



# DCF Executive Summary of the 2023-2029 Long-Range Plan: Addressing Sexual and Domestic Violence in Wisconsin

## A. High Level Summary of the Stakeholder Process Leading Up to the Recommendations

The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) Domestic Abuse Program administers state and federal funding dedicated to providing shelter and supportive services for survivors of domestic abuse and their families. This funding is critical to the ability of domestic abuse agencies across the state to provide safety to victims and their children when they need it most.

The goals of the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) Domestic Abuse Program are to:

- Provide accessible, trauma-sensitive, culturally responsive crisis, safety, and support services for victims/survivors of domestic abuse and their children;
- Provide accessible, effective, and culturally appropriate services to survivors of domestic abuse from traditionally underserved groups and from across the life span;
- Educate the community about issues related to domestic abuse;
- Promote a coordinated community response to domestic abuse; and
- Promote the social change necessary to end domestic abuse.

In 2023, DCF administered \$14.3 million in funding to 74 local agencies, nine federally-recognized tribes and three technical assistance and training providers. Additional information on DCF's Domestic Abuse Program can be found in the [Domestic Abuse Program Annual Report: 2023](#). It should be noted that federal and state funding to support domestic abuse survivors is also distributed by the Department of Justice (DOJ).

As part of Wisconsin's application to receive federal funding under the Family Violence Prevention Services Act (FVPSA), DCF is required to engage with the state domestic violence coalition, tribes, tribal coalitions, community-based organizations that primarily serve underserved populations, including culturally and linguistically specific populations, and other knowledgeable individuals and interested organizations. In addition, DCF is required to identify which populations in the state are underserved and to develop a plan to meet the needs of underserved populations as part of a Wisconsin State Plan.

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To meet these requirements, DCF contracts with a state domestic violence coalition, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin (EA), to facilitate a robust stakeholder process as part of the development of an advisory long-range planning (LRP) process. The most recent LRP process included sexual assault programs that have historically not been part of the planning process. The decision to incorporate sexual assault programs allowed the LRP process to focus more broadly on statewide anti-violence advocacy relating to domestic violence, sexual assault, and the many overlapping aspects of these forms of violence. In focusing on state-wide anti-violence efforts, EA worked with the other state coalitions – Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA), American Indians Against Abuse (AIAA), and Black and Brown Womyn Power Coalition (BBWPC) – to facilitate the development of the plan. Input sessions were held in 2020 and 2022.

This culminated in the creation of the *2023-2029 Long Range Plan: Addressing Sexual and Domestic Violence in Wisconsin*. This document outlined recommendations from the various coalitions and stakeholders regarding “what those working to end sexual and domestic violence must do to bring us closer to the goal of ending violence in Wisconsin.” Per the *Long Range Plan*, these recommendations will be used by the various domestic violence coalitions to inform their work. Recommendations encompass varying levels of system change, including recommendations for direct service providers, communities, partners, as well as local, state and national recommendations.

DCF is profoundly grateful for the many stakeholders who participated in the various coalitions, focus groups and interviews that led to the development of this document. DCF uses the *2023-2029 Long-Range Plan* and the recommendations as an advisory document. DCF did not use the *2023-2029 Long-Range Plan* as the Wisconsin State Plan in its most recent federal submission for FVPSA funding as it goes beyond the scope required by FVPSA. Instead, this document is used to support the state’s program planning efforts, as well as meet the federal requirements stakeholder engagement/feedback expectations outlined under FVPSA.

## **B. Recommendations from Stakeholder Engagement**

The recommendations on the next page are taken directly from the *Long-Range Plan: Addressing Sexual and Domestic Violence in Wisconsin*. DCF acknowledges that this document was created by the various domestic violence/sexual assault coalitions as an advocacy document and will be used to inform their work.

DCF considers these recommendations as advisory to DCF and its broader planning efforts. DCF recognizes that many of these recommendations are outside of the scope of the Department and therefore should not be considered a “road map” for DCF’s Domestic Abuse Program implementation. However, the recommendations within DCF’s scope have been prioritized and are discussed below.



## Recommendations from 2023-2029 Long Range Plan

| Priority Area                   | Goal   | Recommendations   |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Services</b>                 | Expand services beyond the false dichotomy of victim/abuser to include all impacted by harm. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the complexity of violence as it relates to victims/abusers</li> <li>• Incorporate comprehensive services for families and communities</li> <li>• Provide treatment and healing services for those who have caused harm</li> <li>• Offer services for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Services</b>                 | Structure services to be survivor-defined and focused on holistic healing                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance survivor defined services that reflect their expertise and autonomy</li> <li>• Move away from a prescribed list of services to focus on survivor needs</li> <li>• Address historical and intergenerational trauma</li> <li>• Recognize victimization across the lifespan</li> <li>• Expand advocacy beyond criminal, legal, and medical systems</li> <li>• Remove barriers and create employment opportunities for survivors in our work</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Services</b>                 | Remove rigid policies and practices that create barriers to healing and justice              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on the harm and disproportionate impact of mandated reporting</li> <li>• Increase mobile services via outreach, varied hours, virtual options, etc.</li> <li>• Deliver primary services and remove barriers for youth accessing services</li> <li>• Move beyond shelter practices that impede safety and healing</li> <li>• Promote long-term, sustainable housing models – like Housing First</li> <li>• Strengthen sexual assault services within dual agencies</li> <li>• Collaborate in an intentional, and respectful manner for the benefit of survivors to reduce rather than create barriers.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Culturally-Specific Work</b> | Prioritize accessibility of linguistically and culturally appropriate services               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure meaningful access to services across all identities – through translated materials, warm referrals, relationships between programs, etc.</li> <li>• Connect survivors to culturally appropriate healing opportunities</li> <li>• Design equitable grievance procedures for those experiencing discrimination and harm</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Culturally Specific Work</b> | Invest in BIPOC led and culturally specific programs   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove existing barriers to funding for culturally specific programs</li> <li>• Challenge funding structures that prioritize mainstream programs</li> <li>• Offer substantial, non-restricted, flexible funding for services and prevention</li> <li>• Support recruitment, retention, and leadership for those most marginalized</li> <li>• Compensate community leaders for their expertise and leadership</li> </ul>  |



## Recommendations from 2023-2029 Long Range Plan

| Priority Area                   | Goal   | Recommendations  |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Prevention</b>               | Prioritize primary prevention by focusing on root causes                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elevate and compensate youth leadership in prevention efforts</li> <li>• Build on a foundation that understands anti-oppression work as primary prevention</li> <li>• Encourage best practices in primary prevention that are community-led &amp; driven</li> <li>• Embrace prevention as essential to our work</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Statewide Infrastructure</b> | Center QTPOC experiences to improve state level infrastructure for all survivors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify ways to incorporate survivor feedback and input</li> <li>• Examine existing taskforces to coordinate efforts and ensure they center the diverse needs of all survivors</li> <li>• Advance public policy initiatives based on the LRP and focused on intersectional issues including racial, economic, and reproductive justice</li> <li>• Foster a movement to end violence through collaboration of the four coalitions (AIAA, BBWP, EA, and WCASA) and primary funders (DCF, DOJ, and DHS)</li> <li>• DCF and DOJ develop program accountability measures that center the experiences of marginalized communities and individuals</li> </ul> |
| <b>System Work</b>              | Create and expand community responses that center transformative justice         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore options for survivors to seek accountability and healing</li> <li>• Encourage decriminalization efforts – including survival, sex work, and other related offense that harm individuals and communities</li> <li>• Seek alternatives to criminal legal responses – including mandatory arrest</li> <li>• Improve responses for survivors who choose to engage with systems</li> <li>• Re-define multi-disciplinary teams beyond the criminal legal system</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Funding</b>                  | Increase funding and remove barriers to funding for services                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase funding for SA through existing grant programs and prioritize SA in discretionary grants</li> <li>• Increase funding for primary prevention (see Prevention Priority)</li> <li>• Increase funding for culturally specific work (see Culturally Specific Priority)</li> <li>• Value those who work in DV-SA by increasing compensation and enhancing retention</li> <li>• Invest in individual and organizational capacity to support leadership development and improve sustainability</li> </ul>  |



## C. Recommendations Prioritized by the Department

As part of federal funding requirements outlined in FVPSA, Wisconsin is required to engage diverse coalitions and populations to inform recommendations and suggestions to improve service delivery. DCF has begun acting on several key recommendations from lived experience and stakeholder feedback that are within DCF's specific and unique scope. These are outlined below:

### 1 Strengthen sexual assault services within dual agencies.

### 2 Increase funding for sexual assault services through existing grant programs.

**Action |** Over the last several years, DCF has worked to intentionally support the work of sexual assault agencies and dual domestic abuse/sexual assault programs. One key way DCF has done so historically has been through the use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, which allocated \$2,820,665 in funds to local programs across Wisconsin from 10/1/20-9/30/25. DCF intends to continue to support efforts to increase funding to sexual assault services where able.

### 3 Challenge funding structures that prioritize mainstream programs.

**Action |** Where possible, DCF is evaluating the current contracting and procurement processes. The aim of this effort is to ensure clarity on proposal and application requirements for local agencies, and clearer information to providers on service intent and population to be served when using DCF funding.

### 4 DCF and DOJ develop program accountability measures that center the experiences of marginalized communities and individuals.

### 5 Advocate for funding processes that ensure equitable access, promote transparency, and eliminate unnecessary barriers (match requirements, reporting, etc.)

**Action |** DCF acknowledges that having two different state agency funders (DCF and DOJ), often with different requirements for local agencies, causes undue burden on programs. This burden is felt even more acutely, by small, community-based agencies. To that end, DCF and DOJ, as the two largest funders for programs in Wisconsin, have been intentionally increasing coordination and collaboration. DCF and DOJ intend to continue to strengthen and streamline efforts related to funding, procurement processes, coalition engagement, and training/technical assistance provision with coalitions and for local programs. DCF believes that this will provide benefit to all programs across the state that receive funding from both state agencies.

### 6 Promote long-term, sustainable housing models – like Housing First.

**Action |** DCF began the Domestic Violence Housing First Pilot Project in 2021 with awards to nine domestic abuse agencies from around the state. Programs used flexible funding assistance to help survivors access safe, stable and permanent housing as quickly as possible. This project will continue to be administered by DCF through December 31, 2025.

