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Governor Scott Walker  
Secretary Eloise Anderson

Division of Safety and Permanence

May 24, 2017

Brent Ruehlow, Child and Family Division Manager  
Laura Wagner, Initial Assessment/Access Supervisor  
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 2016 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. CPS appeals to be handled by DCF even at the first stage.*

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) has been working closely with the Wisconsin Counties Human Services Association (WCHSA) through the statewide CPS Appeals Workgroup to continue evaluating the appeals process in an effort to support local agency requirements and to improve and streamline CPS appeals related responsibilities, whenever possible. As supported by WCHSA and the CPS Appeals Workgroup, DCF has centralized documentation of Division of Hearings and Appeals-related appeals activity and findings, relieving the local agency of this specific CPS appeals task. DCF will continue to work with the WCHSA Appeals Workgroup to advance recommendations and meaningful supports related to the appeals process.

*2. More statewide funding for the drug epidemic.*

There has been increased attention on the drug epidemic from a range of state and local agencies. DCF has recently established the DCF Opioid Steering Committee, per executive order. The charge of this committee is to develop an understanding of and strategies to address opioid addiction and other drug abuse issues in families that affect child safety. This committee is comprised of cross-systems representation and will culminate with recommendations in the fall of 2017. Additionally, the Governor's 2017-19 biennial budget bill increased funding for the Children and Families Allocation which is the funding provided by the state to counties to support child welfare services. If approved by the legislature, this funding can be used by counties to help address the increase in opioid-related child welfare cases.

3. *Additional funding for local parent coaching in-home.*

DCF provides several programs that support flexible spending aimed at helping children remain safely in their homes; these programs include In-Home Safety Services (IHSS) and Post Reunification Support (P.S.) Programs for targeted children and their families served in our local child welfare systems. In December 2015, DCF started a process to redesign the IHSS Program. The redesign goals were aimed at making the program scale-able statewide, focused on outcomes, and providing flexible funding for local agencies to support children remaining safely in their homes. In January 2017, DCF began the pilot year of the redesigned program. Jefferson County is a 2017 IHSS county. IHSS funds can be used to provide in-home parenting support related to child safety. Additionally, Jefferson County is a P.S. Program County. This program provides flexible funding, which could include in-home parenting support, aimed at achieving and maintaining permanence through reunification.

Thank you for your panel's continued dedication and efforts on behalf of Wisconsin children and families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fredi-Ellen Bove".

Fredi-Ellen Bove  
Division Administrator