



## Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services

### Jeanine B. Legal Settlement

#### Introduction

The Department of Children and Families (DCF), in collaboration with Children's Rights, are seeking court approval to end the Jeanine B. legal settlement agreement governing DCF's child welfare work in Milwaukee County. This action recognizes the significant work completed to date and the state's ongoing commitment to improving child welfare services provided to Milwaukee County's children and families. 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.

#### Impact

In short, there will not be changes to DCF's operations as a result of this development. DCF's providers will continue to serve the children and families of Milwaukee County. The state will continue to publicly report its data (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/mcps/data>), Milwaukee County child welfare will remain in state control, and the Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/mcps/partnership-council>) will continue to provide community feedback and guidance. DCF will continue to implement transformative changes consistent with the federal Family First Act. That includes an increased focus on providing families services to successfully keep children with their families.

#### Background

The Jeanine B. lawsuit dates to 1993. As a result, the Legislature transferred responsibility for child welfare services in Milwaukee County to the state in 1998. 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. 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. The federal Family First legislation, which is changing how child welfare services are delivered, becomes effective in Wisconsin later this year. As the state shifts its focus to keeping families safely together whenever possible, the state defendants and Children's Rights have agreed that substantial compliance with the placement stability benchmark warrants termination of the settlement agreement. You can read more about this lawsuit at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/mcps/settlement>.

## Next Steps

The state defendants and Children's Rights will file a Joint Motion to Terminate Settlement Agreement and Consent Decree on Grounds of Substantial Compliance (Joint Motion) and other related documents. A judge will be assigned and the court will conduct a series of proceedings to determine whether to conclude the settlement agreement. This process could take several months and DCF will continue to share regular updates about these proceedings.

To join a listserv for updates and view court filings, please visit <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/mcps/settlement>.



Wisconsin Department of  
Children and Families