the Children's Wisconsin Family Support team introduced new family support curriculum, Triple P. The family support team did research and feels the evidence-based curriculum of Triple P will better suit parents' needs.

Ms. Leggio shared Children's Wisconsin has had incredible success of retaining Case Managers recently. Some of this can be attributed to increasing the salaries of case managers. Now only 26% have caseloads larger than 15, lowest since 2017. Children's Wisconsin was intentional in creating a culture of supportive leadership staff. This support was a theme in their recent employee engagement poll. Children's Wisconsin is now only averaging one departure a month. Susanna shares they have moved out of the staffing crisis.

Jenny Keefe of Wellpoint Care Network shared the Case Management program is fully staffed. They have been working very hard this year to reach this hiring goal. She stated it was a comprehensive approach which included salary increases, talent development and enhanced training for staff and leaders. Wellpoint currently has 14.6 cases per Case Manager, it will take likely to end of year for 15 or fewer cases for everyone, as new staff are still in training and Wellpoint is doing a much slower onboarding process now.

Ms. Keefe stated Wellpoint Care Network's biggest challenge has been finding and sustaining placements for high acuity youth, as their needs are unmatched with the resources available. Behavior health partners have seen a rise in mental health disorders and mental health needs of youths. She stated 1-2 high-needs youth can take the attention of many staff. She shared Wellpoint leaders have developed strong partnerships with community mental health leaders, and she looks forward to the year ahead.

### **View from the Bench**

Judge Jane Carroll shared there is a need in mental health services for higher needs youth and is especially true for aggressive youths. She is glad about the staffing news, compared to its status a year ago.

Judge Carroll shared Children's Court has onboarded four new judges and are getting two more in November. Liz Finn-Gorski, the Court Administrator, is no longer with Children's Court, she was there for 30 years. Her position has been filled by Melanie Fleischman, if you see her feel free to welcome her.

Judge Carroll overviewed the two treatment courts:

- **Family Drug Treatment:** She shared substance abuse is often primary factor in a child's removal. Data shows participation in the family drug treatment court increases the chance of reunification. Judge Carroll also believed it helps in stopping general problems for families and decreasing future traumas.
- **Healthy Infant:** She shares Healthy Infant court data for 2022, which involves youth removed from parent care who are Birth to 3. Cases that may present additional

difficulties include parents that were also involved in the child welfare system. She stated these are the most vulnerable children in system and feel they deserve more attention. They are provided with a mental health infant specialist that works with families. Those who utilize this have generally seen quicker paths to permanency.

Judge Carroll shared Partnership Council members are able to visit Children's Court. Should a member want to visit, let Judge Carroll know the times. Children's Court is confidential.

### **Bylaws Amendments**

Libby Mueller shared that the Bylaws Committee met and went through each proposal. The committee then came to agreement and now requests a brief overview of recommended changes.

The full bylaws amendments proposal is available at:

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/mcps/partnership/2023pc/mcwpc-bylaws-amendments-proposal.pdf>

Motion to approve all changes proposed in the bylaws except those in the committees section. Motion passes unanimously.

Ms. Mueller shared there currently two categories of committees: Standing and Specialty. Currently the only Standing Committee is the Critical Incidents Committee. Ms. Mueller stated the Partnership Council has the ability to start or resolve committees as seen fit. Ms. Mueller said the Bylaws Committee suggested longer-term committees be put as Standing Committees, while shorter term committees be put as Specialty Committees. The Bylaws Committee suggested forming a second standing committee titled the: *Community Prevention and Support Committee*. The charge for the *Community Prevention and Support Committee* is as follows: *This committee works to identify needs of families who are involved with Child Protective Services (CPS) and identify upstream opportunities to prevent entry for their children into out-of-home care. The committee shall address issues relating to service gaps, available opportunities, and access to those services for families in Milwaukee County.* Ms. Henery stated the *Community Prevention and Support Committee* would help in tie families together. Ms. Mueller clarified the *Critical Incidents Committee* would still be separate. Ms. Henery confirmed this would be the second standing committee.

Motion to approve creation of *Community Prevention and Support Committee*, motion passes unanimously.

Ms. Mueller shared there was a discussion in the Bylaws Committee meeting about community members can be part of standing committee and/or voting members. Chairperson Davis has requested a legal opinion from the Division/Department. Following that opinion regarding community members status on Partnership Council committees, the issue will be brought back to the Partnership Council for consideration.

Ms. Mueller shared the Bylaws Committee suggested forming a Specialty Committee that would support teens and reduce their population in group care. Chairperson Davis asked for more information on it and how it work with ongoing groups and efforts based on member numbers. Ms. Mueller shared the original recommendation was for it to be a Standing Committee, then the Bylaws Committee suggested it be a Specialty Committee. Ms. Henery shared this discussed as a proposal and would need a charge. Ms. Mueller shared she would move to designate the special committee then assess adding members.

Motion to approve creation of a *Group Care Committee* moved by Ms. Mueller, seconded by Judge Carroll, motion passes.

Chairperson Davis shared members can serve on more than one committee and would like a minimum of three Partnership Council members on each committee for a quorum. Ideally no even number of members on the committees. Ms. Chybowski shared MCWPC members not designated on the committee may attend committee meetings.

### **Stronger Families Milwaukee**

Sarah Henery introduces Stronger Families Milwaukee and outlines the origin of the creation of the program. The Department started by taking a look at zip codes with most referrals and released a Request for Information asking the community what would be helpful to reduce family stressors most tied to future maltreatment. Stronger Families was the result. It operates independently of child welfare, although are handed off by them, and the program does its own recruiting and can be supports for families outside of the system.

Lauren Faulds, Program Manager at Stronger Families Milwaukee, presented on Stronger Families Milwaukee. The full presentation is available at:

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/mcps/partnership/SFM-Presentation-updated.pdf>

Chairperson Davis was appreciative of the long-term goals for the program. Ms. Henery shared it's time limit is because it's funded by Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) dollars to avoid interfering with W2 services. One of the requests last year to the budget was to replace a lot of TANF funding with GPR.

### **DMCPS Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) Efforts**

Lilia Figueroa, Policy Initiatives Advisor at DMCPS and Lee Johnson, Access Section Manager at DMCPS presented on DMCPS' Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) Efforts. The full presentation is available at:

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/mcps/partnership/DMCPS-FFPSA-Efforts-Aug-PC-updated.pdf>

Chairperson Davis shared mandated reporting outreach for the educational system includes Birth to 3 Agencies and private/charter schools. Sarah Henery shared mandated supporters'

movement nationally is growing, which includes having mandated reporters make different connections to resources instead of CPS.

### **Community Input**

There was no community input discussed.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Chairperson Davis shared they will be sending an email regarding trainings/case reviews. If you're interested in serving on a committee or have suggestions, reach out to Chairperson Davis or Sarah Henery.

Ms. Henery shared if anyone is interested in doing ride alongs with Initial Assessment staff, please reach out to her.

### **Adjourn**

**1:47 pm.**