



Putting

Families First



A background image showing several hands of different skin tones reaching towards the center, each holding a small, light-colored card. The hands and cards are arranged in a circular pattern on a dark, textured wooden surface. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark blue filter.

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

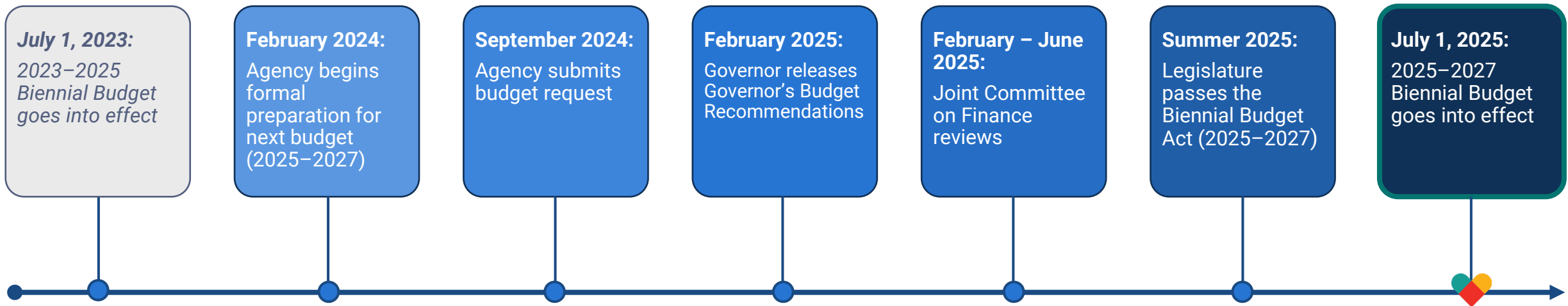
THE YEAR OF THE KID.



The national landscape

Wisconsin's budget timeline

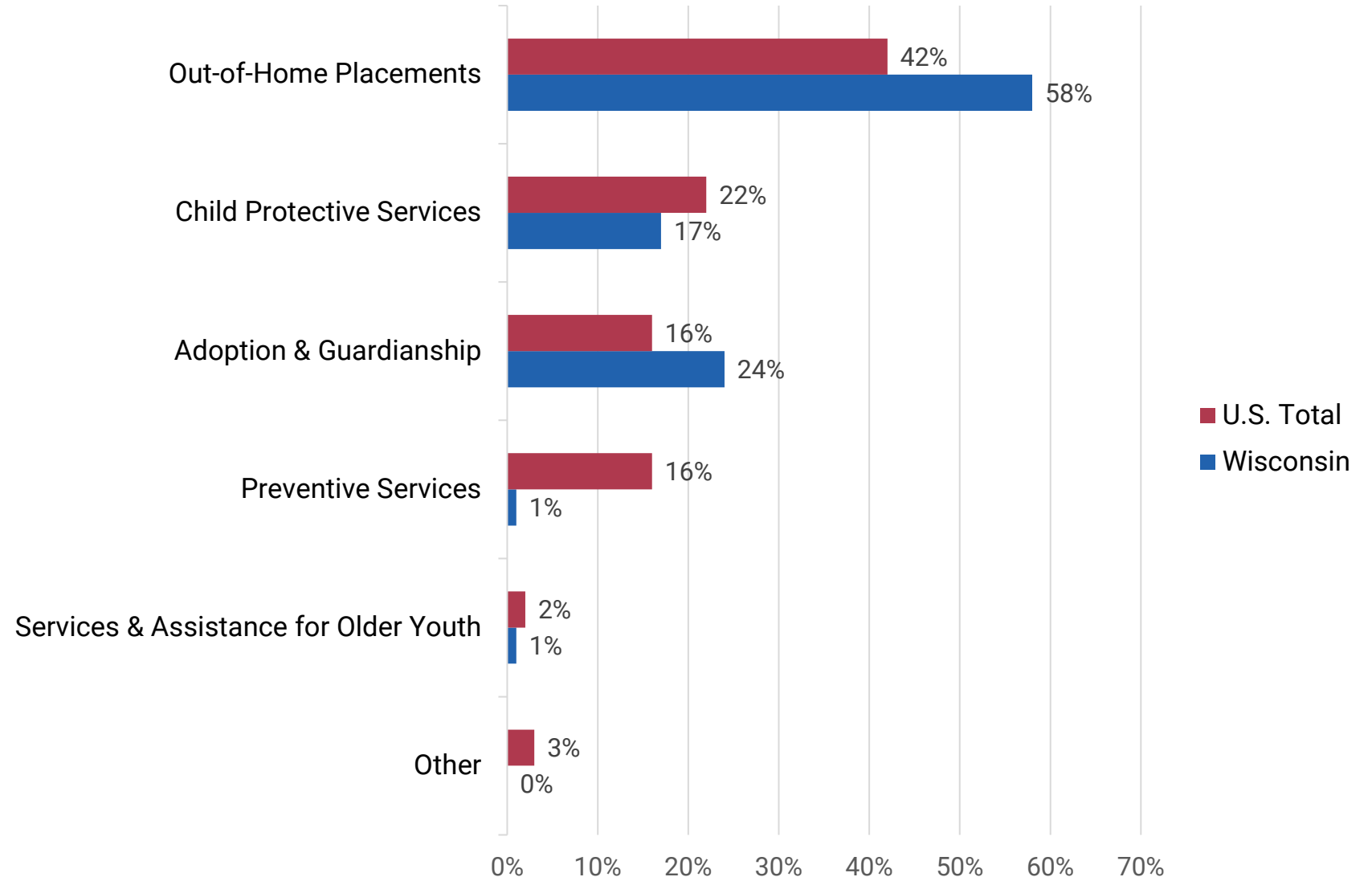
2025–2027 Biennial Budget



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:

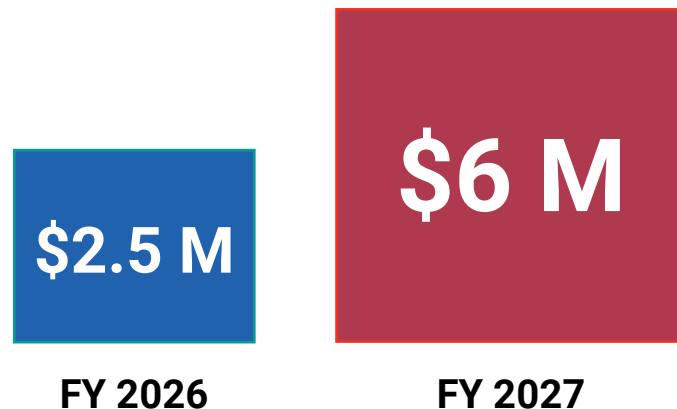
Key investments directly to families and local agencies



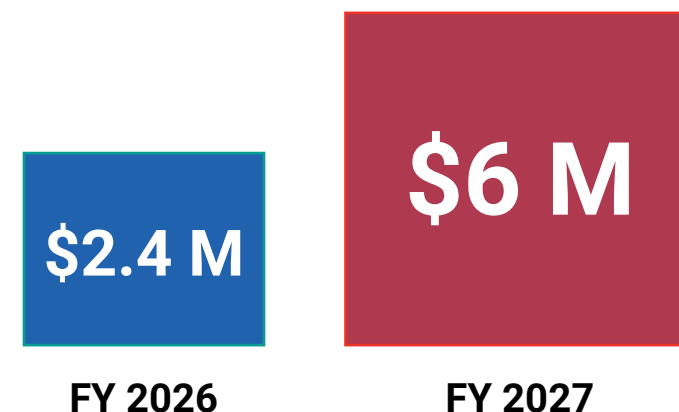
Recommendation: Increasing flexible funding for services and supports for children, youth, and families.

- 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



Budget items removed by Joint Finance Committee:



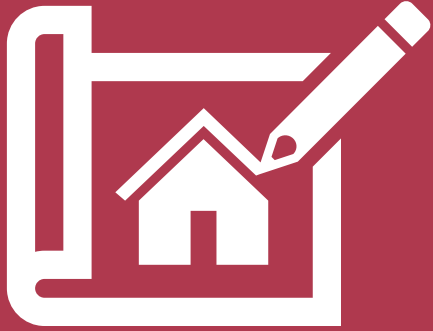
Community Youth and Family Aids funding modifications.



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



Limiting child support collections for OHC.



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

2025 – 2027 Biennial Budget:

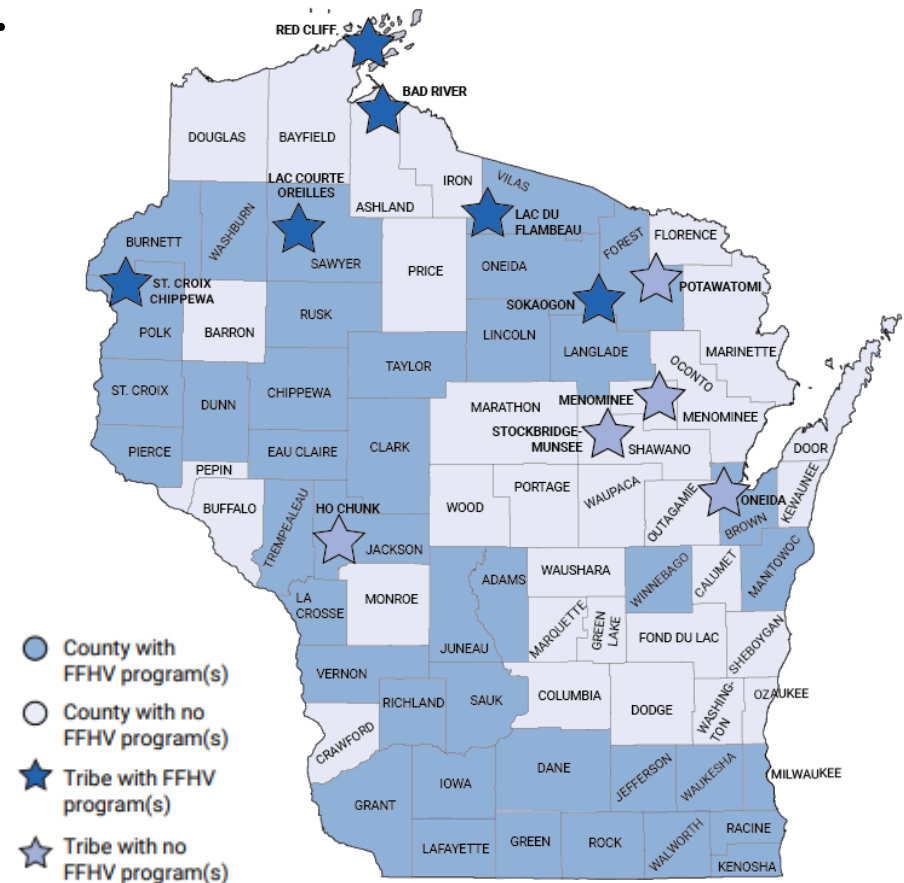
Supporting families in their homes



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.

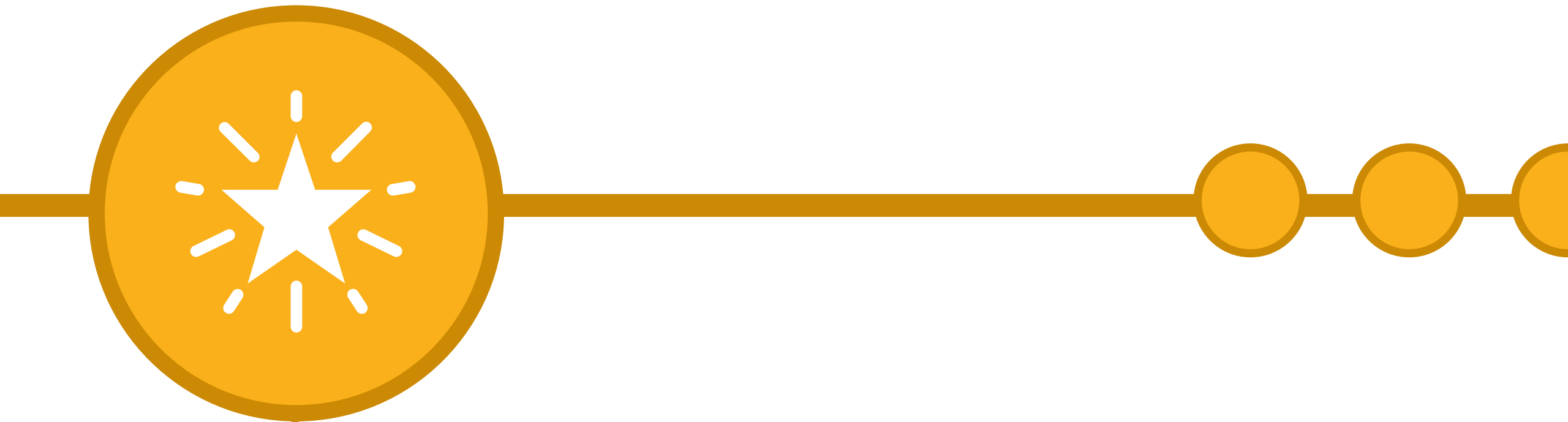
2025 – 2027 Biennial Budget:

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



Budget items removed by Joint Finance Committee:



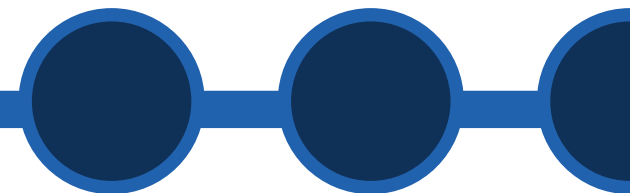
Subsidized guardianship and kinship care eligibility.



Independent Living supports.



Runaway and homeless youth supports.



• **Supporting youth with **complex**
needs.**

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.

2025 – 2027 Biennial Budget:

Supporting youth with complex needs



Budget items removed by Joint Finance Committee:



Wisconsin Wraparound.



Psychiatric residential treatment facility (PRTF) grant program.



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

2025 – 2027 Biennial Budget:

Evidence-based youth justice system changes



Budget items removed by Joint Finance Committee:



Additional funding for juvenile court jurisdiction.



Creation of a Juvenile Justice Reform Review Committee.

***What are you most
excited about?***

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>.

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

