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Governor Scott Walker
Secretary Eloise Anderson

Division of Safety and Permanence

April 23, 2015

Brent Ruehlow, CRP Coordinator
Laura Wagner, CRP Coordinator
Jefferson County Citizen Review Panel
Jefferson County Human Services Department
1541 Annex Road
Jefferson, WI 53549

Dear Mr. Ruehlow and Ms. Wagner:

Thank you for your timely submission of the 2014 Jefferson County Citizen Review Panel report. This letter responds to the citizen review panel annual report requirement in the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA).

The citizen review panel submitted three recommendations to improve child protection services at the state level. A brief summarized statement of each recommendation and the Department of Children and Families Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) response follows:

1) *More explicit guidance is needed in regards to the release of confidential records and confidentiality overall for schools, providers and guardians ad litem.*

Chapters 48 and 938 provide the legal parameters for confidentiality and release of confidential records. The DCF will be releasing several resources related to information sharing between child welfare and schools this year, including an Education Passport and a Best Practices Desk Guide for caseworkers. A need was identified by DCF to create an Education Passport form that can be completed within eWiSACWIS and then printed out and provided to the school alerting school officials of a student's enrollment into or disenrollment out of a school, in addition to other pertinent education information. The Best Practices Desk Guide is intended to be a resource to assist child welfare staff in collaborating with schools, with a focus on information sharing. The guide includes a school enrollment checklist, federal and state laws regarding information sharing between child welfare agencies and educational agencies, information on the Education Passport, and information sharing best practices. Both resources will be made available in the summer of 2015.

For specific case-related questions, we recommend consultation with the local legal counsel for the CPS agency. We invite you to provide us with some specific examples of confidentiality challenges currently encountered in your community for further review and discussion. Please contact Paula Brown at (608) 266-0579 or PaulaL.Brown@wisconsin.gov with these examples. She will follow up and/or connect you to the appropriate resources as needed.

2) *The panel would like to see additional resources and support for heroin addicted parents and their families.*

The DCF acknowledges the increased use of heroin in Wisconsin and the detrimental effects of addiction on children and families. The DCF is a member of the State Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (SCAODA) and its prevention committee, and participated in the development of the report, "Wisconsin's Heroin Epidemic: Strategies and Solutions, July 2014," which includes analysis and recommendations for reducing and addressing heroin abuse and is available at the following web address: http://www.scaoda.state.wi.us/docs/main/SCAODAHeroinReportFinal063014.pdf.

In addition, the DCF is a sponsor and planner for education and training conferences for CPS staff and multi-disciplinary teams and agencies (2014 Drug Endangered Children Conference, 2015 Together for Children Conference) where local and national heroin issues and potential interventions to address this epidemic have been highlighted.

The April 2015 Together for Children 2015 Conference offered a full pre-conference day of information and presentations by experts and community representatives sharing information on addressing the heroin epidemic in Wisconsin. We will continue to focus on this issue and welcome input from our local partners.

3) *The panel also would like additional resources for at risk families prior to maltreatment substantiation.*

The DSP agrees with the need to balance prevention and early intervention in CPS. A continuum of services is offered beginning with prevention services that aim to keep children and their families out of the child welfare system. DCF prevention services include a home visiting program, efforts focused on promoting quality early care and education, and the Families and Schools Together (FAST) family engagement strategy. The Wisconsin Trauma Project provides training to child welfare agencies, foster parents, biological parents and mental health clinicians to ensure children and families witnessing or impacted by trauma receive necessary support from caring and competent helpers. DCF also supports the Community Response Program managed by the Children's Trust Fund. Alternative Response is also implemented in Jefferson County to provide an alternative to traditional CPS maltreatment allegations. County agencies may, but are not required to assist families by screening in and responding to reports where child welfare rather than child protective services are identified as a need. We are hopeful that in 2015 there may be some opportunities for Jefferson County and others to develop prevention and early intervention services through expansion grants for some of these programs.

Thank you for your ongoing dedication and efforts on behalf of Wisconsin children and families.
I hope that your first year as a Wisconsin citizen review panel was productive and that you continue to make progress in 2015.

Sincerely,

Fredi-Ellen Bove
Division Administrator

Cc: Kathi Cauley, Director
Jefferson County Human Services Department