

July 26, 2021

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 three 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. The panel wanted to explore the expansion of like kin to get benefits and recognition of that as a relative. This was sparked due to the family find effort that we engaged in.

DCF appreciates and recognizes the importance of placing children in homes of familial members if in-home safety planning is not possible. Kinship care is an important component of DCF's strategic plan. More specifically, one strategic objective identified is increasing support for relatives and like-kin providers. DCF has also heard from multiple stakeholders that the kinship care definition of "relative" (Wis. Stat. § 48.57) can create challenges in certain situations. While the definition is in statute and cannot be changed without legislative revision, DCF is looking at what can be done within the confines of State and Federal Law. Additionally, an increase in kinship care rates was included in the Governor's 2021-2023 biennial budget. This would increase rates for kinship providers from \$254 per month to \$300 per month.

2. The panel appreciated the expansion of Targeted Safety Support Funding (TSSF) and hope that would expand even further in terms of time limits.

DCF is proud to support TSSF. In 2021, 64 county child welfare agencies and two federally recognized tribes applied and were awarded TSSF funds. There are two categories of services that can be funded by TSSF when included on a Protective or Safety Plan: time-limited resources (Four months) and unlimited resources. Time limits for certain allowable services are determined by the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program through the United States Department of Health and Human Services, and therefore, is outside of DCF's authority to supersede. However, DCF facilitates bi-monthly calls to provide technical assistance to local child welfare agencies, and more importantly, to promote shared learning opportunities between

local agencies regarding creative case planning and use of time-limited and unlimited services.

As part of the state's [strategic transformation efforts](#) and as aligned with DCF's vision for children and families, we are prioritizing investments and changes in practice and program toward being able to serve children in our state's local child protective services (CPS) agencies within their family homes. These changes and investments are taking place in many areas of our work including:

- Developing a holistic in-home services model that aims to keep children safely at home and with their families.
- Researching evidence-based and non-evidence-based services to support families in home.
- Identifying ways to strengthen in-home assessment and service planning practices within Wisconsin's existing safety model and Wisconsin's Child Welfare Model for Practice.

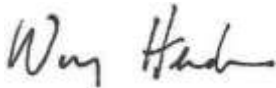
While not advanced by the legislature as part of their 2021-2023 Biennial Budget, DCF will continue to explore ways to support increased investments to better serve children in their family homes, including through the use of evidence-based in-home prevention and family support services.

3. Truancy arose as an issue as it is a common fact that truancy with young children is often parent-driven and is something that can be addressed differently via statutes, so it's not so child-driven.

Effectively addressing truancy concerns involves local-level collaboration between child welfare agencies, schools, and other key stakeholders such as law enforcement, courts, and community-based service providers. Effective local community collaboration among these key players can better ensure needs of the children and families in the community are being met without narrowly focusing on this specific child behavior. DCF believes that a change in statutes as a standalone response would not resolve concerns related to truancy at the local level.

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

Sincerely,



Wendy Henderson
Division Administrator