



201 East Washington Avenue, Room E200  
P.O. Box 8916  
Madison, WI 53708-8916  
Telephone: 608-266-8787  
Fax: 608-422-7158

Governor Tony Evers  
Secretary Emilie Amundson

Division of Safety and Permanence

August 19, 2019

Brent Ruehlow, Co-coordinator and Co-chair  
Laura Wagner, Co-coordinator and Co-chair  
Jefferson County Citizen Review Panel  
Jefferson County Human Services  
1541 Annex Road  
Jefferson, WI 53549

Dear Mr. Ruehlow and Ms. Wagner:

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

The Citizen Review Panel submitted eight 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:

- *Additional funding for prevention programming to avoid CPS involvement as outlined in The Raising of America*
- *Support evidenced based programming for parents such as the Incredible Years (IY)*
- *More Trauma Informed Parenting support and resources*
- *Add Medicaid allowable services to expand to offer additional preventative services*

The DCF appreciates the emphasis placed on creative, evidence-based, and responsive programming related to early care, prevention, and parenting supports, particularly for the children and families in our communities facing significant challenges in accessing quality care and needed services and supports. These types of programs, also acknowledging that investment are a shared, community-wide responsibility, the DSP continues to work in a variety of forums and with key partners to advance these types of resources statewide through our Division of Early Care and Education, with other state agencies, and key partners such as the Children's Court Improvement Program (CCIP) and the Child Abuse and Neglect-Prevention Board (CAN-PB).

The DSP is currently developing a comprehensive strategic plan with our local child welfare agency representative and with input from other key stakeholders to leverage programmatic and funding opportunities now available under the federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) which emphasize evidence-based programming, specifically to prevent a child's entry into out-of-home care. In addition, the federal Children's Bureau has encouraged states to think about how better engage local communities and providers in better meeting child and family

needs to better address those factors that put families at greater risk of entering the formal child welfare system.

- *More statutory flexibility to allow for the sharing of information between agencies and organizations.*

The DCF appreciates the panel's desire to see information sharing and collaborative planning across agencies and organizations, and we support efforts by local agencies to promote this. Currently, Wis. Stat. § 48.981 authorizes a greater ability for child protective services to share information with other professionals than is often permitted by local agency policy or practice.

Based on our work with other, external stakeholders, we have become increasingly aware of the challenges surrounding the sharing of information between agencies and organizations, and in response, have begun strategically collaborating with stakeholders from organizations such as the Department of Health Services (DHS) to examine and seek solutions to this issue and others.

- *Add educational neglect to Ch. 48.*
- *Consider re-writing Ch. 54 to allow for easier navigation of Ch. 54 for minor guardianship.*
- *Expand the definition of relative again and allow more benefits to "Like Kin" to promote more placements with family connections.*

The DCF has an interest in the welfare of all children and is aware of the challenges sometimes faced by vulnerable children and youth within their families, the educational system, and both parents and relatives caring for these children and youth. Of course, Wisconsin statutes and our state's local court systems are a primary driver related to how children, their families, and the providers and agencies that serve them experience and move through our state's child welfare system. The DCF continues to work with key stakeholders such as the CCIP, the CAN-PB and the Wisconsin County Human Services Association to assess, prioritize and address concerns related to statutes that affect children and families in the child welfare system.

For example, those bringing guardianship of minor actions under Chapter 54, these actions are typically considered to fall outside of the purview of the areas of responsibility delegated to the DCF by the legislature for oversight. However, Assembly Bill 47, which was introduced, read, and referred to the Committee on Family Law on February 28, 2019, proposes a new statute that would govern private minor guardianships in a new subchapter under Chapter 48. More information about this bill can be found through the following links:

<https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2019/proposals/AB47>

[https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/misc/lc/hearing\\_testimony\\_and\\_materials/2019/ab47/ab0047\\_2019\\_05\\_21.pdf](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/misc/lc/hearing_testimony_and_materials/2019/ab47/ab0047_2019_05_21.pdf)

In relationship to other relative caregiving supports and definition, the DCF is currently reviewing access, and increasing resources, to ensure like-kin receive adequate supports when caring for children in out-of-home care.

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

Sincerely,



Wendy Henderson  
Division Administrator