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Governor Scott Walker
Secretary Eloise Anderson

Division of Safety and Permanence

June 27, 2018

Tina Czapa, President
Wisconsin Youth Advisory Council
Office of Youth Services
Division of Safety and Permanence
201 E. Washington Avenue
PO Box 8916
Madison, WI 53708-8916

Dear Ms. Czapa:

Thank you for your timely submission of the 2017 Youth Advisory Council annual 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 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 Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) response follows:

1. *The YAC recommends for the state to increase the minimum monthly requirement of siblings visits to have a minimum of 2 visits a month being a face to face interaction as well as unlimited contact through other formats such as phone calls or social media. These should be conducted in a natural setting to nourish a healthy sibling relationship.*

The DCF remains committed to supporting the placement of siblings together unless it is not in their best interest. If siblings are not placed together, the current minimum requirement is one face-to-face contact per month, though other forms of contact and more frequent contact are strongly encouraged. The frequency and quality of sibling interactions will be an area for discussion and possible action in the development of the state's Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). Thank you for serving on the PIP Advisory Group and assisting the Department in identifying ways to strengthen the child welfare system to help children, youth, and families thrive.

2. *The YAC recommends for the state to decrease barriers for youth reaching independence such as increasing the amounts of tuition waivers to make post-secondary education more attainable and affordable.*

The Department of Children and Families remains steadfast in promoting foster youth's ability to access and succeed in postsecondary education endeavors. 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. Additionally, former foster youth who were in care after turning 13 can claim independent status on their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), increasing the likelihood of federal and state financial aid to attend postsecondary education and training.

As you are aware, Assembly Bill (AB) 777, which was considered by the state legislature in 2017-2018, proposed full tuition waivers for current or former foster youth attending University of Wisconsin schools and state technical colleges. The Department supported AB 777. We recognize and applaud the Youth Advisory Council for your active advocacy and testimony in support of the bill. Passage of this statutory proposal would be an important step forward in making post-secondary education more attainable and affordable for youth placed currently or previously in foster care.

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

Sincerely,



Fredi-Ellen Bove
Division Administrator