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☞ Details: Audit Report 06-1 and Report 06-2, Milwaukee County Child Welfare, Department of Health and Family Services

(FORM UPDATED: 08/11/2010)

# WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE ... PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE RECORDS

## 2005-06

(session year)

## Joint

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

## Committee on Audit...

### COMMITTEE NOTICES ...

- Committee Reports ... **CR**
- Executive Sessions ... **ES**
- Public Hearings ... **PH**

### INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL

- Appointments ... **Appt** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Clearinghouse Rules ... **CRule** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Hearing Records ... bills and resolutions (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
  - (**ab** = Assembly Bill)                      (**ar** = Assembly Resolution)                      (**ajr** = Assembly Joint Resolution)
  - (**sb** = Senate Bill)                              (**sr** = Senate Resolution)                              (**sjr** = Senate Joint Resolution)
- Miscellaneous ... **Misc**

\* Contents organized for archiving by: Stefanie Rose (LRB) (October 2012)



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE

**Joint Legislative Audit Committee**

Committee Co-Chairs:  
State Senator Carol Roessler  
State Representative Suzanne Jeskewitz

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 23, 2006

For More Information Contact:

Senator Carol Roessler  
Representative Suzanne Jeskewitz

(608) 266-5300  
(608) 266-3796

**Committee to Conduct Hearing in Milwaukee  
on Child Welfare and W-2 Programs**

(Madison) Joint Legislative Audit Committee co-chairs, Senator Carol Roessler (R-Oshkosh) and Representative Suzanne Jeskewitz (R-Menomonee Falls), announced that on Tuesday, March 14<sup>th</sup>, the Committee will conduct a public hearing on the Milwaukee County Child Welfare program, and hold a follow-up hearing on the status of the W-2 program.

Earlier this month, the nonpartisan Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB) released its comprehensive evaluation of the Milwaukee County Child Welfare program, which is administered by the Department of Health and Family Services. In its audit of the program, LAB analyzed timeliness, effectiveness, and coordination of services in a report on program issues (report 06-1) and program funding, expenditures, and staffing in a report on program finances and staffing (report 06-2). These reports identified many areas in need of improved program management and financial administration. On March 14<sup>th</sup>, the Committee will receive public testimony concerning the audit and the program.

“Given the importance of the child welfare program to the citizens of Milwaukee, my co-chair and I thought it only appropriate to conduct this Committee hearing in Milwaukee so that those most affected by the program would have an opportunity to testify,” said Roessler. “We hope that a thorough and complete airing of the audit findings and recommendations will lead to much-needed improvements in the oversight and administration of this program as well as greater safety and security for the children served.”

On March 14<sup>th</sup>, the Committee will also conduct a follow-up hearing on the W-2 program. In April 2005, LAB released its comprehensive evaluation of the Department of Workforce Development’s (DWD’s) administration of the Wisconsin Works (W-2) program (report 05-6). LAB analyzed W-2 expenditures, caseloads, and services provided to participants. In its report, LAB made several recommendations to improve program management. At the hearing, the Committee will receive an update from DWD on its efforts to implement LAB’s recommendations. The Committee will also discuss the status of W-2 contracts for the 2006-2009 period. Because the W-2 portion of the hearing is related to audit follow-up, testimony will be restricted to invited speakers only.

“As co-chairs, we see each audit as a tool for change. LAB’s audit of W-2 identified several specific ways to improve the management of the program. With this hearing, we want to review DWD’s progress in implementing the audit recommendations and ensure that the new W-2 contracts reflect these principles of improved program management,” stated Jeskewitz.

-more-

SENATOR ROESSLER  
P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, WI 53707-7882  
(608) 266-5300 • Fax (608) 266-0423

REPRESENTATIVE JESKEWITZ  
P.O. Box 8952 • Madison, WI 53708-8952  
(608) 266-3796 • Fax (608) 282-3624

The hearing will begin with testimony on W-2 with invited speakers only at 10:00 a.m. on March 14<sup>th</sup>, in Cooley Auditorium at the Milwaukee Area Technical College's Downtown Campus, which is located at 700 West State Street in downtown Milwaukee. The Committee expects to begin the hearing on Milwaukee County Child Welfare at approximately 11:00 a.m., and the public is invited to testify. An audio stream of the hearing and copies of the audit reports are available on the Legislative Audit Bureau's website at <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lab>.

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## Matthews, Pam

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**From:** Chrisman, James  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 23, 2006 11:29 AM  
**To:** Matthews, Pam  
**Subject:** Milwaukee TV

Pam:

Here are the Milwaukee TV stations for which I had contact information. To these folks, I'd suggest sending the press release and the hearing notice.

Thanks!

Joe

WITI TV - Newsroom. (Fox)  
9001 N. Green Bay Rd.  
P.O. Box 17600  
Milwaukee, WI 53217-0600  
Fax Number: (414) 586-2141

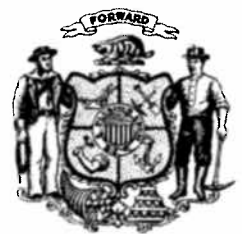
WDJT (CBS)  
Newsroom  
CBS58 809 S. 60th Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53214  
Fax Number: (414) 777-5802

WTMJ-TV (NBC)  
Newsroom  
720 East Capitol Drive  
Milwaukee, WI 53014  
Fax Number: (414) 967-5378

WISN-Channel 12 News (ABC)  
759 North 19th Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53233  
Fax Number: (414) 342-7505



# WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE





WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE

**Joint Legislative Audit Committee**

Committee Co-Chairs:  
State Senator Carol Roessler  
State Representative Suzanne Jeskewitz

**Media Advisory**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 13, 2006

For further information, contact:

Rep. Suzanne Jeskewitz (608) 266-3796

Sen. Carol Roessler (608) 266-5300

**Hearing on W-2 and Child Welfare Programs in Milwaukee on Tuesday**

(Madison)... On **Tuesday, March 14<sup>th</sup>**, the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, co-chaired by Rep. Suzanne Jeskewitz (R-Menomonee Falls) and Sen. Carol Roessler (R-Oshkosh), will hold a hearing in Milwaukee on the nonpartisan Legislative Audit Bureau's evaluations of the Wisconsin Works (W-2) and Milwaukee County Child Welfare programs.

**The hearing will be held at:**

**10:00 A.M.  
Cooley Auditorium  
Milwaukee Area Technical College, Downtown Campus  
700 West State Street  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

In April 2005, the Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB) released its comprehensive evaluation of the W-2 program (report 05-6). LAB analyzed W-2 expenditures, caseloads, and services provided to participants. In its report, LAB made several recommendations to improve program management. At the hearing, the Committee will receive an update from the Department of Workforce Development on its efforts to implement LAB's recommendations. The Committee will also discuss the status of W-2 contracts for the 2006-2009 period. Because the W-2 portion of the hearing is related to audit follow-up, testimony will be restricted to invited speakers only and will begin at 10:00 a.m.

At approximately 11:00 a.m., the Committee will hold a public hearing on LAB's comprehensive evaluation of the Milwaukee County Child Welfare Program. Released in February, the LAB audit analyzed timeliness, effectiveness, and coordination of services in report 06-1 and program funding, expenditures, and staffing in report 06-2. These reports identified many areas in need of improved program management and financial administration. At the hearing, LAB will present its audit findings and officials from the Department of Health and Family Services will also offer testimony. This portion of the hearing will be open to the public for comment.

Barring any technical difficulties, a live video/audio stream of the hearing may be accessed on the Internet at <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lab>. Copies of the audit reports are also available on this site.

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SENATOR ROESSLER  
P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, WI 53707-7882  
(608) 266-5300 • Fax (608) 266-0423

REPRESENTATIVE JESKEWITZ  
P.O. Box 8952 • Madison, WI 53708-8952  
(608) 266-3796 • Fax (608) 282-3624





**TESTIMONY FOR PUBLIC HEARING (via e-mail)**  
**on**  
**LEGISLATIVE AUDIT BUREAU'S AUDIT**  
**of**  
**BUREAU OF MILWAUKEE CHILD WELFARE**  
**3/14/06**

Senator Roessler and Representative Jeskewitz: Thank you for holding this public hearing on the Legislative Audit Bureau's audit of the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (BMCW) in Milwaukee and hearing testimony from citizens of Milwaukee. I expect that many of the people presenting testimony today are motivated to do so by a desire to insure that the best possible services are provided to the most vulnerable residents of our community rather than to depreciate the work of the dedicated staff of BMCW.

I have been a social worker for over 25 years and have worked in the areas of child welfare, juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, and mental health. I have worked for public and non-profit agencies. I serve as the Co-Chair of Milwaukee's Child Abuse Prevention Network's Public Policy and two committees of the Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council. While the comments I make today are my own, many of the issues I raise have been the subject of committee meeting discussions.

First, I want to highlight the positive findings of the Audit Bureau. When I provided foster care services as a caseworker for Milwaukee County over 20 years ago, workers often felt that foster care was an inadequate way to address problems facing vulnerable families. Federal and state funding streams offered more funding for foster care services than for services designed to keep families intact. Consequently, the foster care caseload grew. However, the number of children in out-of-home care in BMCW has declined and the median stay in foster care has also declined. Clearly, this is a positive trend and one that is welcomed by many in the community.

The establishment of an Ombudsman for Child Welfare is also a positive development. The recommendation for the establishment of an ombudsman came from advocates and other community residents concerned about assuring the quality of services and creating a way for families and others to have complaints addressed in a formal and structured way. BMCW management welcomed this recommendation and the state worked with community groups to design the ombudsman program. The Ombudsman provides an opportunity for citizens to have their concerns addressed by an objective body outside of the child welfare system.

The State's efforts to address turnover should also be recognized. By increasing salaries and improving training for staff, the State has demonstrated a concrete commitment to reducing turnover.

While there have been improvements in Milwaukee's child welfare system, there are areas that need more attention. Some of the concerns raised in the Legislative Audit Bureau's audit may be consequences of the design of Milwaukee's child welfare system. As the audit points out, DHFS contracts for most services provided. Having many service providers makes quality inconsistent, creates complications in monitoring the availability and adequacy of services, increases administrative costs, and requires considerable time and talent from workers to implement effectively.

Additionally, by privatizing and decentralizing much of the child welfare system, administrative costs may be increased. This money could be spent on creating competitive salaries, additional staff supports, and essential services to families.

Each of the following examples from the audit illustrates how the design of BMCW's service provision may contribute to shortcomings reported in the audit. To be effective in working with families to reach case goals, case managers must coordinate services with a variety of service providers and family supports. Such coordination is "labor intensive" and requires advanced interpersonal and analytical skills. The audit notes that placement instability resulted from a lack of collaboration among ongoing case managers and foster care staff. The implementation of services for families whose children have been placed in foster care was "too slow." Also, the audit points out that the availability of specialty services may be inadequate for meeting the needs of families in the system. Staff in the Safety Services program had difficulty complying with requirements to meet with families and service providers within prescribed timelines.

Coordinating the work of the service providers and others important to the family includes conducting Coordinated Service Teams. The effective operation of Coordinated Service Teams requires a broad knowledge of resources, the ability to juggle conflicting demands, the time to investigate services and their applicability to a particular family's situation, and the capacity to support service providers. Given the level of experience and education of the staff in the child welfare system, these demands may be beyond what can be consistently expected of many staff.

The shortcomings of the design of the Safety Services program and its funding structure should also be considered. The number of families in Safety Services declined over time and may have resulted from a change in how families were deemed to be appropriate for the program. At one time, Safety Services included families who were "at risk" of maltreating their children. Eventually, the determination of need for Safety Services was limited to those families who were determined to be at "immediate" danger of maltreating their children.

This change in enrollment raised concerns among BMCW staff and community residents who saw Safety Services as an alternative to out-of-home placement. Given the racial disparity that exists in out-of-home placements in Milwaukee, the shrinking of Safety Services may have had a disproportionate impact of families of color. It is hoped that BMCW's plan to extend Safety Services to families whose children are not at immediate risk of maltreatment will address this concern, but state funding must support this effort

over the long term. Other shortcomings in the Safety Service program such as structure of payments and length of time families participate in the program must also be addressed and directed to comprehensively meeting the needs of families.

Finally, the audit identifies problems in the coordination of services between W-2 and child welfare. These problems are particularly troublesome given the finding about median incomes of birth parents and primary caregivers. The Audit Bureau's report provides examples of failures in coordination that highlight problems encountered by BMCW workers in trying to coordinate services with W-2 agencies as well as BMCW workers' lack of knowledge of W-2 policies. Additionally, the report notes that mothers whose children were in foster care and mothers participating in the Safety Services program had low participation rates in W-2. The auditors also found that a low percentage of children were reunified with their parents within two years.

Anecdotally, advocates and community residents cite failures of W-2 agencies to provide services or case assistance as a precipitant to involvement or extended time in the child welfare system. Low participation rates in W-2 among families involved in the child welfare system may reflect the extent to which families are sanctioned or declared "job ready" and diverted from W-2 work positions that offer cash assistance. Currently, there is no way to accurately determine how many of those families whose children enter foster care do so because of diversion from the W-2 program or other barriers to receiving services or cash assistance from W-2. Also, it is uncertain how many families re-enter the Safety Services program because of lack of access to financial supports to maintain adequate housing, provide medical care, or provide for other needs of children. It may be useful to require both W-2 and BMCW to collect this data.

The structure and purpose of W-2 may create barriers to parents who need financial supports to maintain their families. Through their evaluation of BMCW, researchers M. Courtney of the University of Chicago and S. McMurtry of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee discovered that the predominant predictor of children's being placed in foster care in Milwaukee was an episode of homelessness in the 18 months prior to placement. The audit also cites the researchers' findings regarding family incomes of families with children in foster care. The median income of birth parents and primary caregivers is \$7416, while the median income of families in Milwaukee County is approximately \$30,000. Among birth parents and primary caregivers, 71.3% of families fall below the federal poverty level.

Currently, there is no way for parents to receive cash assistance when they are ready to be reunified with their children beyond the current temporary absence policy's limit of 90 days. While DWD has proposed changing the temporary absence policy's limit to 180 days, more needs to be done for families whose children have been in foster care for more than 6 months. After families have met Court conditions for reunification and other goals of the case plan have been reached, reunification may be delayed or denied because the family has no access to cash supports necessary to establish a household. It is unfair and dishonorable not to provide means for poor parents to establish a home for their children when they have met the court's conditions.

In my interactions with BMCW management and staff, I have found them to be motivated to work with W-2 agencies to provide needed services. Unfortunately, I cannot say the same of W-2 agencies. BMCW and DHFS cannot insure effective coordination and provision of services by themselves; Milwaukee's W-2 agencies and DWD, beyond the Milwaukee Regional Office, must take deliberate and concrete action to recognize the complexities of the lives of low-income parents. Families come to the attention of child welfare after a series of crises.

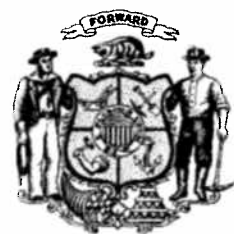
To simply focus attention on problems and needed improvements within BMCW is nearsighted. It is not merely the responsibility of BMCW to address the needs of vulnerable children and their families. This mission belongs to a variety of community agencies and, indeed, the entire community.

Respectfully submitted:

Mary Thomas, MSW, LCSW



# WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE



**Matthews, Pam**

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**From:** Matthews, Pam  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 15, 2006 10:44 AM  
**To:** Rep.Cullen; Rep.Jeskewitz; Rep.Kaufert; Rep.Kerkman; Rep.Travis; Sen.Cowles; Sen.Fitzgerald; Sen.Lassa; Sen.Miller; Sen.Roessler  
**Subject:** FW: Foster parenting/adoption

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**From:** bkcampbell6@netzero.com [mailto:bkcampbell6@netzero.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 14, 2006 1:37 PM  
**To:** Rep.Jeskewitz; Sen.Roessler  
**Subject:** Foster parenting/adoption

I was unable to attend the meeting today because I have a nursing infant at home, however, I wanted to forward my experience to you.

I had adopted 2 children through the Milwaukee county foster care system without many problems. The placements happened quickly, and both adoption took place within 6 mos of my children being placed with us. My husband and I then decided to go through the foster care system in order to adopt an infant. That was a completely different story!

Our son was placed with us at 10 days old. He was a drug exposed infant whose birth mom had binged on cocaine in order to go into labor early. His older brother was placed with his biological grandparents, but they were not willing to take in another baby. For a few months, my sons birth mom did not show any interest in seeing him. Then, out of the blue, she decided that she wanted him back. For the next 18 months, we went through hell. Visits were arranged, and either myself or a service was to take my son to these unsupervised visits. Birthmom had NEVER been tested to see if she was clean, but I had to leave this infant in her care because he was HERS. Some days she would not show up. Some days, noone could get her to wake up to answer the door. One day, my son (who was 4 mos old at the time) came home with a red cheek, and broken blood vessels on his arm. The next day, I was informed that visits would be extended. To make a long story short, the TPR was started when my son turned 17 months. When he was 21 months, his birthmom decided to voluntarily terminate her parental rights. That should be the end of my story, right??

My case was then turned over to the state to go through the adoption process. I received a letter in the mail, telling me that Devins adoption would not go through for another 6 months (since TPR happened in January, this would be July). I called Dale Langer to complain. This baby had been in my care for 21 months already, and I had already adopted 2 children from the state of Wisconsin. He assured me that he would push things through to make this adoption happen faster. I was told by one worker that I should not go forward with moving into a new home, as this would make the adoption take even longer than 6 months! My case was then sent to a new worker at Bethany who assured me that Devin's adoption would happen quickly. At the most, 4 months. My worker was very nice, but kept "forgetting" paperwork that I had to fill out. She forgot that my family needed physicals. Forgot that she needed all of our birth certificates, our marriage certificate. It was just one thing after another. Devin needed medical testing done, and I could not have it done without the permission of his worker (who had seen him a handful of times). By the time Devin's adoption went through, it had been 9 months since the TPR. Devin was 30 months old.

I again emailed Dale Langer and told him how unhappy I was with the way that things dragged on. He emailed me back, stating the he would look into the matter and let me know what had happened. This was in October of 2005. I have yet to hear back from him.

03/16/2006

My opinion is that foster/adoptive parents are for the most part disregarded. There is no respect for what we do for these children. There is no thought given to what we are going through. And there is certainly no thought given to what our children have to go through.

Now, surprisingly (I say sarcastically), Devin's birth mom has had yet another cocaine addicted baby. But this time, the baby was sent home with her. He is now in foster care, but all efforts are being made to return him to her. I just wonder... when does it stop?? She has had three children.. none of whom she can care for, yet we are using all of this money to try to reunite them?? Is it truly better for this baby to be reunited with a drug addicted mother than to be adopted by someone who can care for him??

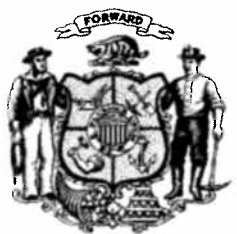
Katie Campbell

(262) 675-0148

[bkcampbell6@netzero.com](mailto:bkcampbell6@netzero.com)



# WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE







WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE

Joint Legislative Audit Committee

Committee Co-Chairs:  
State Senator Carol Roessler  
State Representative Suzanne Jeskewitz

March 28, 2006

Ms. Helene Nelson, Secretary  
Department of Health and Family Services  
1 West Wilson Street, Room 650  
Madison, Wisconsin 53701

Dear Ms. Nelson:

Thank you for your testimony at the Joint Legislative Audit Committee's March 14<sup>th</sup> public hearing on the Milwaukee County Child Welfare program. We appreciate the testimony you offered to describe the actions taken by the Department of Health and Family Services to follow up on the recommendations presented in the nonpartisan Legislative Audit Bureau's evaluations of the program (reports 06-1 and 06-2). However, we wish to express our concern that the findings from a report referenced in a March 20<sup>th</sup> *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* article were absent from the Department's testimony on March 14<sup>th</sup>. We find the timing for the disclosure of this information troubling.

We contacted the office of the Administrator of the Division of Children and Family Services on Tuesday, March 21<sup>st</sup>, to request copies of this report. As of today, we have not received them. Please ensure that copies are provided to all committee members by March 31, 2006. As we look ahead, we ask you to place the members of this Committee on the distribution list for any future evaluative reports generated by the Department about the program. We also want to stay informed about the Department's efforts to implement the audit recommendations and make necessary improvements to the financial and programmatic concerns identified in the audits. The audits recommend that the Department submit a written report to the Committee in February 2007. In addition, we ask that you submit a written report to the Committee by October 2, 2006, that:

- describes any efforts between the Department and the Department of Workforce Development to assess and address program participant needs in a collaborative manner;
- responds to each of the seven recommendations made by the Child Welfare League of America in written testimony provided to the Committee on March 14<sup>th</sup>;
- summarizes the status of the Department's efforts to improve the timeliness of its investigations of child abuse and neglect, improve the timeliness of services ordered for each family when a child is removed from the home, reduce the time children spend in out-of-home care, and ensure the adequacy of safety services provided by contractors; and
- provides an analysis of the number of contract staff who have elected to pursue masters-level training at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee that was at least partially paid for with Child Welfare funding, and the number who have or have not fulfilled all terms of their education contracts.

SENATOR ROESSLER  
P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, WI 53707-7882  
(608) 266-5300 • Fax (608) 266-0423

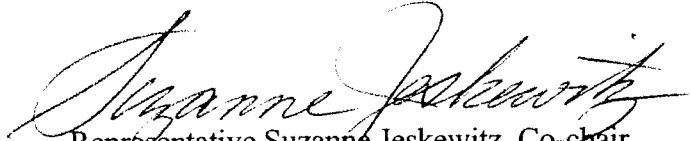
REPRESENTATIVE JESKEWITZ  
P.O. Box 8952 • Madison, WI 53708-8952  
(608) 266-3796 • Fax (608) 282-3624

Thank you for your cooperation. We believe that your October 2006 report will offer another benchmark against which we can measure the Department's progress in improving the management of the Milwaukee County Child Welfare program.

Sincerely,



Senator Carol A. Roessler, Co-chair  
Joint Legislative Audit Committee



Representative Suzanne Jeskewitz, Co-chair  
Joint Legislative Audit Committee

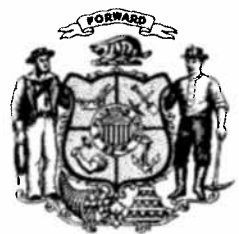
cc: Senator Robert Cowles  
Senator Scott Fitzgerald  
Senator Mark Miller  
Senator Julie Lassa

Representative Samantha Kerkman  
Representative Dean Kaufert  
Representative David Travis  
Representative David Cullen

Janice Mueller  
State Auditor



# WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE



March 2006

To: Members, Wisconsin State Legislature

From: David Larson                      Julie Daggett                      Liz Buchen  
President & CEO                      Director of Govt. Relations                      Govt. Relations Consultant  
414-325-3015                      608-335-6453                      608-255-9575

RE: **Lutheran Social Services Response**  
**Legislative Audit Bureau Report 06-2**  
**Milwaukee County Child Welfare: Finances and Staffing**

As you know, the Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB) recently released its findings of its audit of the child welfare system in Milwaukee County. **The purpose of this memo is to respectfully rebut and provide clarification on some of the highlighted financial findings involving Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan (LSS).**

LSS' "First Choice for Children" program provides "Out-of-Home Placement" unit services in Milwaukee County. This includes the recruitment and licensing of foster homes and foster parent training.

LSS has been a proud, long-term private sector partner with government in the provision of quality human services and has always been a highly responsible steward of public funding. Selected language in the LAB report and some subsequent press coverage made it appear that LSS mishandled contract dollars and channeled money away from the children and families we serve. This could not be further from the truth.

- **LSS did NOT double bill the State for \$541,604.** LSS submitted an original bill to the State for \$541,604 for First Choice for Children expenses. It was soon realized that that bill was short by \$3,813. LSS then submitted, with the State's permission, an amended bill for \$545,417 for First Choice for Children expenses. As is standard, LSS then received a monthly check from the State for payment for ALL State contracted programs, including payment for First Choice for Children expenses. That payment erroneously included payment for both the original invoice and the amended invoice described above. The overpayment was not immediately obvious upon receipt of the check because the check was for a lump sum payment for multiple programs. However, **LSS recognized the overpayment shortly thereafter and took action to rectify the situation.** LSS moved the full amount to a segregated budget line where it remained awaiting repayment instructions from the Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS). We disagree with the statement on page 24 of the LAB report which says, "The duplicate payment was not identified until we (the LAB) brought the matter to the attention of DHFS officials." LSS, of course, sincerely regrets the confusion and concerns this highly unusual situation has created and is reviewing its internal systems as well as working with DHFS to ensure this does not happen again.

- **LSS at NO time used tax dollars for worship services or other religious activities referred to in the audit as “church relations.”** LSS church relations staff communicate with congregations and communities about the needs of LSS programs. One example is our clothing distribution center. LSS works with another non-profit organization to procure new children’s clothing as a gift-in-kind from several major retailers. Volunteers, recruited by our church relations staff, process the clothing. This includes the removal of all labels, the sorting and displaying of clothing on racks and the distribution of clothing to foster children. Over \$300,000 of new clothing was distributed in 2005. The audit identified \$16,344 attributable to church relations expenses. LSS asserts that these relationships are in fact an added benefit that we are able to provide to the people we serve at not cost to the taxpayer. LSS rigorously abides by the regulations governing faith based organizations providing government sponsored human services.

Also, within the “church relations” activities noted in the audit, government dollars were NOT used to pay for a box at Miller Park. The box was donated by a supporter of our agency so we could hold an event to thank leaders of the clothing drive. However, LSS was in error in assigning food and other miscellaneous costs for the thank you event to the contract and those expenses will be reimbursed to the State.

- **LSS values its staff and believes it was operating within the rules on small gifts.** LSS’ most treasured asset is our staff. Each day they bring our agency’s mission to life by serving those in need. In particular, our foster care employees are routinely confronted with extremely difficult situations and decisions. Since this work—especially in the private versus public sector—generally pays rather modest wages, we work hard to recognize and show appreciation for staff members in other ways, including giving them an agency jacket or cup as an expression of our appreciation for their dedication. We believe strongly that these “tokens” enhance employee morale and function as a vital tool in our limited toolbox to retain quality staff.

Moreover, regulations governing allowable costs provide for such expenditures:

OMB Circular A-122 (Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations):

“13. Employee morale, health and welfare costs.

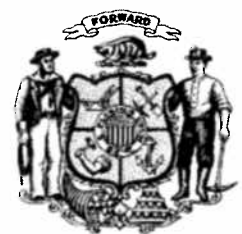
- a. The costs of employee information publications, health or first-aid clinics and/or infirmaries, recreational activities, employee counseling services, and any other expenses incurred in accordance with the non-profit organization’s established practice or custom for the improvement of working conditions, employer-employee relations, employee morale, and employee performance are allowable.”

**Thank you for the opportunity to respond to these three important points.** We remain committed to doing what’s best for the people we serve, the people who provide the service and the people who pay for it. In each year that LSS has operated the foster care program in Milwaukee County, we have found management efficiencies that have allowed for quality services at reduced costs. We are pleased to continue to work with all stakeholders to resolve any outstanding issues.

Please feel free to contact any of us at the above phone numbers with any questions.



# WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE





State of Wisconsin  
Department of Health and Family Services

---

Jim Doyle, Governor  
Helene Nelson, Secretary

April 11, 2006

Senator Carol Roessler, Co-Chair  
Legislative Audit Committee  
8 South, State Capitol  
Madison, WI 53702

Representative Suzanne Jeskewitz, Co-Chair  
Legislative Audit Committee  
314 North, State Capitol  
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Senator Roessler and Representative Jeskewitz:

Thank you for inviting me to testify at the Joint Legislative Audit Committee's March 14<sup>th</sup> hearing on the Legislative Audit Bureau's report on the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (BMCW). I appreciate the opportunity to tell the Committee about the initiatives underway in Milwaukee to address many of the systemic issues affecting the program. It was also good to talk with you about steps the Department will take to improve the performance of the BMCW.

I am troubled by your March 28<sup>th</sup> letter regarding disclosure of the Period 3 Settlement Report. I by no means tried to delay disclosure of the report. In fact, our March 1st response to the Committee mentioned the report and its upcoming release. We did not include it again in our testimony because we felt the testimony was already too long. There are so many things going on in Milwaukee child welfare it was difficult for us to decide what warranted inclusion in the testimony. In addition, the March 20<sup>th</sup> date for the community briefing was negotiated with plaintiffs' counsel and was agreed to in late January, weeks before the audit was released to us and the hearing date was established.

Regarding your request for copies of the report, my staff did forward electronic copies of the Period 3 Settlement Report and the Comprehensive Review to Pam Matthews in Representative Jeskewitz's office on the morning of March 22. Staff report that the email apparently did not go through. I want to assure you the Department has consistently been and will continue to be attentive to your requests.

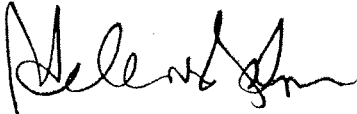
I am happy to keep you updated on the Department's efforts to implement the audit recommendations and other improvements the Department is making. As you requested, the Department will submit a written report to the Committee by October 2, 2006 on the issues you requested.

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Senator Carol Roessler  
Representative Suzanne Jeskewitz  
Page 2  
April 11, 2006

Thank you again for inviting us to testify before the Joint Committee, and I will report to you again in October. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions prior to that time.

Sincerely,



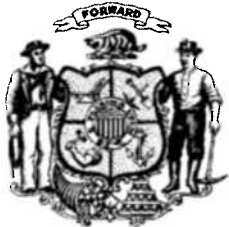
Helene Nelson  
Secretary

cc: Senator Robert Cowles  
Senator Scott Fitzgerald  
Senator Julie Lassa  
Senator Mark Miller  
Representative David Cullen  
Representative Dean Kaufert  
Representative Samantha Kerkman  
Representative David Travis  
Janice Mueller, State Auditor





# WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE





State of Wisconsin  
**Department of Health and Family Services**

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Jim Doyle, Governor  
Helene Nelson, Secretary

October 2, 2006

Honorable Carol A. Roessler, Co-Chair  
Joint Legislative Audit Committee  
Room 8 South  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53707

Honorable Suzanne Jeskewitz, Co-Chair  
Joint Legislative Audit Committee  
Room 314 North  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Senator Roessler and Representative Jeskewitz:

I am pleased to provide you with the interim report on several specific items that the Joint Legislative Audit Committee requested as follow-up to the Legislative Audit Bureau Evaluation of Milwaukee County Child Welfare (Reports 06-1 & 06-2). We have made significant progress implementing the audit recommendations and expect to be in a good position to provide the Committee with a full report in February 2007, as recommended by the Audit Bureau.

We have focused significant energy and resources on effective strategies to address the complexity of issues that trouble families so that they can maintain a healthy and safe environment for their children. We have not only addressed the audit recommendations, but have also undertaken other initiatives to strengthen the work of the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (BMCW). I would like to highlight progress and plans in a few areas:

- **PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES.** Since the audit we have updated measures for the first half of 2006 from the federal Settlement Agreement approved by the Federal court. BMCW was recently released from 10 enforceable provisions identified in the Agreement by mutual agreement with plaintiffs' counsel. (This includes exceeding a standard for length of stay in out-of-home care, a topic we are addressing in more detail in this interim report per your request). This represents solid accomplishment of improved child welfare services and outcomes for children and families.
- **STAFF TURNOVER.** I am pleased to report that turnover numbers have dramatically improved for ongoing case management staff. Over time, a more experienced and stable workforce will improve the quality, continuity, and timeliness of services for children and families. The number of case management staff hired in the first six months of 2006 was 19 as compared to 73 for the first six months of 2005. The workforce is also maturing with the number of staff with six months or less experience dropping and the number with 37+ months of experience rising to nearly one-quarter of the workforce. This improvement is related to specific actions we have taken, such as salary adjustments and better training, described in more detail in the enclosed report.
- **BETTER SAFETY SERVICES.** The Department will implement new contract arrangements for Safety Services this fall, designed to assure that families receive the

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services they need for the right amount of time. This responds directly to findings and recommendations of the audit reports. Our modifications include changing the method of reimbursement to contract agencies, a topic raised by the auditors, as well as making other changes explained more fully in the enclosed report.

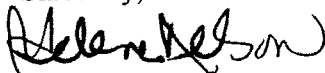
- **BMCW MANAGEMENT.** We addressed specific financial and operational management recommendations of the LAB audit previously, as you know. Since our earlier reports to you on these actions, the Department has redesigned the structure of BMCW to improve management capacity to avert similar problems in the future. In addition, we are also structuring contracts for 2007 with different financial incentives and new performance expectations for private partner agencies.
- **CONTINUING QUALITY IMPROVEMENT.** BMCW is undertaking a new approach to examine performance, change outcomes, and improve quality of practice. We are implementing a new process called the Quality Service Review (QSR) to strengthen child welfare practice in Milwaukee.

BMCW is also targeting a number of specific program management areas for continuing quality improvement. These include three specific areas that are addressed in the enclosed report per your request: improved collaboration between DHFS and DWD for integrated services to families, oversight to assure timeliness of investigations, and actions to improve the timeliness of services to birth families after children are removed from their home.

The Department is working to improve several other core functions as well – for example, we are redesigning foster care and adoption services for better collaboration and stronger success in both areas through contract restructuring, and we are instituting a “medical home partnership model” that will assure foster children are receiving the health services they need.

Thank you for the opportunity to report on the progress that has been made by BMCW and its partner agencies, with the support and guidance of the Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council and many others who share our commitment to the safety and well-being of children and families. We thank you for your interest and support for our continuing efforts to enhance the quality of services provided to children and families in Milwaukee.

Sincerely,



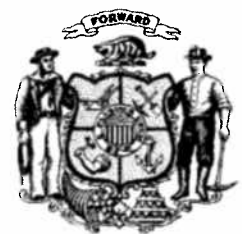
Helene Nelson  
Secretary

CC: Members of Joint Legislative Audit Committee  
Jan Mueller, State Auditor  
Special Legislative Committee on Strengthening Wisconsin Families

Enclosure



# WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE





State of Wisconsin  
**Department of Health and Family Services**

---

Jim Doyle, Governor  
Helene Nelson, Secretary

**Interim Report to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee  
Evaluation of Milwaukee County Child Welfare (Reports 06-1 and 06-2)  
October 2, 2006**

The Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (BMCW) in the Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) is responsible to protect children at serious risk of abuse or neglect in Milwaukee and to strengthen the ability of their families to care for them safely insofar as possible. The State has had this responsibility since 1998. Significant improvements in child welfare services have been made since that time. However, added improvements in child welfare services are needed and underway.

The Legislative Audit Bureau released two lengthy reports on the finances, management and program performance of BMCW in February 2006. The Auditors recommended and the Department agreed to report on program performance improvements in February 2007.

The Joint Legislative Audit Committee also requested an interim report from the Department in October 2006 to address several specific items. Those specific items are detailed below with Department progress reports on each item. This report supplements earlier reports we have made on progress in other areas. The items reported below show important progress, as the Department maintains its broader commitment to continual quality improvement in the critical responsibilities of BMCW. The Department appreciates the interest of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee in this important work to protect children and strengthen families.

*1. Describe any efforts between the Departments of Health and Family Services and Workforce Development to assess and address program participant needs in a collaborative manner.*

The Departments of Health and Family Services and Workforce Development have joined together through the Families Forward Initiative to improve outcomes for families involved in both systems related to increased economic security, and improved child safety and well-being. It is well documented that many of the families involved in child welfare are also W-2 recipients. DHFS and DWD are dedicated to partnering on initiatives that promote strong collaborations between the two systems at the local level.

Each agency has instituted new requirements with its private contract agencies for them to coordinate services with families. These requirements will apply county-wide to families involved in both systems. In addition, two pilot site partnerships are advancing our work in this area: Maximus/YWCA (W-2 providers) and Children's Family and

Community Partnership (CFCP) on Milwaukee's north side, and UMOS (W-2 provider) and La Causa on the south side.

On the north side, the partner agencies identify families involved in both systems and work together to assure that case plans are coordinated. W-2 workers have been trained by BMCW in the Coordinated Service Team (CST) model and when possible, attend CST meetings. A child welfare liaison employed by the W-2 agency is located at CFCP and serves as a trouble shooter for identified W-2 issues of child welfare families. The liaison also assists child welfare workers to connect to the designated Financial and Employment Planner (FEP) for a family. For families not enrolled in W-2 but possibly eligible, the liaison assists the worker to get the family assessed for eligibility. Each agency has developed and delivered in-service trainings for supervisory staff to assure each understands how the other system works. A dedicated FEP employed by the YWCA serves only families that are involved in both systems; currently the caseload is lower than that of other FEPs to allow for more time with families.

On the south side, the W-2 contract agency and child welfare partner agency have implemented a two-part initiative: in Phase 1, the two agencies have developed processes to enable child welfare staff to identify families that may be in need of W-2 services, assist them in applying for benefits, and coordinate case planning efforts. Direct service workers from both agencies have participated in training on each other's systems, in order to help them better serve families in both systems, and W-2 staff participate in CST meetings with families in Safety Services and W-2. In Phase 2, the W-2 agency (UMOS) identifies families applying for or receiving W-2 benefits who may be at risk of child abuse and neglect (using a risk assessment tool developed by child welfare staff) and refers them to La Causa for voluntary services to maintain child safety within the home. The staff from the two agencies work as a team to provide a single family plan that addresses the specific needs of each individual family, with a focus on mitigating risk factors for child abuse and neglect.

After learning from the experiences described above, DHFS and DWD, in partnership with the Department of Corrections, have expanded our collaboration in creating the Milwaukee Family Services Integration Office. This collaborative effort is designed to assist families at risk and in need of targeted services from the three departments.

The Milwaukee Family Services Integration Office will work to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families through collaboration and coordination of state-administered services in Milwaukee. The initial focus will be on integration and coordination of services among the Departments of Health & Family Services, Workforce Development and Corrections, especially to improve outcomes for families served in the W-2 and child welfare programs, and families of offenders and ex-offenders re-entering communities.

2. Respond to each of the seven recommendations made by the Child Welfare League of America in written testimony provided to the Committee on March 14<sup>th</sup>.

The Department initiated a contract with the Child Welfare League of America prior to the audits in order to gain the benefit of their advice and assistance in tackling the issue of high turnover in private contract agency staff. The Department initiated this work to reduce turnover of staff as a priority for program improvement long-term, because high staff turnover can undermine the quality, continuity, and timeliness of services to families. The Department has taken steps to implement some recommendations already and is implementing a comprehensive strategy to reduce turnover with the help of a broad-based team of public and private agency staff. This work is already showing results, with significant reduction of turnover documented in the first half of 2006.

As part of the overall strategy to retain qualified workers, BMCW established a Workforce Steering Committee in December 2005 to develop an action plan in response to the recommendations in the CWLA Workforce Report. The committee is comprised of state and private agency direct service staff, supervisors, and managers and is co-chaired by supervisors from two BMCW private agencies. Four staff workgroups were formed: 1) training and staff development; 2) mitigating compliance, standardizing practice, and motivation; 3) morale, staff recognition, organizational culture and climate; and 4) workload, documentation, and efficiency. The staff recommendations developed by the workgroups were presented to the CEOs of the private partner agencies for approval and to the Executive Committee of the Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council this month.

The specific recommendations made by the Child Welfare League of America and the Department's responses are outlined below.

- a) Raise the base salary for all Bureau workers by approximately 15% and provide immediate salary increases for all workers currently below that level.
  - Governor Doyle had recommended salary increases for ongoing case managers in the 2005-2007 biennial budget. After the Legislature removed the new funds to support these increases, Governor Doyle directed the Department of Health and Family Services to identify funding to support the increases from within the existing budget. The Department identified approximately \$840,000 per year for fiscal year 2006 and 2007 in available one-time revenue to support the increase in salaries. Effective September 1, 2005, salary increases were provided to case managers, mentors, and supervisors of BMCW private agencies. The Department's 2007-09 agency budget request includes funding for continuing base salary increases for on-going case managers and supervisors.

- b) Create a career ladder that encourages staff longevity and ongoing professional development in the form of additional training, certification, and educational degrees.
  - BMCW's workgroup on Training and Staff Development recommended that BMCW create Professional Development Plans (PDP) for staff to assist in the transfer of skills learned in the classroom to actual job responsibilities. The PDP breaks down the core competencies of each mandatory and foundation training attended and directly applies them to a case. In addition, the PDPs will also assist supervisors in identifying areas where staff may need additional development. The recommendation has been approved by the CEOs of BMCW private partner agencies and will be presented to the Executive Committee of the Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council this month.
  - A career ladder was incorporated into the salary increases. This ladder provides a pathway for workers to advance in pay and seniority depending upon educational degrees earned, longevity, and other factors.
  
- c) Provide more opportunities for Bureau workers to obtain MSWs on both a full-time and part-time basis. For workers who already have their degrees, provide additional internal training to enable them to expand their professional skills into specialty areas.
  - BMCW continues to work in partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Helen Bader School of Social Welfare to implement a part-time Master of Social Work (MSW) program. This program is designed exclusively for state and private agency BMCW staff who want to earn their MSW degree while continuing to work full-time in Milwaukee child welfare. Classes are held each semester and during the summer and are offered at BMCW office locations in the evenings. Staff who are admitted receive full tuition (subject to the continuing availability of federal Title IV-E funds) plus an allowance for books. There is also a two-year, full-time MSW program option for BMCW staff. Participants in this program receive a stipend and a book allowance and must sign a contract to return to BMCW for at least two years after receiving their MSW.
  
- d) Provide significantly increased support for new workers.
  - Based on consultation with Child Welfare Associates, BMCW will implement the use of training teams to train and prepare newly hired staff. The training team experience will provide a foundation for the continued professional development of each new staff person. The training team is built on the following principles of adult learning: 1) new staff will



immediately apply what is learned through practice activities; 2) new staff progress is closely monitored, frequently evaluated and immediately addressed; and 3) staff receive extensive "hands on" experience under close supervision of a skilled training team supervisor. New case management staff will spend 4-6 months in training teams with a training team supervisor after they are hired before being assigned primary responsibility for cases.

- e) Enhance efforts to recognize staff for the quality of work they do.
  - BMCW's staff workgroup on Morale, Staff Recognition, Organizational Culture and Climate recommended that each program area within BMCW develop a staff morale and recognition plan. The plan is designed to create a supportive team environment by identifying specific outcomes that are achieved and recognizing them. Staff recognition will be tied to performance criteria. The recommendation was approved by the CEOs of private partner agencies in August 2006 and presented to the Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council this month. The recommendations will be implemented within BMCW in October 2006.
  
- f) Continue to carefully monitor worker caseload size and consider conducting a workload study to ensure that caseloads can be managed successfully.
  - BMCW monitors ongoing case manager caseload size as one of the performance standards in the federal Settlement Agreement. BMCW must ensure that ongoing case managers have an average of 11 families per case-carrying manager per site. The overall three-month rolling average for April 2006 – June 2006 was 9.5 families per case-carrying manager. Because BMCW has met this standard for two consecutive six-month periods, we were released from this item in the Settlement Agreement by mutual agreement with plaintiffs' counsel earlier this month. On a voluntary basis, BMCW will continue to report to the community on caseload ratios.
  - BMCW's staff workgroup on Workload, Documentation, and Efficiency recommended that BMCW hire case aides to help with tasks such as driving children to therapy and doctor appointments. Funding has been identified to employ case aides. The workgroup is currently creating a job description and determining what qualifications case aides will need. This, in turn, will determine salary range. When this work is completed, the Department will assess the information about available funding, salary requirements for aide positions, and potential workload needs in order to decide the number of staff to be hired.

- g) Conduct a systematic review of documentation requirements to eliminate redundant and otherwise unnecessary paperwork.
- One item identified by the staff workgroup is the “down time” workers spend waiting at Children’s Court between hearings. Staff indicated that this time could be put to good use in completing necessary paperwork on cases. BMCW has begun distribution of over 260 wireless tablet PCs that are available for caseworkers to take in the field with them. They can be used in any setting, and enable workers to input their case notes almost immediately.
  - BMCW is in the process of reviewing all procedures to identify what documentation requirements are redundant and what may be eliminated. Within this project is a review of forms and paperwork connected to program activities.

3. Improve the timeliness of the investigations of child abuse and neglect.

The Legislative Audit Bureau identified areas of concern regarding BMCW’s response time for investigating child abuse and neglect, specifically that BMCW’s investigation time exceeded the 60 day statutory time limit. BMCW understands the importance of timely investigations and is committed to the swift completion of quality initial assessments to ensure child safety.

In response to the issues identified in the Legislative Audit report, BMCW reviewed the initial assessments that exceeded the statutory time limits. Although it is unacceptable that these initial assessments were not timely, it was determined that child safety had been assured in each of these cases and it was the documentation in the case file that was not completed in a timely manner.

BMCW has implemented corrective strategies to monitor and track the timely completion of initial assessments. Managers are receiving and using bi-monthly data reports to track case closures by supervisory work units. This information is monitored weekly during BMCW management meetings.

BMCW is seeking a change to the data system (eWiSACWIS) that allows a substantiation/unsubstantiation finding to be documented independently of the final initial assessment process. This would allow the data to show that a determination has been made in a timely manner and that the children are safe. The investigation may then continue as others related to the case are interviewed and a thorough examination of the family circumstances conducted beyond the incident that was reported.

In addition, the tablet PCs currently being distributed to BMCW staff will assist with timely documentation since staff will be able to document as they are conducting interviews.

Based on these collective strategies, we believe BMCW will continue to improve the timeliness of completed investigations.

4. Improve the timeliness of services ordered for each family when a child is removed from the home.

When a child is removed from a home, BMCW contract agencies are responsible to plan and arrange for services to the birth family that will increase the likelihood of children being able to return home and be safe there. Courts oversee and direct this process for individual families. After a court has ordered services, it is important for the contract agencies to commence birth family services as quickly as possible to provide every opportunity for safe reunification.

Service Implementation Hearings (SIH) are scheduled with Children's Court between 19 and 22 days after the detention hearing for a child. The SIH follows a Family Conference in which the family and other team members identify services that will keep their children safe. The SIH is held to report to the Court on identified needs of parents and services implemented to address safety in the home.

The courts have been clear and the Department has recognized the need to improve the timeliness of implementing these services. The following corrective strategies have been implemented to address the timely provision of services:

- a) Ongoing management meetings are held with BMCW private agency partners to discuss the status of agency efforts and to identify solutions and track progress;
- b) Monthly data reports are produced by BMCW Program Evaluation Managers to analyze outcomes, and track agency performance by family case. Follow up is done as necessary to address concerns;
- c) In collaboration with the Children's Court, issues have been identified and are being addressed that cause barriers or delays in implementing services such as attorneys who represent birth parents advising their clients not to participate in services until after a court hearing before a judge;
- d) Both private agencies have implemented improvements to their respective internal systems to expedite provider authorizations so that services can begin or continue; and
- e) BMCW notified its private agency partners in May 2006 that fiscal penalties will be imposed starting this month if they have not achieved a 90% or better compliance rate in meeting the requirements for timely implementation of services.

The Department will closely monitor the results of these actions and take other actions if necessary to achieve timely services.

5. Reduce the time children spend in out-of-home care.

The federal Settlement Agreement requires BMCW to monitor performance on the length of stay in out-of-home care (no more than 25% of children in out-of-home care shall be in care for more than 24 months). During the first six months of 2006, BMCW achieved a performance level of 18.8% of children who were in out-of-home care for more than 24 months. BMCW has successfully met the baseline performance measure as required in the Settlement Agreement for two consecutive six month periods. Thus we were released from court oversight of this item by mutual agreement with plaintiffs' counsel earlier this month.

Even beyond the Settlement Agreement, BMCW has been aggressively working with children who have been in care for 24 months or more. As a result of these efforts, the actual number and percentage of children in out-of-home care 24 months or more has decreased. The percentage of children who have been in out-of-home care for 24 or more months declined to 37% from 62.8% between January 2003 and June 2006. As of June 30, 2006, of all children in out-of-home care 24 or more months, 59% were 12 and older. BMCW is also now conducting permanency status conferences during critical times in each case (9<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> month) on a regular basis.

6. Ensure the adequacy of safety services.

The audit identified questions about the Safety Services program. In general, the Department believes that Safety Services have offered a viable and positive program option to keep children safely in their own homes. The Department also recognizes the concerns identified in the Legislative Audit Report and is taking measures to improve the Safety Services program.

Safety Services has been a short-term program designed as an alternative to foster care for children. Our internal review has led us to make four types of changes. First, the Department has refined its definition of who will be served to include children and families who face risks to safety that are not imminent but are likely to occur without some form of intervention. Second, the Department is modifying its payment structure to avert any incentive to artificially limit the length of services and close cases before families can safely care for their children. Third, the Department is anticipating that some subset of families will receive services longer and we are equipped to manage this reality within the existing budget. Fourth, the Department is strengthening its performance oversight of contractors in this area.

Based on the recommendation by the Legislative Audit Bureau, BMCW has changed the way its partner agencies will be reimbursed effective October 1, 2006. Rather than receiving a fixed rate reimbursement for a maximum of four months, agencies will be paid on a monthly basis for every month that a case remains open. BMCW will monitor and staff cases that are open longer than three months in order to determine the need for the case to remain open. This will ensure that each family receives the services it needs

and will avoid the risk of premature case closure, but also allow reasonable management of financial resources.

BMCW will develop and add a performance contract provision to the 2006 contracts for the Safety Services program and provide financial incentives for partner agencies to: 1) decrease the rate of recidivism; 2) decrease the entry into out-of-home care while the case is open in Safety Services; 3) decrease the incidences of maltreatment while the case is open in Safety Services and within six months of case closure; and 4) increase timely and appropriate services within a week of opening the case. BMCW will monitor performance starting with comprehensive case reviews and the Quality Service Review process.

BMCW is monitoring the agencies' corrective action plans to ensure all service providers are meeting with the family within seven days; that the Safety Services Manager meets with the family every seven days; that the Safety Services Manager completes safety assessments every seven days; and that the Coordinated Service Team meetings are held monthly. In addition, BMCW is developing reports that will allow us to closely monitor the percent of families who ceased receiving safety services and had their children enter out-of-home care within 12 months. In addition, BMCW is in the process of internally reviewing all those cases that were open in Safety Services and the children had to be placed in out-of-home care. Based on the outcome of those reviews, BMCW will take corrective measures to address any concerns or practice issues.

7. Continue to work to improve the retention of child welfare staff, including an analysis of the number of contract staff who have elected to pursue masters-level training at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee that was at least partially paid for with child welfare funding, and the number who have or have not fulfilled all terms of their education contracts.

The Department is committed to supporting child welfare staff by providing educational and other training opportunities. UW-M administers the Title IV-E program and tracks on a regular basis, which students participating in the program have left employment with BMCW. Title IV-E funds are now applied to both the full-time and part-time MSW program. Only active employment is counted toward the contractual agreement. If an employee temporarily leaves service, such as during maternity leave, the clock stops and starts again when the employee is active. Paybacks are pro-rated if employees leave before meeting their service obligation.

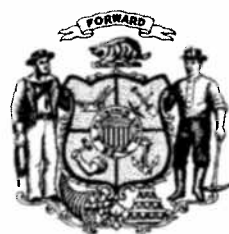
This program appears to be successfully meeting its goals. Since 1993, 123 students have graduated from the full-time MSW program. Ninety-six of the graduates have paid off their obligation through employment with BMCW; six paid off monetarily; two were never offered employment; and nineteen are still paying off through work. There are currently twelve students enrolled in the program who are expected to finish in August 2007. In addition, there are currently eleven students in their second year of the part-time MSW program and twenty students in their first year.

Closing

The Department is continuing to focus attention on program and management improvement in the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare. Real progress is evident in the areas reported here and in other areas. At the same time, added improvement remains needed and will be diligently sought by the Department and its private partners, who share a commitment to the safety of children and well-being of families. The Department will report again on progress to the Joint Committee on Audit in February 2007.



# WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE





WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE

Joint Legislative Audit Committee

Committee Co-Chairs:  
State Senator Carol Roessler  
State Representative Suzanne Jeskewitz

December 7, 2006

Ms. Helene Nelson, Secretary  
Department of Health and Family Services  
1 West Wilson Street, Room 650  
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

Dear Ms. Nelson:

Thank you for your letter, dated October 2, 2006, which updates us on the Department's progress in implementing the recommendations presented by the Legislative Audit Bureau in its evaluation of Milwaukee County Child Welfare (reports 06-1 and 06-2). We appreciate both the timeliness and thoroughness of your written follow-up report to the Committee.

We are pleased to note the Department's progress in several key areas, including a reduction in staff turnover and release from 10 enforceable provisions identified in the federal Settlement Agreement. Your follow-up letter identifies several areas where new initiatives are being planned or newly implemented. It will be important for the Joint Legislative Audit Committee to remain informed about outcomes from these efforts in the months ahead. Therefore, in your February 1, 2007, report to the Committee, please also plan to:

- comment on results from the efforts to assess and address program participant needs collaboratively with the Department of Workforce Development;
- update the Committee on any additional federal Settlement Agreement performance measures from which the Bureau has been released; and
- describe changes to the 2007 contracts, including financial incentives and performance expectations.

We appreciate your responsiveness to the audit and its recommendations. We are confident that the 2007-08 Joint Legislative Audit Committee will review your February 2007 report with particular interest. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Senator Carol Roessler, Co-chair  
Joint Legislative Audit Committee

Representative Suzanne Jeskewitz, Co-chair  
Joint Legislative Audit Committee

cc: Janice Mueller  
State Auditor

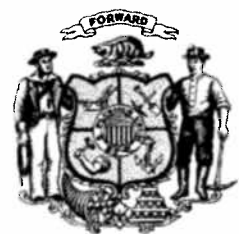
SENATOR ROESSLER  
P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, WI 53707-7882  
(608) 266-5300 • Fax (608) 266-0423

REPRESENTATIVE JESKEWITZ  
P.O. Box 8952 • Madison, WI 53708-8952  
(608) 266-3796 • Fax (608) 282-3624





# WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE



no date

**Linda Davis**  
**127 E. Trillium Court**  
**Mequon, WI 53092**

Dear Madam Co-Chairs: I failed yesterday to thank you both for making the extra effort to hold the Legislative Audit Committee hearings in Milwaukee. I know this is unusual but your efforts sent a very strong message that both our W-2 clients and our kids are important. THANK YOU. I hope it will happen again.

I didn't want to take the time yesterday to comment on a couple of things mentioned in the meeting and offer any help I can give in these or other areas. In addition, I would love to talk more about the efforts of the Partnership Council at some time. The Partnership Council has gone from a group that had no influence to a group that has really bonded and working on issues. As you know, the Partnership Council was created by legislation and I believe along with other members that we owe the legislature some accountability as to our work as well as a stronger relationship with a variety of legislators.

You mentioned yesterday the correspondence that you have received from Richard Wexler and wanting to look into his allegations. As Chair of the Child Welfare Philanthropy Group, I paid for and invited Mr. Wexler to meet with us almost five years ago. He was invited to meet with us to give us his opinions on child welfare and Milwaukee specifically. I'd be happy to meet with you to discuss our impressions if that will help. Additionally, I have seen his most recent correspondence and it worries me on many levels. My biggest concern is Mr. Wexler's general process of misrepresenting issues by limiting the facts he uses to make his pre-conceived, pre-determined positions. For example, his recent letter talks about kids "churning" in and out of the Milwaukee system and infers that case workers are grabbing kids out of their families. It is worrisome that Mr. Wexler would put this kind of concern forward with the intent of his hypotheses making it into the newspaper rather than fact-based research. He fails to take into account that the allegations of child abuse resulting in children being removed from their families must go in front of a judge to justify that removal. Even if we had a rogue caseworker, that person would have to justify their decisions in front of our Children's Court judges. He has been concerned from the very beginning that Milwaukee (and all child welfare agencies across the nation) remove children too frequently and without cause. I also think this does not reflect the removal numbers we have seen in Milwaukee. In fact, in 2005, the Partnership Council questioned the LOW number of children coming into our system. We did not want BMCW to keep children out of the system in order to meet caseload sizes, etc. which is directly in conflict with Mr. Wexler's assertions.

Mr. Wexler, to my knowledge, has not been in Milwaukee since I brought him here over five years ago. He is not a child welfare "expert" but rather a journalist who is highly interested in the subject. This is just to say that while I am interested in some of his assertions, I think it is important to put his assertions and motivations in context while looking into his allegations.

Secondly, there was mention yesterday by both Rep. Jeskewitz and Senator Darling regarding the possibility of creating a Children's Village (long term residences) here in Milwaukee similar to the SOS Children's Villages in other parts of the US and the world. Sen. Darling was

absolutely accurate that there was a strong, multi-year attempt to get a Village built in Milwaukee a few years ago that resulted in the Milwaukee Children's Village being spun off to Lutheran Social Services. I thought I would add that the Child Welfare Philanthropy Group (CWPG) which I chair (made up of 11 private funders) looked at the possibility of funding this effort. We decided to decline the opportunity to participate by contributing our funds once we read the outcomes report of the SOS Children's Villages particularly the one located in Florida. I don't have the report still as it has been years but I remember lots allegations of abuse, teen pregnancies, etc. In addition to these negative outcomes, I do not believe the state would have been allowed to refer children to the Village due to federal regulations of some kind but I may be wrong on that. Susan Dreyfus was the Administrator at the time and could give better understanding of any federal limitations. In addition, these types of long term residential treatment are no longer considered best practice for our kids. The cost of the project was prohibitive particularly when we looked at the annual budgets that would require millions of dollars each year in private donations to sustain the effort. There was no business plan that met our requirements for sustainability or outcomes; hence we did not join in the effort. The Child Welfare Philanthropy Group is always interested in creative best practice initiatives but this one did not meet our minimal standards.

The CWPG is always happy to help. We consider the state a "donor" to child welfare too and see ourselves as kindred spirits in improving child welfare. Our strongest asset is our knowledge rather than our money. We work closely with DHFS on child welfare projects and would be happy to do so with the legislature if that would be helpful.

I hope you found the time spent on yesterday's meetings informational and helpful. I am close to Jess McDonald from Illinois and I hope you take him up on his offer to help. He would be helpful in responding to the Richard Wexler assertions vis-a-vis Cook County and Milwaukee as well as general child welfare practice. He is considered the "guru" of child welfare nationally since he took Illinois from one of the worst systems in the nation to the "gold standard". It should be noted that his study of the turnover problem in Milwaukee ....which he did at NO charge to the state ....is now seen as a national influence. We have great national expertise helping us now including Paul Vincent, Jess, Connie Flower (Jess' colleague), etc.

Thanks again for your interest. I was asked once what one thing I would want to fix Milwaukee child welfare. My answer was if I only got one thing it would be to have the political will in our state to make the changes necessary and devote the resources needed. I am so appreciative on behalf of the kids that you and your committee join us in having the political will to help the kids. The kids don't vote, pay taxes or have money to pay lobbyists, but they do have us!!

I am happy to come to Madison any time I can help. Thanks again. Linda