



Wisconsin and Children's Rights Take First Step to Conclude *Jeanine B.* Settlement Agreement

MADISON – Today, the Department of Children and Families (DCF), in collaboration with Children's Rights, began the process of seeking court approval to end the *Jeanine B.* legal settlement agreement governing DCF's child welfare work in Milwaukee County.

"Today's filing is an important moment in our ongoing work to ensure the safety and well-being of the children and families in Milwaukee County," said DCF Secretary Emilie Amundson. "It's a reflection of the collaborative work of the many partners but is a specific testament to the dedication of our child welfare professionals and community members. We remain committed to the structure, transparency, and commitment to community-based solutions the settlement helped us develop."

The *Jeanine B.* lawsuit dates to 1993. While the legal proceedings were ongoing, the legislature transferred responsibility for child welfare services in Milwaukee County to the state. In 2002, the parties (the state defendants and a class of children represented by Children's Rights) agreed to enter into a settlement agreement to resolve the *Jeanine B.* lawsuit. This settlement agreement was approved by the court in 2002 and has facilitated substantial improvement of the child welfare services provided to Milwaukee County's children and families.

"We can celebrate today that our collaborative work has improved the safety, health, and well-being of vulnerable children in Milwaukee County," said Children's Rights attorney Eric Thompson. "While the work is never done, DCF has fully embraced the reform process first committed to in response to our lawsuit. Years of consistent, documented improvements now allow us to recognize that court oversight has accomplished its purpose."

The *Jeanine B.* settlement agreement established 19 performance measures relating to the permanence, safety, and well-being of children in care for the state to meet before being released. All but one of those measures, relating to placement stability, have been met. While exiting the settlement agreement marks a significant milestone, it will not change the state's commitment to continue to provide the best possible child welfare services to the community in a transparent and collaborative fashion.

The legal process to exit the *Jeanine B.* settlement agreement will continue over the next year. As a first step, the state defendants and Children's Rights filed a Joint Motion to Terminate Settlement Agreement and Consent Decree on Grounds of Substantial Compliance (Joint Motion). The court will conduct a series of proceedings to determine whether to conclude the settlement agreement. A judge will be assigned to consider and decide the Joint Motion, which could take several months. DCF will continue to share regular updates about these proceedings.

To join a listserv for updates, view court filings, and access other relevant documents related to the *Jeanine B.* settlement agreement, visit <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/mcps/settlement>.