

## **MILWAUKEE CHILD WELFARE PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL**

**Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services**

**Friday, November 7, 2025**

**12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

DRAFT

The meeting was conducted by Zoom rather than in-person. The Zoom meeting information was made available on the DCF DMCPs Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council webpage on October 28, 2025. (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/mcps/partnership-council>).

### **Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions, Kelly Pethke, Chair**

At the request of Chairperson Pethke, a roll call was taken to identify the Partnership Council members present for the meeting.

Present were Chairperson Kelly Pethke, Judge Jane Carroll, Justice Grau, Sally Yeldell, Dr. Mallory O'Brien, Mary Thomas, Supervisor Sky Capriolo, Bria Grant, Rochelle Johnson-Bent, and Senator LaTonya Johnson.

A quorum of the Council was present during roll call of the Zoom meeting.

Chairperson Pethke welcomed a new member of the Partnership Council: Mary Thomas. Mary Thomas shared she is a social worker and teacher at UWM.

**Notice of Meeting** – Chairperson Kelly Pethke reviewed compliance with Open Meetings Law requirements.

First, the notice of the meeting was published on the DCF and DOA websites on October 28, 2025, and in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on November 3, 2025. Second, the notice was emailed to the newspaper of record for the State of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin State Journal on October 28, 2025. The notice was emailed to the Partnership Council stakeholders including any media who had requested such notice on November 3, 2025. Finally, the agenda was posted on the front door of the DMCPs building at 635 N. 26th St. on October 28, 2025. This satisfies the requirements for notice under Wis. Stat. 19.84(1)(b).

### **Review and Approval of Past Minutes, Kelly Pethke, Chair**

Judge Jane Carroll motioned to approve minutes from August 15, 2025 Partnership Council meeting. Supervisor Bria Grant seconded approval. Minutes were approved.

### **DCF Budget and Government Shutdown Update, Nadya Perez-Reyes, DCF Deputy Secretary**

Nadya Perez-Reyes gave an update that prior year funding awards; most programs funding should be good through the end of 2025. If there isn't a continual resolution, 2026 fiscal awards may not be received. There is a concern about how this will impact communities and the effects on premiums increasing on Affordable Care Act, Head Start programs, SNAP/Food Share benefits and more. DCF and partners are working on connecting people to resources and some flexibilities in emergency assistance. Nadya Perez-Reyes called for the MCWPC members to share and flag resources and ideas that can serve the community.

### **Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services /Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) Updates, Bridget Chybowski, Administrator, Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services**

Bridget Chybowski shared the following updates:

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- DMCPS Initial Assessment (IA) staff have been provided the ability to purchase food for families. Ongoing case management agencies were given additional funding to provide food for families impacted by the shutdown and in need.
- The Dave Herbert Trust fund can be used for families in need. Through this funding, DMCPS and case management agencies can purchase gift cards for families.
- DMCPS recently onboarded an IA cohort in September and there will be more onboarding in February 2026. There have been good recruitments over the year with a surplus of qualified applicants and there has been solid retention.
- Sadly, Rebecca McFadden, 2<sup>nd</sup> Shift IA worker who served for over 25 years, unexpected passed away in September. She is missed by staff and the community.
- The updated large conference room in the North 26<sup>th</sup> Street building is finished. Waiting on furniture for new childcare rooms. The childcare space will be larger and will have rooms for quiet space and room to play.
- The safety enhancements for North 26<sup>th</sup> Street building will include a bullet resistant window film, full perimeter parking lot gate, and enhanced security cameras in areas. Updates have started this month, November 2025, and will take about 3-4 months.

### MCWPC Subcommittee Check-In, Kelly Pethke, Chair

Chair Kelly Pethke reviewed the current members of Partnership Council Subcommittees and called for voting on new members for the subcommittees:

- **Prevention Committee**- Current members are Chair Carmen Pitre and Sally Yeldell.

New members vote for the following PC members occurred:

- *Justice Grau*: Rochelle Johnson-Bent motioned vote for appointment, Sky Capriolo seconded, and council agreed. Justice Grau's appointment approved to Prevention Committee approved.
  - *Mary Thomas*: Rochelle Johnson-Bent motioned, Judge Carroll seconded, and council agreed. Mary Thomas's appointment approved to Prevention Committee approved.
  - *Rochelle Johnson-Bent*: Sky Capriolo motioned, Dr. Mallory O'Brien seconded, membership approved, and council agreed. Rochelle Johnson-Bent's appointment approved to Prevention Committee approved.
- **Critical Incident Committee**- Current members are Chair Libby Mueller, Senator LaTonya Johnson, Supervisor Willie Johnson Jr., and Dr. Mallory O' Brien.  
New member vote for Rochelle Johnson-Bent: Sky Capriolo motioned, Sen. LaTonya Johnson seconded, council agreed. Rochelle Johnson-Bent's appointment approved to Critical Incident Committee approved.
- **Teen Care Committee**- Current members are Chair Judge Jane Carroll, Darrin Madison and Kelly Pethke. No new member vote.

### Independent Monitoring Report: Deeper Dive: Out of Home Care

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Bridget Chybowski shared the Division of Safety and Permanence has announced there will be a Chapter 56 Admin Code update occurring December 1, 2025. This update will remove barriers to licensing relatives, like-kin caregivers, and child welfare workforce. This will decrease time frame for licensing relatives and like-kin caregivers to become licensed and provides payment equity. The change in the rule will hopefully increase children who are placed with relatives and like-kin caregivers because there has been a decrease in foster homes in the last 10 years.

#### **Tyler Oettinger, Quality Review and Performance Analysis Section Manager, Division of Management Services**

Tyler Oettinger introduced the deep dive presentation on Out of Home Care and about the placement types, licensing, and foster care. Tyler shared the following information about Out of Home Care (OHC) in the presentation: background, trends, children in OHC demographic information, court ordered kinship care, and licensing application requirements. Full presentation is available at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/mcps/partnership-council>. The process of semi-annual reporting will be changed to an Annual Independent Monitor Report to provide a deeper dive on different subjects and more education on topics.

#### **Jill Collins, Ongoing Services Section Manager, Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services**

Jill Collins presented the key takeaways:

- There has been a steady decline in the number of children in out-of-home care in Milwaukee County in the last 10 years and the number of people applying to become licensed foster homes.
- Most children are placed in family-like settings and with a relative of someone the child knows.
- There has been an increase in number of children placed in court-ordered kinship compared to 2016.
- There is hope the upcoming change in Chapter 56 will create a quicker pathway for relatives to become licensed caregivers.

#### **Case Management Agencies: Wisconsin and Wellpoint Care Network**

Angie Fairbank, Licensing Supervisor at Children's Wisconsin, shared their focus has been quality over quantity in foster homes and that is a large reason for their decrease in foster homes. Placement matching is challenging. Some other barriers over the years have been COVID impact, inflation, exposure to community violence, day care closer and increase in mental health needs, and access to services. For recruitment efforts, Children's Wisconsin has a campaign to email families that have been previously licensed with them. They have referral bonuses and working on ways for retention including their Foster Parent Advisory Committee and hiring a part time Retention Specialist.

Jennifer Erdmann, Director of Out of Home Care at Wellpoint, shared many people in the community stated they were unaware there was a need for foster parents when spoken to.

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Wellpoint uses ads in social media, online newspapers, and billboards to spread the message and connections with community partners. Persistent individualized follow up has been beneficial to maintain connections with potential foster parents. Wellpoint has a goal of 40 applicants a month. Jennifer shared COVID, the current political and economic climate, and Wisconsin flood hardships have created barriers for prospective applicants. Some applicants aren't ready for the lengthy process of application, Wellpoint tries to maintain those connections if it isn't the right timing.

Kelly Pethke, Administrator, Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services, Children, Youth and Family Services (CYFS), reported on the youth justice side. Their struggles are finding the right placement and providers who can meet the children's needs. They are seeing more younger children who have significant mental health challenges. CYFS took over responsibility of out of home care contracts and providers as of July 2025. They have added an Out of Home Care team of 1 supervisor and 4 OHC liaisons to provide more direct care and attention to children. Their contracts consist of residential treatment centers, group care, foster care and independent living. They are currently working on getting respite care contracts. They have increased their budget for next year. There has been a decrease in correctional placements. They are transitioning into a Secure Residential Care Center operated by Milwaukee County and this is a post dispositional correctional placement.

Jill Collins started the Call for Action discussion related to the Out of Home Care presentation. Questions posed to the Partnership Council were:

1. What are your initial thoughts about the decrease in youth in out-of-home care?
2. What do you think are the reasons/contributing factor to declines in the number of foster care applicants? Overall number of foster homes?
3. What assistance can this council provide with helping address the placement needs for the youth?
4. What can the community do to help address some of questions raised?

Some suggestions and information shared:

Sup. Sky Capriolo recommended the Council have access to a marketing partner to have a consistent group message and marketing campaign. Judge Carroll agreed there is a public relations issue and she added people need to be aware of the need for foster parents and how rewarding the experience could be. Rochelle shared there may be stigmas of fostering such as the emotional stigma of having a bond with a child and they may have to go back in the system. She noted the time commitments and significant process of becoming a foster parent and recommended finding out the reasons why foster parents who have done it for years later pull out of fostering. Senator LaToya Johnson shared the requirements, preparation, and lack of resources to be a foster parent can be a challenge and some parents may have to take off work to succeed as foster parent. Sally Yeldell suggested having a psychologist children can see once a month to help with the trauma throughout the process.

**MCWPC 2026 Meeting Dates, Kelly Pethke, Chair**

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Chair Pethke informed the Council of following 2026 MCWPC meeting dates:

- February 20, 2026
- May 15, 2026
- August 21, 2026
- November 13, 2026

All meetings will be from 12-2pm and occur via Zoom. DMCPD will send out meeting invites.

**Community Input, Kelly Pethke, Chair**

No input shared.

**Concluding Remarks, Kelly Pethke, Chair**

Bridget Chybowski informed the PC members of the National Citizen Review Panel that will occur end of May and beginning of June 2026. Members who have not attended before will have first preference. Attendance to the event is contingent of the government shutdown ending.

The Department of Administration should have sent an email out to all Partnership Council members regarding a training on open meetings. This is a requirement as a part of membership to the Council.

**Adjourn**

Rochelle Johnson-Bent motioned to adjourn. Supervisor Sky Capriolo seconded. Meeting adjourned.