



July 26, 2021

Christa Jensen, Coordinator
Marathon County Citizen Review Panel
Marathon County Department of Social Services
400 East Thomas Street
Wausau, WI 54403

Dear Ms. Jensen,

Thank you for your timely submission of Marathon County Citizen Review Panel'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 three recommendations to improve child protection services at the state level. A brief summarized statement of this recommendation and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) response follows:

1. Continued funding and expansion of funding of programs like Targeted Safety Support Funding (TSSF), so that creative preventive services can be implemented with families to return children to their parental home or help children remain in their parental home.

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 our Department'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 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 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.

2. Support to counties and community agencies to implement Evidence Based Practices supported by the IV-E Evidence based prevention clearinghouse and which are contained within Wisconsin's Five-Year Plan.

DCF is actively working on our child welfare strategic transformation which is focused on strengthening all Wisconsin families to support their children because children belong with their families. As part of this process there are four key priorities:

1. To strengthen local communities and build services to support families in their homes.
2. To keep children in family settings whenever possible.
3. To improve our group care system.
4. To support our workforce with solutions and improvements.

Our Department is committed to supporting local child welfare, tribal child welfare, and community-based provider agencies in their efforts to implement Title IV-E Evidence Based Prevention programming. Research on evidenced-based and non-evidence-based services to support families in-home continues. Several evidence-based services continue to be evaluated for potential inclusion in Wisconsin's Five-Year Prevention Plan. These models are Homebuilders, Motivational Interviewing, Healthy Families of America, Nurse-Family Partnership and Parents as Teachers.

There are still many unknowns related to evidence-based services in Wisconsin and at the federal level. DCF remains committed to keeping agencies updated regarding information as it becomes available. In addition, DCF commits to updating and enhancing its Five-Year Prevention Plan as more services become identified on the federal Title IV-E Prevention Clearinghouse and as needs are further identified to better serve children, youth and families served by our local human and social services agencies.

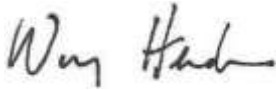
While not advanced by the legislature as part of their 2021-2023 Biennial Budget, DCF will continue to explore ways to support increased investments to better serve children in their family homes, including through the use of evidence-based in-home prevention and family support services. Information about updates, decisions and future opportunities will be provided via [Wisconsin's Family First webpage](#).

3. Continued funding and expansion of funding of programs to aid in the retention and recruitment of Foster Parents.

DCF recognizes and appreciates the invaluable resource that foster families are to Wisconsin's children, youth, and families. DCF continues to support foster parent retention activities under 2017 Wisconsin Act 260. Act 260 provides funding every year to DCF to allocate one-time funding opportunities via a competitive grant process to county child welfare agencies, tribal agencies, and non-profit organizations to support foster parents. DCF also continues to increase resources to all licensing and placing agencies to support their efforts to recruit foster and adoptive parents that reflect the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the children placed in out-of-home care.

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, appearing to read "Wendy Henderson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Wendy Henderson
Division Administrator