



August 19, 2022

Faith Price, Panel Coordinator
Youth Advisory Council
Department of Children and Families
201 West Washington Avenue
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Ms. Price:

Thank you for your timely submission of the Youth Advisory Council's (YAC) 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 one recommendation 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. The YAC recommends for the state to implement Independent Living Services through the age of 23. This would guarantee continued care for the young adults who receive an Independent Living Worker before and after the age of 21. State YAC has been informed by other Independent Coordinator workers that many of their youth don't go to them until they have reached the age of 18-21 so services for many of them have stopped or have been shown to be "too late" due to a certain age.**

DCF recognizes that this is a continued recommendation from last year. DCF continues to support the extension of Independent Living (IL) services through the age of 23 and the benefits these services would provide for youth. However, in order to provide IL services to more youth for a longer period across the state, DCF would need an increase in state funding to ensure such services are adequate, meaningful, and sustainable.

As a part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, a federal stimulus bill passed by Congress and signed into law in December 2020, states' Independent Living Programs received additional funding to support their programs. DCF allocated a large portion of this to contracted Transition Resource Agencies (TRAs) to support qualifying youth in a number of ways – including areas of need exacerbated by the public health crisis as well as new

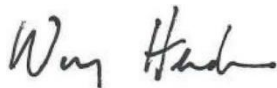
efforts not usually possible with the standard IL allocation. One of the areas of focus was a temporary increase in the IL eligibility age limit from age 21 to age 23. DCF therefore encouraged the TRAs to use a portion of their stimulus funding to serve eligible youth to age 23 and all have done so to some degree since mid-2021. Generally, TRAs did so by continuing services to pre-existing clients past age 21 or re-connecting with young people who had "aged out" of the program previously. While TRAs may serve youth to age 23 through the end of 2022, permanent adoption of this upper age limit depends on increased dedicated funding to the IL program.

Thanks to the advocacy of YAC on this issue, Governor Evers recommended expanding eligibility for independent living services, including increasing the maximum age for services to 23 in his 2021-23 Executive Budget. However, that provision was ultimately removed by the legislature and not included in the final 2021-23 Biennial Budget signed into law.

DCF remains committed to exploring ways to ensure funding is available to expand eligibility and services to Wisconsin youth longer-term.

DCF continues to acknowledge and appreciate the continued efforts put forth by the Youth Advisory Council 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