

August 12, 2020

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:

1. Reimbursement for supportive housing projects as a Medicaid benefit. Housing is a real struggle for families and as an evidenced based practice this has been shown to be effective.

While DCF recognizes and appreciates the importance Medicaid plays in affording children and family access to key services and supports, it is a federally structured benefit administered by the Department of Health Services and, as such, DCF does not have authority to enact changes to it. As part of its focus on serving children in their family homes as a key child welfare response, DCF will continue to explore and advocate for ways to advance access to affordable housing for children, youth and families served by our state's local agencies.

2. Work with ICPC to align policy with Family Find philosophy when working with parents out of state or like-kin .

In seeking further clarification on this recommendation, the DCF contacted Jefferson County CRP for additional information. The panel identified situations in which a child was placed with a parent or relative in another state under a Temporary Physical Custody order sanctioned by a judge, though Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) does not accept this as a legal

placement when this occurs prior to completion and approval of a home study. The panel expressed an understanding of the rationale for a home study process but believes that the way it is designed currently does not support practice or align with Family Find philosophy.

The DCF recognizes and values placement with fit and willing relatives, which sometimes involves parties outside of the state of Wisconsin. The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) is a national compact between states and has been codified into state law. Under this compact, placing a child with a relative across state lines requires a home study approval prior to the placement in the receiving state, and each receiving state establishes their own requirements for placement approval. While emergency situations may occur, necessitating immediate placement of a child with a relative out of state, ICPC process and placement evaluation and approval is still mandated. Wisconsin encourages proactive ICPC requests to minimize placement disruption should the relative be deemed ineligible for placement. The DCF acknowledges that children are sometimes placed with parents and other relatives out of state in emergent situations. While there is a risk that the receiving state require the child to be returned to Wisconsin while the home study is completed, it is not a requirement; Wisconsin ICPC Specialists work with the receiving state in an effort to preserve the placement while the home study is conducted, and work to come in to compliance quickly to ensure proper supervision of the placement. In situations in which the court places the child with a parent from whom the child was not removed, the ICPC process may not apply if the court:

1. Has no evidence that the parent is unfit
2. Does not seek evidence that the parent is fit or unfit, and
3. Relinquishes jurisdiction as soon as the child is placed

The goal of ICPC is to ensure that the safety of children placed across state lines is ensured and that agencies maintain responsibility for the planning and well-being of that child. The DCF appreciates the call for expediency but does not have the authority to supersede the national compact.

3. Any improvement to the Immigration laws affecting our youth and families ability to access services, become providers etc...

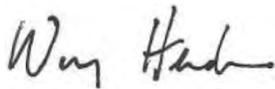
An individual may be licensed regardless of immigration status if all required background checks are able to be completed. Often the challenge is obtaining the background checks for individuals who are in the US without documentation.

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Wisconsin has been working with the Mexican Consulate to create an memorandum of understanding for how to proceed with different child welfare needs in accordance with federal treaties. Wisconsin County Human Services Association has reviewed the proposed agreement with the Mexican Consulate and DCF is hopeful it will be finalized within the next year. This MOU provides enhanced means to obtain the necessary background checks as well as assistance in locating relatives who still reside in Mexico.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wendy Henderson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Wendy Henderson
Division Administrator