



August 19, 2022

Pastor Larry Creamer, Co-Chair  
Connie Raether, Co-Chair  
Citizen Review Panel Serving Outagamie County

Dear Pastor Creamer and Mrs. Raether,

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

Recommendations 1, 2, and 3 are related to congregate care facilities for children with high acuity and DCF's response addresses these recommendations together.

- 1. Need locked psych residential treatment facilities in WI as well as facilities that allow kids with low cognitive functioning to be admitted. Now kids need to go out of state and that is expensive and difficult to maintain family connections.**
- 2. Need treatment facilities in Wisconsin that have staff trained in brain interventions. Currently kids are sent to a facility in Georgia.**
- 3. Law requires least restrictive setting, and we also try to keep kids in community, but it sets kids who need a more restrictive setting in order to feel safe to go through placements that do not work. Law needs to be changed to allow some kids to be placed in a more restrictive setting earlier if needed and if in their best interest.**

A key DCF priority is to keep children whose needs require residential placement close to home in the least restrictive setting that meets the child's needs. DCF is actively in the process of identifying evidence-based practices designed to serve kids in family-like settings and develop the tools and skills they need to prevent the need for placement in a secure facility. All children, including those with low cognitive functioning, deserve to be and should be able to be served in their family homes and in their families' communities. Multiple efforts are underway at the local,

regional, and state levels to address the complex needs of children and youth with high acuity.

- The Wisconsin Association of Children and Family Agencies (WAFCA) is piloting Resource Connections sessions. The goal of each session is to have all possible treatment options identified for the child, and to equip the placing agency with contact information for the identified options so they can follow-up with those agencies specifically to coordinate the child's care.
- DCF and the Department of Health Services (DHS) are collaborating to explore Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTF) that could provide additional inpatient psychiatric treatment resources in Wisconsin to address the mental health needs of children.
- DCF is collaborating with the Wisconsin County Human Service Association (WCHSA) to address residential placement options for youth with high acuity needs.

Additionally, Governor Evers included \$200,000 in his 2021-2023 biennial budget to develop training for group care providers. Curriculum planning and development are currently underway. This package of trainings will include information on brain development and related interventions. Additionally, a nationally renowned speaker will present to Wisconsin's group care providers in November 2022 regarding the application of neuroscience to interactions with kids and families. DCF and the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS) also offers Think Trauma training to all congregate care providers, a program focused on trauma's impact on development, coping strategies, vicarious trauma, organizational stress, and self-care.

**4. Need a law change so families do not have to go through child welfare system before being placed in residential care. It stigmatizes the families who have not abused or neglected their children.**

Many residential care centers in Wisconsin accept private placements that do not necessitate child welfare system involvement and many families can and do access this without child welfare involvement. The ability to privately pay for placement is often an issue, which results in families turning to the public child welfare system to aid in the costs of this type of care. Children in residential care should be there due to their treatment needs, regardless of any maltreatment history and regardless of a family's ability to pay for this therapeutic service. It is important to refocus the narrative of this placement setting to be one of meeting a child's treatment needs rather than stigma. Citizen Review Panels are and should continue to be a good partner in understanding the role of residential care and promoting this message.

Recommendations 5 and 6 are related to foster parent recruitment and retention and DCF's response addresses these recommendations together.

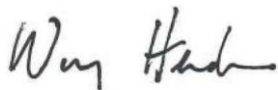
5. **Need to offer an option for foster parents to do foster care professionally full time and be paid appropriately.**
6. **Need a state initiative to more aggressively recruit and provide a high level of training and support for foster parents statewide due to complex situations and very difficult cases.**

DCF is aware of and empathetic toward the difficulties local agencies have in finding appropriate placements for children and recognizes the importance of building infrastructure that can support as many children in their communities as possible. Professional and treatment foster parenting is an important part of achieving this goal and DCF continues to explore concrete ways in which to expand and support local implementation of professional foster parenting to address the needs of foster parents and continues to make adjustments to foster parent training to better support their needs. DCF is looking at ways to improve both of these sets of efforts at both the state and local levels.

Kinship care is also an important component of DCF's [Putting Families First](#) initiative. DCF is committed to providing supports to kin and like-kin providers, as research supports children have better outcomes when placed with people they know and who know them. To this end, an increase in kinship care rates was included in the Governor's 2021-2023 biennial budget. This increase raised the monthly rates for kinship care providers from \$254 per month to \$300 per month. Like-kin are often recognized by children and their families as an informal extension of family, thereby considering these relationships to be included in the family structure. DCF will continue to elevate this important philosophical orientation when evaluating and implementing policy and practice.

DCF continues to acknowledge and appreciate the continued efforts put forth by the Citizen Review Panel Serving Outagamie County for their continued advocacy. Thank you for the time, energy, and commitment you have made to improve services for Wisconsin children and their families.

Sincerely,



Wendy Henderson  
Division Administrator