



July 26, 2021

Connie Raether, Co-chair
Larry Creamer, 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 and Mr. Creamer:

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 six 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 recommends that the state offer an option for counties to develop a level five home for children with behavioral problems.

DCF's strategic priority of keeping children with their families and in their communities aligns with this recommendation. Our Department has heard from multiple local child welfare agencies that they experience challenges in locating appropriate placement resources for children with complex needs. DCF is exploring all options that would allow our state to reach this goal. This includes exploration of placement resources, including treatment foster care and leveraging Level Five homes, and supporting family-based placement settings.

2. Need parenting classes for parents with personality disorders and;

3. Need incentives for training counselors.

Wisconsin has a state-supervised, county-administered child welfare system. This means that child welfare services are operated and delivered at a local level and DCF does not directly provide parenting classes statewide. In many local communities, available services include parenting classes and counseling services. When the type or frequency of services are not available, establishing a partnership between the local child welfare agency and a private agency is often the best way to address unique parenting education and counseling needs in a specific community.

4. Changes in reporting options, specifically related to cases involving domestic violence.

Wisconsin's [Child Protective Service \(CPS\) Access and Initial Assessment Standards](#) provide local child welfare agencies and CPS professionals with specific direction in screening and assessing reports of child maltreatment.

DCF recognizes that there is significant overlap between domestic abuse and child maltreatment. Information about the presence of domestic violence, including the demonstration of power, control, and entitlement, is required to be gathered and documented in all cases. Sufficient information must be gathered to understand and assess family information and dynamics that contribute to child safety threats to make informed decisions about which families must receive additional services or CPS intervention.

- 5. There is a state statute that requires there to be an adoptive resource available before a termination of parental rights (TPR) is filed and in some cases that isn't possible so there are more delays in permanence for the child.**

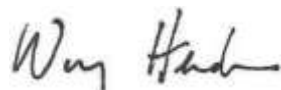
DCF and local child welfare agencies must abide by all state statutes. DCF continues to be committed to eliminating barriers to reaching permanence for all children. We recognize the importance of finding permanent placement resources for children and youth including the identification of a permanent resource prior to starting the TPR process. DCF continues to collaborate with court partners to identify changes that could improve the timeliness of the TPR process.

- 6. The legislative issue the Wisconsin Court needs to address is removing trial as an option for contested matters, specifically related to TPR.**

DCF recognizes that this is a continued recommendation from a prior year. What makes this recommendation particularly challenging is a parent's right to due process, which includes their ability to contest the TPR and request that it be resolved through a trial. We also acknowledge that many local agencies face challenges to reaching timely permanency due to congestion in local courts. DCF continues to collaborate with court partners in identifying ways to improve the timeliness of the TPR process and will keep this consideration as part of these continued conversations.

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

Sincerely,



Wendy Henderson
Division Administrator