



Department of Children and Families Overview

**DCF Tribal Consultation Meeting
Lac Courte Oreilles, Hayward, WI
May 10, 2017**

Department of Children and Families Overview

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) was formed in 2008 by combining programs from the Department of Health and Family Services and the Department of Workforce Development.

The mission of the Department is to improve the economic and social well-being of Wisconsin's children, youth and families. DCF is committed to protecting children and youth, strengthening families and supporting communities.



Department of Children and Families

Agency Description

The Department of Children & Families works in partnership with local governments, health and social services agencies, tribes, private providers and affected citizens to:

- Protect and promote child, family and community well-being through integrated programs offering a family-centered approach to service delivery.
- Supervise the statewide child welfare system by working with local governments, health and social services agencies, and private providers to protect children and establish permanency plans for the care and placement of these children.
- Supervise the county-administered community-based youth justice system.
- Manage child protective services and child care certification in Milwaukee County.
- Administer statewide licensure of Wisconsin's child care and child welfare facilities (including family child care, group child care and day camps).
- Oversee the child quality child care quality rating and improvement program, YoungStar.
- Administer the Wisconsin Works (W-2) and Wisconsin Shares (child care subsidy) programs.
- Maintain systems to collect and disburse child support payments, and encourage county efforts to establish paternity and support.

Department of Children and Families

Agency Description

The Department is headed by Secretary Eloise Anderson.

The Secretary administers the Department with the assistance of an appointed Deputy Secretary, Assistant Deputy Secretary, and Administrators for the Department's divisions:

- Division of Early Care and Education

- Division of Family and Economic Security

- Division of Management Services

- Division of Safety and Permanence

- Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services

The Secretary appoints the Chief Legal Counsel, Legislative Liaison, Communications Director, and Office of Urban Development Director. The Secretary's Office also includes the Tribal Relations Director, Rural Poverty Director and Office of Inspector General.

There are two statutory councils attached to the Department: Governor's Council on Domestic Abuse and the Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council.

Division of Early Care and Education (DECE)

The Division of Early Care and Education (DECE) has five bureaus whose mission is to provide families in Wisconsin with access to affordable, high-quality child care and early education experiences to enhance their children's development and support families in work and parenting roles.

Activities include:

- Managing child care regulation: **Licensing and Certification**
- Oversight of the child care subsidy program: **Wisconsin Shares**
- Managing fraud detection, investigations and prevention: **Program Integrity**
- Managing child care quality rating and improvement program (QRIS): **YoungStar**
- Administering child care programs and services for Milwaukee County: Bureau of Milwaukee Early Care Administration (**MECA**)

Early Care and Education

Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy

- The Wisconsin Shares program subsidizes a portion of the child care cost for low-income families to assist them as they work or prepare for employment.
- The program is administered by county/tribal agencies, with the exception of Milwaukee County which is run by the Department.
- Providers must be regulated and participating in the Quality Rating Improvement System to provide services to Wisconsin Shares participants.
- In 2016, Wisconsin Shares served 42,326 families and 73,793 children with an expenditure over \$241 million. The program is funded with 12% state GPR and 88% federal funds.
- MyWICChildCare Rollout: Western Region (October 2016), Balance of State (February 2017), Milwaukee (April 2017)

Early Care and Education

Quality Child Care - YoungStar

- YoungStar is the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System and it has two goals: to improve the quality of child care services and to help parents choose the best child care program for their children.
- YoungStar evaluates the quality of child care programs care and rates them from 1 to 5 stars, with 5 stars being the highest rating. A programs's star rating is based on:
 - Education Qualifications and Training
 - Learning Environment and Curriculum
 - Professional and Business Practices
 - Child Health and Well-Being Practices
- YoungStar puts this rating information on the Regulated Child Care and YoungStar Public Search website so that parents can access it to help them choose the best child care programs for their children.



Division of Family and Economic Security (DFES)

The Division of Family and Economic Security (DFES) has two bureaus: the Bureau of Working Families and the Bureau of Child Support. The mission of the Division is to ensure low-income parents with children have economic security and stability.

The Division oversees:

- Wisconsin Works (W-2)
- Wisconsin Child Support Program
- Transform Milwaukee Jobs and Transitional Jobs
- Emergency Assistance
- Community Services Block Grant
- Refugee Services

Division of Family and Economic Security Wisconsin Works (W-2) Background

- The W-2 program provides necessary training, supportive services and financial incentives for low-income parents to prepare to work and obtain viable, self sustaining jobs. This benefits *all* Wisconsin families and our state's economy.
- To be eligible for W-2 a parent must: have custody of one or more minor children; have a gross income below 115% of the federal poverty level; and have less than \$2,500 in assets.

Division of Family and Economic Security

Wisconsin Child Support Program

- DCF is responsible for overseeing the Wisconsin Child Support Program. The program is operated locally by county child support agencies under supervision of DCF Bureau of Child Support which is responsible for fostering statewide uniformity, filing required federal reports, and managing the payment system.
- Mission is to establish paternity for children of non-marital parents, to establish or modify support obligations, to enforce support obligations, and to operate a system for receiving and disbursing all child support payments.
- DCF is responsible for allocating federal incentive funds and GPR to local child support agencies.

Division of Family and Economic Security

Subsidized Employment Programs

- **Transform Milwaukee Jobs and Transitional Jobs Program**

Subsidized employment programs for non-custodial parents, targeted to unemployed ex-offenders, unemployed child support payers, unemployed youth aging out of out-of-home care and unemployed parents of children in the child welfare system.

- **Trial Employment Match Program (W-2 TEMP)**

Provides subsidized employment opportunities for both custodial parents in the W-2 program and non-custodial parents of children participating in either W-2 or Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy program.

Substance Abuse Screening, Testing and Treatment

- Participants in Transitional Jobs, Transform Milwaukee Jobs and Children First program are screened for the use of controlled substances, and offered treatment if needed.
- Since implementation, 1731 applicants/participants have been screened.
- Since implementation 8 individuals have been referred to treatment.

Division of Management Services



The Division of Management Services is responsible for providing the administrative support services.

The administrative support services include the following key functions:, Budget, Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Performance Management and Regional Operations, Agency Operations, Continuity of Operations (COOP).

Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP)

The Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) has the program responsibility to oversee the statewide child welfare system and the youth justice system.

The purpose of the Child Welfare System is to keep children safe and to support families to provide safe, permanent, and nurturing homes for their children. The system does this by safely keeping children and youth in their own home, family, tribe, and community whenever possible. The system strives to engage with children, youth, and families to expand healthy connections to supports in their community and tribes and bolster resiliency in families to help them thrive.

The vision for the youth justice system is to serve each youth, individually, within the context of his or her family and culture, to acquire the tools to thrive in adulthood, while protecting public safety.

The child welfare system in Wisconsin is county administered, with the exception of Milwaukee County where the state runs child welfare through the DCF Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services. The youth justice system is county administered throughout the state.

Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP)

Specific responsibilities of DSP include:

- Developing statewide standards and policies, monitoring system outcomes, and identifying and undertaking system quality improvements
- Overseeing the statewide child welfare training system and information system
- Administering prevention programs, including home visiting, domestic abuse prevention and services, trauma-informed care training, and positive youth development programs
- Licensing child welfare agencies, including congregate care residential facilities
- Carrying out the “Act 78” public disclosure notification requirements for critical child welfare incidents
- Administering the independent living and other programs for vulnerable youth
- Overseeing the Kinship Care program
- Administering the Special Needs Adoption Program

Functions of County Child Welfare Agencies and Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services

Receive calls from members of the public about possible child abuse or neglect. Certain professions are mandated to report suspected cases of maltreatment. DCF encourages all individuals to report concerns about a child's safety to their local child welfare agency.

- In response to the calls, the child welfare agency initiates an assessment to determine if the child(ren) are safe and if maltreatment has occurred.
- If the child welfare agency determines the child is not safe, the agency develops a safety plan. The agency seeks to identify services and supports to maintain the child safely at home, whenever possible. If the child cannot remain safely at home, the agency removes the child to an out-of-home placement.
- Unless the parent agrees voluntarily, implementation of in-home safety plans and out-of-home placements require the review and approval of the court.

In 2015, Wisconsin county agencies assessed 25,878 reports from the public of possible child maltreatment.

- Of this total, there were 5,278 substantiated maltreatments affecting 4,697 children.
- The majority of substantiated maltreatments, 62%, involved neglect.

Division of Safety and Permanence

Areas of Focus and Recent Developments

- Prevent child abuse and neglect through Home Visiting and other programs
- Incorporate trauma-informed approaches into the child welfare system and youth justice system
- Strengthen services for youth who have experienced sex trafficking
- Develop strategies to address opioid and other drug abuse issues in families that affect child safety
- Improve educational and health outcomes for children in out-of-home care (OHC)
- Achieve permanence as expeditiously as possible for children in OHC
- Support successful family reunifications and avoid recurrence of maltreatment
- Strengthen collaboration and alignment between child welfare and youth justice systems
- Support vulnerable youth transition to and thrive in adulthood