

**Wisconsin's Post-Reunification Support Program Statement:
Values, Principles and Related Initiatives**

Introduction

Wisconsin's Post-Reunification Support (P.S.) Program, authorized under the recently approved Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Program, embraces and is predicated upon the values and principles articulated in the state's child welfare Practice Model, including the most critical elements of the model as follows:

- ***Permanence and Stability:*** Children and youth need and have the right to lifelong nurturing and secure relationships that are provided by families who can meet their specific needs. Efforts to identify and secure permanency are continuous and integrated into all stages of involvement with children, youth and families.
- ***Well-Being:*** Children's well-being is dependent upon strong and developing families and communities who are meeting their physical, mental, behavioral health, educational and cultural needs.
- ***Family Centered:*** Families are the primary providers for children's needs. The family is meaningfully involved with the child welfare system throughout the life of the case in a respectful and responsive manner that builds upon its strengths.
- ***Respectful Interactions:*** Children, youth and families are best served when we educate them regarding the child welfare process, actively listen to them and invite participation in decision making, and empower them to meet their unique and individual needs. Agency practices, service delivery, communications and actions are easily understood and mutually developed.
- ***Cultural Responsiveness:*** Cultural responsiveness is achieved through understanding and serving children, youth, and families within the context of each unique family and community. This includes, but is not limited to, families' beliefs, values, race, ethnicity, history, tribe, culture, religion and language.
- ***Partnership:*** Families, communities, and the child welfare system are primary and essential partners in creating and supporting meaningful connections for children and youth in safe and nurturing environments.

Vision and Values

As part of the state's Practice Model, core functions of child welfare agency caseworkers that support all aspects of child welfare intervention, including those which are integral to the *P.S. Program* include:

Engagement

Meaningful engagement sets the tone for accommodating, transparent, beneficial, and respectful interactions during every stage of the child welfare involvement to build trust and commitment to the change process.

Teaming

The size, composition and function of the family team are determined by the needs and safety concerns of the family. Family teams build on the development of constructive and

collaborative relationships, so that our efforts can concentrate on identifying and achieving beneficial outcomes. Involving the family and those with the skills, family knowledge, and abilities needed to organize effective strategies for a child and family empowers that family to accept ownership of the subsequent assessments, case plans and decisions.

Assessment

Ongoing fact-finding and organization of relevant information and knowledge concerning the family is the global responsibility of the team.

Effective and Appropriate Intervention

Well-informed strategies should be implemented with sufficient effort and precision to be effective in producing expected changes. Service interventions should be customized to the individual needs of the family, help families develop the capacity and resourcefulness to achieve sustainable independence, and be coordinated in a way to avoid overwhelming families and unintentionally sabotaging their efforts.

Tracking and Adjustment

Child and family status, intervention process, progress and problems, and change results are routinely measured and evaluated by the family team. Strategies, interventions and supports are adapted to changing conditions and needs, applying knowledge gained and creating a self-correcting process for finding what works for the child and family.

These core functions serve to align the state's child welfare system values and principles, serving as an overarching strategy to maintain child safety, to assess for and respond to ongoing needs, and to promote child, caregiver and family functioning. As part of these core functions, the child welfare agency caseworker collaborates with the family to carry out ongoing assessments of child and family dynamics, strengths, and needs in order to implement effective plans that lead to safe case closure and long-term family stability.

Post Reunification Support Program (P.S.): Program Goals and Description

Program Goals

Based on the values and principles identified above and through the implementation of the above core child welfare functions, the P.S. Program seeks to accomplish the following goals:

- Promote family stability and adjustment following a child's reunification to the family home;
- Empower parents to strengthen caregiving, problem-solving, and coping skills;
- Reduce the likelihood of child maltreatment recurrence and re-entry of a child to out of home care after being reunified with his or her parents; and,
- Improve the short and longer term well-being of the child and his or her family members.

Program Target Population

Under the auspices of the five year Title IV-E waiver demonstration project, the P.S. Program intends to accomplish these goals by supporting statewide roll-out of continued ongoing case management and provision of services and supports during a 12 month period following an enrolled child's reunification with his or her family. This intervention will be similar in case practice and reimbursement to the post-permanency support services provided by the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (BMCW) to all children reunifying with their families since January 2012.

Children of all ages, who are being served due to child protective service or child welfare concerns, who are in placement voluntarily or under a Child in Need of Protection and Services (CHIPS) and are reunifying with their parent(s), are possible candidates for enrollment in the P.S. Program. These children will be screened using the results of a formal predictive risk model, currently being developed as part of the P.S. Program evaluation process, to enroll children who are projected to be at the greatest risk of re-entering out-of-home care.

Siblings of a child enrolled in the P.S. Program, who also reunify with the parent(s) and who are being served due to child protective service or child welfare concerns or under a CHIPS order may also be enrolled in the P.S. Program.

The P.S. Program is implemented for all qualifying children and their families including Wisconsin Native American children served by the local child welfare agency, who meet the above criteria, are members or eligible for membership of a WI Native American Tribe, and there is a functionally active 161 Agreement or a Memorandum of Understanding (M.O.U.) between the tribe and local agency.

Program Description

During the 12 month post-reunification period, children and their families who are enrolled into the P.S. Program will continue their engagement with their ongoing services caseworker to ensure the following objectives are met:

- Families, whether served voluntarily or under court order during the 12 month post-reunification period, are creatively and meaningfully engaged in and fully understand the respective roles and responsibilities of the child welfare caseworker, service providers (formal and informal), and themselves. Caseworker contact requirements are delineated below and all attempts, both successful and unsuccessful, are documented in eWiSACWIS.
- Using a family teaming and solution-focused approach, families are empowered through the helping process to be leaders in carrying out responsibilities associated with identifying needs and concerns and contributing to the development, implementation, and modification of strategies to address those needs and concerns.

- Assessments and modifications to related planning documents based on these assessments are individualized for each family and documented as directed below in eWiSACWIS in the following areas:
 1. Child safety assessment and planning;
 2. Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) child and caregiver assessment components at program entry, six (6) months following program entry and within the month prior to case closure; and,
 3. Case Planning and family development planning.

- Families are encouraged over the course of the post-reunification period to re-ignite, nurture and secure access to community-based and natural supports that will contribute to and sustain child safety and child and family stability and well-being beyond the 12 month post-reunification period.

Program Funding, Participation and Reinvestment Requirements

Program Funding

For any child enrolled into the P.S. Program, the local child welfare agency who has been approved to provide services under the P.S. Program will receive a payment equal to \$1100 per month per enrolled child for each month the child is open for services with the program for up to 12 months following the child's reunification. Specific requirements associated with child and family participation and case closure are described in further detail below.

These funds may be used flexibly within and across all active cases of enrolled children and their respective families throughout the 12 month service period. The funds are intended to support the provision of ongoing case management requirements and other direct service provision needs, both formal and informal service provisions as well as other forms of tangible or intangible support of enrolled children and their families based on the needs and services documented in the family's Safety and Ongoing Service Case Plans in eWiSACWIS.

P.S. Program payments will be authorized for approved counties via the State and County Contract amendment. Payment will be provided for each child for each month the child is enrolled in the P.S. Program.

Agency and Family Participation Requirements

A child, and his/her family, who is identified by the local child welfare agency as meeting program eligibility requirements and is subsequently enrolled in the P.S. Program will be served by the local child welfare agency either under court order or voluntarily for the entire 12 month period except in the following circumstances:

Case Situation	Enrollment Status	Case Documentation
Child or parent death	Child's disenrollment is documented in the Child's Program Assignment page in eWiSACWIS	Family case may be closed in eWiSACWIS, depending on other case circumstances
Child or parent(s) re-locates during a voluntary service period within the 12 month post-reunification period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child or parent is not able to be located for a maximum of 60 days, during which time successful contact with the child or parent is not made, and the family is confirmed to have relocated to another jurisdiction • Child's disenrollment is documented in the child's Program Assignment page in eWiSACWIS with an end date that does not exceed 60 days from the last successful contact with the child or parent(s) 	Family case is closed in eWiSACWIS
Child, if age appropriate, or parent(s) explicitly request P.S. Program discontinuation during a voluntary service period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child's disenrollment is documented in the child's Program Assignment page in eWiSACWIS with an end date that does not exceed 60 days from the last successful contact with the child or parent(s) 	Family case is closed in eWiSACWIS
Child is removed from his/her home and re-enters OHC either under a voluntary placement agreement or via court order	Child's disenrollment is documented in the child's Program Assignment page in eWiSACWIS with an end date that is earlier than or the same as the child's corresponding removal date	Child's placement is documented in eWiSACWIS in the Out of Home Placement page

Agency Reinvestment Requirements

Participation in this program is expected to yield savings, at both the state and local levels, by preventing a child's re-entry into out-of-home care and, therefore, reduce the demand on state and local revenue sources to pay for these placement costs. As part of the conditions of the federal Title IV-E waiver, savings are expected to be reinvested in the child welfare system. To reflect this re-investment expectation, the P.S. Program includes the following reinvestment requirement for participating counties: for every three (3) cases in which a child was enrolled in the P.S. Program and payment for program services was provided to the local child welfare agency by the DCF, the local child welfare agency must fund P.S. Program participation for one (1) child using non-P.S. funding sources, such as Community and Family Allocation (CFA) or local funding, by the end of the subsequent year.

**Post Reunification Support Program Intervention:
Practice Framework and Requirements**

P.S. Program practice framework and requirements are predicated on the state's Safety Intervention and Ongoing Services Standards and the BMCW Post-Permanency Support service procedures currently used to guide post-reunification services during the 12 month period following reunification of children with families who are served by the BMCW. To best support achievement of the P.S. Program goals of ensuring child safety, promoting family stability, and child and family well-being, and preventing any repeat maltreatment and child re-entry into OHC, and to support the federally required evaluation associated with this program, the requirements of the above standards have been modified as follows:

- Use of formal Family Team Meetings at entry to and exit from the P.S. Program;
- Use of a formal Post- Reunification Support (P.S.) Program Support Agreement (attached) signed by both the agency's representatives and the family members;
- Refined caseworker contact requirements specific to the case type, status, and enrollment month, and;
- Completion of CANS Assessment (Child and Parental Caregiver modules) at specific intervals during the 12 month service period.

The P.S. Program practice requirements to be carried out prior to, during and at the conclusion of the 12 month service period are as follows:

1. ***Prior to Reunification-*** At least 30 days prior to the expected child reunification, which would include any period in which the child is placed with the parent(s) under a Trial Reunification placement setting, carry out and complete the following casework responsibilities via a formal Family Team Meeting which is documented in eWiSACWIS as a Case Note and includes the date of the team meeting and all meeting participants:
 - a. Continue implementation of safety intervention and ongoing service practice requirements associated with reassessment and plan modification (Safety and Case Plans) as warranted based on family needs which are documented in eWiSACWIS;
 - b. Complete Post-Reunification (P.S.) Program Support Agreement which is approved and signed and is to be retained in the written case record;
 - c. Update and document in eWiSACWIS the child's Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Assessment for both the Child and Caregiver modules;
 - d. Update and maintain accurate Legal Status documentation in eWiSACWIS, and;
 - e. As appropriate, file a Change of Placement Notice per statutes and with local parties to the court (To be retained in the written case record).

Once all parties have supported this change, the child may be considered for enrollment.

2. During the 12 month post-reunification service period-

- a. Continued caseworker contacts to assess child safety and child, caregiver and family functioning, needed changes to the family Case Plan, and continued advocacy to support the family’s connections to natural and community-based support are to be based on unique family needs and will change throughout the 12 month service period. Minimum contact requirements, with one or more members-caregivers and or child(ren)- of the family cases, are as follows:

Case Type (as documented and updated in eWiSACWIS)	Minimum Contact Requirements
In-Home CPS Cases (Court-Ordered or Voluntary)- child safety concerns present for one or more children in the family case	2 Face to Face Contacts per Month
In-Home, Court-Ordered Child Welfare (CW) Cases- no child safety concerns are present for any child in the family case, but in-home court ordered supervision is required	1 Face to Face Contact per Month
In-Home, Voluntary CW Cases- no child safety concerns are present for any child in the family case and there is no in-home court ordered supervision required	1 Face to Face Contact per Month through the first nine months of the service period; at least 1 phone contact per month, thereafter

- b. Continued Safety Reassessment and Planning and Case Plan Reassessment and Planning per Safety Intervention and Ongoing Services Standards requirements for which any updates or changes are documented in eWiSACWIS as required by these standards;
- c. The CANS Assessment- Child and Caregiver modules are updated and documented as follows:
 - 1) 30 days prior to expected reunification
 - 2) 6 Months following reunification
 - 3) 30 days prior to expected program closure
- d. Throughout the 12 months post-reunification service period, case participant, Case Type/Person Type, case address, and the child and family Legal Status are updated as appropriate in eWiSACWIS.

3. Prior to Case Closure- Within 30 days of the case closure, the following casework responsibilities are carried out and completed via a formal Family Team Meeting to meet the following purposes:

- a. Recognize family accomplishments, strengths and areas of continuing challenge.

- b. Review continuing family resources- formal, informal and natural supports- and contingency planning to address future concerns regarding child functioning, caregiver needs and capacity and family supports.
- c. Gather information to complete and document in eWiSACWIS a final CANS- both the Child and Caregiver modules- for the child.

This final Family Team Meeting is to be documented in eWiSACWIS as a Case Note which indicates the date of the meeting, identifies the meeting participants, and describes the results of the meeting.

- 4. Case Closure Requirements- a case will be ended in the P.S. program prior to the end of the 12 months service period under the following circumstances:
 - a. Child re-enters out-of-home care (Case does not closed, but P.S. Program enrollment ends due to child placement)
 - b. Child/parent death (Case is closed in eWiSACWIS)
 - c. Child/parent relocate out of state and family cannot be located (Case is closed in eWiSACWIS after 60 days during which efforts to contact the family are unsuccessful as documented in eWiSACWIS)
 - d. Family case is being served in a voluntary status and no child safety concerns are present and the family explicitly discontinues P.S. Program participation (Case is closed in eWiSACWIS, including documentation of all caseworker attempts-- successful and unsuccessful-- to voluntarily engage family in continued participation)
- 5. ***Supervisory consultation and oversight-*** The supervisor of the caseworker is required to provide ongoing consultation regarding practice requirements and how to meet and prioritize practice responsibilities, as well as oversight and monitoring of these requirements throughout the 12-month service period, including a formal six (6) month staffing, to be documented via a Case Note in eWiSACWIS. Formal supervisory involvement and oversight is required to authorize case entry into and closure from the P.S. Program and support is required throughout the 12-month service period.
- 6. ***Caseworker Training Requirements-*** In addition to training requirements currently in place for new workers, ongoing workers, and supervisors, the P.S. program may require specialized training and/or consultations, such as peer-to-peer mentoring sessions. The Department will establish reasonable timelines for completion of any new training requirements and work with the state's Child Welfare Professional Development system to ensure that adequate training sessions are available for new training requirements.