



**DCF presentation to
Legislative Council Study Committee on Adoption
Disruption and Dissolution**



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Role of Department of Children and Families (DCF)

- DCF places children in the child welfare system with adoptive parents if they are unable to reunify with their biological or extended family
 - ✓ Recruit/identify adoptive parents
 - ✓ Conduct assessments of prospective adoptive parents
 - ✓ Ensure adoptive parent completes training
 - ✓ Set level of and administer Adoption Assistance payments
- **In private domestic or international adoptions, DCF's role is limited, but includes:**
 - ✓ Licensing Child Placing Agencies that conduct private domestic and international adoptions
 - ✓ DCF does not carry out recruitment, assessment or training for private adoptions

Covered Topics

- I. Issues related to children adopted from the child welfare system
 - ✓ Background data
 - ✓ Assessment of Prospective Adoptive parents
 - ✓ Matching children and parents/use of CANS tool
 - ✓ Adoption Assistance
- II. Post-Adoption Supports
- III. Legal restrictions regarding disclosure of adoptions
- IV. CPS Worker Training
- V. Federal Child Welfare funding

I. Issues related to children adopted from the child welfare system: Background data

- Approximately 700 children are adopted each year from the child welfare system
 - ✓ This represents approximately 15% of all children in out-of-home care
- 85% of children adopted from the child welfare system are adopted by their foster parents
- In Wisconsin, the average time from placement of a child into out-of-home care and adoption finalization is 33.6 months
- In recent years, DCF has strengthened permanency outcomes, including adoption, for children in the child welfare system

Assessment of Prospective Adoptive Parents

- Statewide, prospective adoptive parents for children from the child welfare system are assessed using the Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE) instrument
 - ✓ 52 counties use the SAFE tool to assess foster parents; prospective adoptive parents who have completed a SAFE assessment to become foster parents do not need to undergo an additional assessment to become an adoptive parent
 - ✓ The SAFE tool is used in 24 states
 - ✓ Private adoptions may, but are not required, to use the SAFE tool
- A person must be age 21 to adopt a child or age 18 to adopt a relative child in Wisconsin per state law; there is no upper age limit
- Adoptive worker assesses the ability of the prospective parent to care for the child up to the age of majority, taking the parent's age and health into consideration
- Adoptive worker discusses with the prospective parent his/her plan for the child's care if the parent becomes incapacitated

“Matching” of Parents and Children, Use of CANS Tool

- The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool provides a comprehensive assessment of a child
 - ✓ Validated through national research as reliable and effective
 - ✓ Used in 42 states
- In Wisconsin, the CANS is completed on a child in the public child welfare system within 30 days of placement in out-of-home care and at least every 6 months the child is in care
 - ✓ Used to match the knowledge, skills and abilities of a foster parent with the child’s needs
 - ✓ Used in the development of the service plan for the child
 - ✓ Used to determine the supplemental portion of the foster and adoptive care rates
- The CANS also strengthens the match between adoptive parents and child welfare children given that 85% of adoptive parents are former foster parents of the child

Pre-Adoptive Training

- Families adopting children in Wisconsin must complete 18 hours of training, as specified in Administrative Rule (DCF 51)
 - ✓ 2 hours of training specific to adopted child
 - ✓ 16 hours on core competencies
- Wisconsin training is based on the Partners in Alternative Care Education (PACE) national model of pre-adoptive training, which incorporates elements of the PRIDE national curriculum
- Training includes information on trauma and its effect on children
- International adoptions - The Hague requires 10 hours of training for IR4 children (finalized abroad); for IR3 adoptions (finalized in U.S.), they must also complete the 18 hours of training requirements
- Domestic adoptions - First time adoptive parents must complete 16 hours on core competencies

Adoption Assistance

- A child is eligible for Adoption Assistance if the child meets the eligibility criteria for a special needs child specified in Administrative Rule (DCF 50)
 - ✓ Generally, all children in the child welfare system meet the special needs criteria
- An Adoption Assistance payment for a child is composed of three parts:
 - ✓ The basic rate, which mirrors the basic foster care rates established by age in statute
 - ✓ The supplemental rate, which is based on the child's emotional, behavioral, and physical needs as determined through the CANS tool
 - ✓ An exceptional rate, based on whether the child has exceptional needs and the circumstances of the family

Adoption Assistance

- Adoption Assistance payment levels:
 - ✓ Average monthly payment/child is \$900
 - ✓ Monthly payment/child cannot exceed \$2,000
- Total state expenditures on Adoption Assistance payments per year:
 - ✓ \$91 million, of which approximately 50% is state funding and 50% is FED IV-E funding
 - ✓ Covers 8,300 children
- Adoption Assistance must comply with federal requirements

Adoption Assistance

- Adoption Assistance continues at least until age 18 unless one of the following occurs:
 - ✓ Marriage of adoptee
 - ✓ Adoptee is no longer receiving support of adoptive parent
 - ✓ Death of adoptee
 - ✓ Death of adoptive parent(s)
 - ✓ A change in the adoptee's guardian
 - ✓ Adoptive parent(s) are no longer legally responsible for the support of the adoptee
- Adoptive parents are required to report any of these changes in status to DCF
- Adoption Assistance may continue to age 21 under certain circumstances

II. Post-Adoption

- DCF Role
 - ✓ Administer Adoption Assistance payments
 - ✓ Support Post Adoption Resource Centers (see next slide)
- Adoptive children and families have the same legal status and receive the same treatment as birth families in the community
 - ✓ DCF does not intervene in or oversee the lives of adoptive families on a routine basis
 - ✓ The county child protective services agency becomes involved with an adoptive family if there is a report of possible abuse or neglect

Post-Adoption Supports: Post Adoption Resource Centers (PARCs)

- DCF funds six PARCs in Eau Claire, LaCrosse, Green Bay, Stevens Point, Madison, and Milwaukee with the following services:
 - ✓ Toll-free telephone line available 24/7
 - ✓ Education, support, activities and services to adoptive families
 - ✓ Support groups
 - ✓ Training
 - ✓ Promotion of community awareness of adoption
 - ✓ Advocacy services
- Information on all finalized adoptions is forwarded monthly to the PARCs, unless the adoptive parents opt-out of having their information shared
- PARC services are available to all adoptive families
- Statewide, the PARCs receive approximately 70 contacts per month

Post-Adoption Supports: Post Adoption Resource Centers (PARCs)

- A total of \$472,800 in federal funding is used to operate the PARCs:
 - ✓ Southern (Madison): \$76,000
 - ✓ Northern (Stevens Point): \$83,000
 - ✓ Western (LaCrosse/Eau Claire): \$83,000
 - ✓ Southeastern (Milwaukee): \$77,900
 - ✓ Milwaukee: \$77,900
 - ✓ Northeastern (Green Bay): \$75,000

Post-Adoption Supports: Peer Mentoring

- Wisconsin Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents Association runs a program called the Foster and Adoptive Support & Preservation Program (FASPP)
 - ✓ Peer-driven volunteer network designed to help foster and adoptive families
 - ✓ The volunteers are highly trained to help parents navigate the foster care and adoption systems
 - ✓ Does not provide legal advice
 - ✓ Provides information on other resources, such as additional training, conferences, and resource materials
 - ✓ Service is available to all adoptive families with children from child welfare system, private domestic or international adoptions

III. Legal Restrictions regarding disclosure of Adoptive Status

- Under state statutes, adoption records are closed except:
 - ✓ To give a picture and description to media to find adoptive parents for the child
 - ✓ To give certain information to the adoptive parents, an adoptee's caseworker, a birth parent, or the adoptee after age 18 with birth parent consent
 - ✓ For program administration
 - ✓ For the purpose of administering state taxes
 - ✓ For an adopted Indian child, to give the U.S. Department of Interior the child's tribal affiliation
 - ✓ By order of the court for good cause

Legal Restrictions regarding disclosure of Adoptive Status

- Under federal law, individually identifiable information regarding Adoption Assistance is confidential except for purposes:
 - ✓ Related to administration of federal programs
 - ✓ Connected to criminal or civil proceedings
 - ✓ Related to authorized audits of federal programs
 - ✓ Related to federally required reporting of child abuse and neglect

IV. Child Protective Services (CPS) Worker Training

- Requirements are applied statewide and are established in DCF Ch. 43 Admin. Code
 - ✓ Pre-Service Training must be completed prior to designation as a CPS worker
 - ✓ Foundation Training: 15 days of training which must be completed within the first two years of employment
 - ✓ Special Skills and Topics: 30 hours of training every 2 years
- DCF contracts with the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System at UW-Madison for the development and delivery of child welfare worker training
 - ✓ 4 UW institutions (UW-Green Bay, UW-River Falls, UW-Milwaukee, UW-Madison) provide the child welfare worker training to counties on a regional basis

V. Federal Child Welfare Funding

- Three major federal child welfare funding sources:
 - ✓ Title IV-B, part 1 of the Social Security Act
 - ✓ Title IV-B, part 2 of the Social Security Act: Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF)
 - ✓ Title IV-E of the Social Security Act

Federal Child Welfare Funding

- Title IV-B, subpart 1: Can be used to protect and promote the welfare of all children; prevent child abuse and neglect; support at-risk families; promote the safety, permanence, and well-being of children in out-of-home care; and provide training
 - ✓ Wisconsin's funding is \$4.8 million/year
 - ✓ Majority is distributed to counties via two block grants: Children and Family Allocation (\$3 million) and Youth Aids (\$800,000)
 - ✓ Remainder is used for Youth Runaway Services (\$700,00) and state administration (\$200,000)

Federal Child Welfare Funding

- Title IV-B, subpart 2: Promoting Safe and Stable Families: Can be used for family support services; family preservation services; family reunification services; and adoption promotion and support services
 - ✓ Wisconsin's funding is \$5 million/year
 - ✓ Majority is distributed to counties and Tribes via block grants: Children and Family Allocation (\$3.1 million) and Family Services Tribal Block Grant (\$400,000)
 - ✓ \$1.1 million used for adoption-related services: \$500,000 for Post Adoption Resource Centers and \$600,000 for the Special Needs Adoption Program contracts
 - ✓ Remainder is used for trauma projects (\$200,000) and state administration (\$200,000)

Federal Child Welfare Funding

- Title IV-E: Federal reimbursement for certain expenditures for qualifying children in reimbursable out-of-home care settings; including daily care (maintenance), administration, information systems, and training
 - ✓ Wisconsin received approximately \$108 million in SFY14
 - ✓ \$43 million was used for adoption assistance, state foster care and subsidized guardianship payments
 - ✓ \$400,000 for Special Needs Adoption Program contracts
 - ✓ \$6.5 million for education, training and other “pass through” contracts with counties and the UW System
 - ✓ The remainder is used for by BMCW (\$15.6 million); counties via the Children and Family Allocation (\$26.4 million) and state administration (\$7.4 million)

Questions