



August 12, 2020

Connie Raether, Co-chair
Citizen Review Panel Serving Outagamie County
Outagamie County Department of Health & Human Services
401 South Walnut Street
Appleton, WI 54911

Dear Ms. Raether:

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

The Citizen Review Panel submitted four 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. Both representatives from Outagamie County and from the Oneida Tribe request that tribal social workers be allowed to enter information into EWISACWIS as they feel that would be very helpful. At this point they can only enter case notes, but no plans. The CRP agrees that this would be a great step forward in improving child protection services.***

The DCF appreciates and elevates collaboration between tribes and local child welfare agencies in best serving Indian children and families and in adherence to the Indian Child Welfare Act. Tribes currently have limited access to eWiSACWIS and maintain sovereignty over their own information and data. Exploration of expanded eWiSACWIS access has been, and continues, to be considered but must be approached carefully and in agreement between all parties.

- 2. Based on our case reviews, there is a need for more legal training for social workers and more support for foster parents, which could be provided by the state. In addition, increased funding for more child protection workers would help with reducing turnover. Staff turnover is one of the reasons children stay in out of home care longer than they should. Increased funding would provide for more workers.***

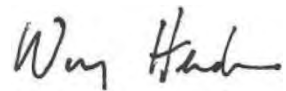
The panel has put forth a robust recommendation which highlights three key components: 1. More legal training for social workers, 2. More support for foster parents, in which DCF did follow up with the panel to garner additional context about this subset of the recommendation and it was determined that the panel was specifically recommending increased financial support for foster parents, and 3. Reducing staff turn over by further financially supporting the workforce.

1. Regarding the panel's recommendation that social workers have more legal training, the required statewide training system requires that child welfare professionals complete the Court Pre-Service Module, which covers protocol for removing a child, Children's Court and Court Process, and Preparation for Court. All juvenile court intake workers are also required to take Chapter 48 Intake Training. Additionally, child welfare professionals are offered Effective Courtroom Preparation and Presentation, which highlight the social worker's role in the court process pursuant to the Children's Code, as well as additional training titled Termination of Parental Rights, which includes procedural and substantive analysis of the law, information and impact of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), with recent case law and statutory changes. Should there be additional, or specific, areas of training need as identified by the panel, DCF would welcome more information on this.
2. As it pertains to the panel's recommendation regarding more support for foster parents, the DCF recognizes and appreciates the invaluable resource that foster families are to Wisconsin's children, youth, and families. Foster parents certainly deserve recognition and appropriate compensation. The DCF continues to evaluate the rates in Wisconsin and supports legislation that increases foster care rates.
3. Staff turnover is certainly a challenge in child welfare, and research does confirm a correlation between changes in caseworker and timeliness to permanence. DCF is stewarding a workload study to commence in 2020 which will provide valuable information about current staffing levels. Additionally, DCF supported a multi-million dollar funding allocation increase to all Wisconsin county child welfare agencies in 2019. Local agencies are financially sustained from a variety of local, state, and national funding sources but maintain local discretion and control of their respective staffing levels and compensation.

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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 style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Wendy Henderson
Division Administrator