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Governor Scott Walker  
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Division of Safety and Permanence

May 24, 2017

Jameelah Love, President  
Wisconsin Youth Advisory Council  
Office of Youth Services  
Division of Safety and Permanence  
201 E. Washington Avenue  
P O Box 8916  
Madison, WI 53708-8916

Dear Ms. Love:

Thank you for your submission of the 2016 Youth Advisory Council 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 Youth Advisory Council submitted two recommendations to improve child protection services at the state level. A brief summarized statement of each recommendation and the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) response follows:

***1. Decrease barriers for youth reaching independence; e.g., increasing amounts of tuition waivers to make post-secondary education more attainable and affordable.***

The Department of Children and Families recognizes and understands the importance of foster youth's ability to access and succeed in their postsecondary education endeavors. The educational outcomes for youth aging out of care are unacceptable, and we are working hard to ensure we have policies in place that positively impact Wisconsin youth. For example, we recently reevaluated our funding of the DCF Scholarship and adjusted our policy regarding the level of funding a student can receive. As a result, all students eligible for the DCF Scholarship, regardless of whether they are enrolled in a two or four year program, are able to apply for the maximum award of \$5,000 per academic year.

In addition, now that former foster youth can claim independent status on their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), it is more likely that students can receive federal and state financial aid to attend postsecondary education and training. DCF is working diligently to notify high school personnel, postsecondary institutions, foster parents, service providers, and youth themselves to encourage youth to apply for admission and financial aid early their senior year of high school and each spring a

student is in a post-secondary program. The Foster Youth to College Advisory group has conducted presentations to this effect at conferences and through webcasts. Their efforts have also resulted in Northeast Wisconsin Technical College and UW Stout creating specialized support for former foster youth. DCF is also pursuing a way to inform younger youth currently in out-of-home of the FAFSA information so that they can begin to see post-secondary education as a possibility in their future. If a child is in care after turning 13, he/she is able to claim independent status.

**2. *Increase minimum monthly requirement of siblings visits to one visit a week with at least two face-to-face visits in the month.***

DCF is committed to supporting the placement of siblings together unless it is not in their best interests. When it is not possible for siblings to be placed together, the minimum requirement is one face-to-face contact per month. Other forms of contact and more frequent contact are strongly encouraged as well as looking at how the siblings can be placed together in the future.

DCF will review this recommendation by YAC. Wisconsin is in preparation for our Round 3 Child and Family Services Review with the federal government in which child welfare practice will be reviewed in Wisconsin. Frequency and quality of sibling interactions is one of the areas that will be reviewed. As a part of this review we will be preparing a statewide assessment of current practices, which will include this topic. DCF remains committed to improve sibling connections, especially when they are unable to be placed together.

Thank you for your dedication and efforts on behalf of Wisconsin children and families.

Sincerely,



Fredi-Ellen Bove  
Division Administrator

CC: Emily Tofte, Section Manager  
Bureau of Youth Services