

July 31, 2026

Cyrus Anderson
Senate Chief Clerk
State Capitol, B20 SE
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53703

Edward A. Blazel
Assembly Chief Clerk
Risser Justice Center
17 West Main Street, Suite 401
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Senate Chief Clerk Anderson and Assembly Chief Clerk Blazel:

In compliance with 2009 Wisconsin Act 78, the Child Welfare Public Disclosure Act, please accept the Department of Children and Families' (DCF's) 2026 second quarter report on alleged sexual abuse of children residing in out-of-home care. The data presented below addresses such reports for the period April 1 to June 30, 2026, and fulfills the DCF's reporting requirements under Wis. Stat. § 48.981(9)(a).

We appreciate the Legislature's interest in Wisconsin's child welfare system and their commitment to supporting DCF, county and tribal child welfare agencies, and the hundreds of non-profit organizations who work to protect Wisconsin children every day. Like you, we are saddened by all cases of child maltreatment and are committed to strengthening families. Wisconsin is fortunate to have dedicated and passionate child welfare professionals, and we want to recognize and express our appreciation for their commitment and compassion as they engage in these very challenging situations with children and families on a daily basis.

We encourage legislators and stakeholders to reinforce awareness that prevention of child maltreatment is a community-wide responsibility involving all individuals and organizations in the community, and to continue to support efforts at the local and state levels to develop a more robust and consistent array of child maltreatment prevention services. Through collaborative and data-driven analyses and discussions, we all can support efforts to strengthen the families in our state to provide safe, stable, and nurturing homes for their children and help our families and children succeed and thrive.

The following is a summary of the findings in the [report](#):

Number of Reported Incidents: 31

Wisconsin child protective services agencies screened in and investigated 31 reported incidents of alleged sexual abuse to 27 children residing in out-of-home care.

Dates of the Incidents:

Of the 31 reported incidents, one occurred in December 2023, and the other 30 are estimated to have occurred between April 2026 and June 2026. Because children disclose abuse in different stages, it is common for children to report incidents months or even years after the incident

occurred. Furthermore, in cases of alleged abuse involving non-verbal children, dates of alleged maltreatment are often difficult or impossible to determine.

Maltreatment Determinations:

Of the 31 reported incidents, maltreatment determinations were made for 13 (42%) of the reported incidents, while 18 (58%) maltreatment determinations are pending because the investigations are not complete.

Of the 13 reported incidents where the maltreatment determination was made, ten (77%) were unsubstantiated (i.e., preponderance of the evidence indicating that sexual abuse occurred was not found), and three (23%) were substantiated.

Nature of Maltreater Relationship:

Of the three substantiated incidents, the relationship of the maltreater to the child was a non-caregiver in two incidents and a minor in the placement setting in one incident. One of the substantiated incidents included allegations of sex trafficking.

Types of Placement Settings

Of the three substantiated incidents, one took place while the child was placed at a residential care center (RCC), one while the child was placed with an unlicensed relative caregiver, and one occurred when the child was missing from out-of-home care.

Location of Substantiated Incidents:

Of the three substantiated incidents of sexual abuse to children residing in out-of-home care, two occurred in Milwaukee County and one occurred in Walworth County.

Ages or Age Group of Children:

The alleged sexual abuse was reported and investigated for children 4-17 years of age. The three substantiated incidents of sexual abuse involved three children. At the time of the incident, one of the children was 13 years old and the other two children were 16 years old.

In closing, thank you for your continued partnership in ensuring all Wisconsin children are safe and loved members of thriving families and communities. Feel free to contact the department with questions or clarification requests.

Sincerely,



Secretary Pertl

cc: Governor Evers