

# Children's Trust Fund

Wisconsin's Resource for Preventing Child Abuse

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Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board

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DATE: December 12, 2014

TO: Representative Joan Ballweg, Chair  
Legislative Steering Committee on Supporting Healthy Early Brain Development

FROM: Michelle Jensen Goodwin, Executive Director  
Wisconsin Children's Trust Fund

Jennifer Jones, Associate Director  
Wisconsin Children's Trust Fund

RE: Additional Information on Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Efforts

CC: Rachel Letzing, Staff Attorney, Legislative Council  
Melissa Roberts, Chair, Legislative Committee, CTF

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Thank you for the invitation to provide additional information to the Legislative Steering Committee for Supporting Healthy Early Brain Development about the work of the Children's Trust Fund (CTF) to prevent child maltreatment in Wisconsin.

The mission of CTF, also known as the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board, is to promote the development of a sustainable, comprehensive prevention infrastructure that reflects research and promising practices in child abuse and neglect prevention. CTF's community investments are driven by strategic goals and the latest prevention research.

To advance knowledge and practice in the field of child maltreatment prevention, CTF promotes a diverse array of strategic prevention initiatives which are highlighted below.

- **Abusive Head Trauma**

CTF convenes a statewide workgroup to coordinate the implementation of the Prevent Violence Against Children Act (2005 Wisconsin Act 165), which requires training and education on shaken baby syndrome for care providers. The group recently decided to expand the focus to identify and promote effective prevention strategies to reduce

abusive head trauma and other types of physical abuse of infants and young children. CTF will be partnering with two pediatricians to move this initiative forward by expanding education to professionals who work with young children on understanding sentinel injuries, promoting *Period of PURPLE Crying®* (an evidenced-based shaken baby syndrome prevention program) and improving data collection.

- **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study**

At the June 19, 2014 meeting of the Steering Committee, CTF provided detailed information about the findings of the ACE Study. As you may recall, 58 percent of Wisconsin adults reported having at least one ACE with 14 percent experiencing 4 or more. The more ACEs an individual reports, the more likely they are to engage in high risk behaviors and experience negative physical and mental health outcomes. In fact, the ACE researchers have concluded that ACEs are the primary cause of health and social problems, and the leading determinant of public health spending in our country. CTF has convened a workgroup with several key stakeholders across multiple systems to ensure that the ACE Study findings inform policy and practice.

- **Awareness to Action**

In partnership with Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, CTF supports Awareness to Action, a child sexual abuse prevention initiative that trains professionals across multiple systems with a focus on adult and community responsibility. The initiative works with youth and child serving agencies to improve internal policies, procedures and training related to keeping children safe from sexual harm, as well as coordinating Darkness to Light trainers across the state.

- **Community Response**

This project provides voluntary services to children and families who have been reported to county Child Protective Services (CPS), but the case was either screened out or closed after an initial investigation concludes there were no immediate safety risks. In 2012, CPS agencies screened out over 60% of the cases referred, which was over 42,000 cases. CPS is not required to provide any services to families screened out of the system. Yet, this population remains at high-risk for returning to CPS due to unresolved or escalating threats.

- **Evaluation of Early Childhood Initiative**

Dane County Department of Human Services was awarded the first Child Maltreatment Innovation Fund grant to provide funds for the evaluation of the Early Childhood Initiative, an ecologically driven home visiting program. The evaluation of this Wisconsin based model will provide the prevention field with information on how to engage families with complex needs, and integrate clinical services into case management services. The Innovation Fund is an investment strategy intended to

impact the lives of children and families in Wisconsin by advancing the child maltreatment prevention field.

- **Family Resource Center Networks**

CTF support to FRCNs is the largest of our community investments and promotes the dissemination of evidence-based practice in geographic areas of Wisconsin at highest risk of child maltreatment. FRCNs coordinate and collaborate across systems that work with families and their children to provide comprehensive support services and local community leadership in an integrated continuum of family centered prevention services.

- **Positive Community Norms**

Since 2010, CTF and Children's Hospital of Wisconsin have been working with Montana State University to apply the Positive Community Norms framework to child maltreatment prevention. Specifically, the PCN framework has shown effect in changing societal norms on public health issues, such as smoking, underage drinking, and seat belt use. We are the first state in the country using this model to transform cultural norms as it relates to the prevention of child maltreatment.

- **Project GAIN**

Project GAIN is an economic-only prevention model that serves families reported to the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare whose cases are closed after an initial investigation. Developed in partnership with the Department of Children and Families and the University of Wisconsin-Madison Institute for Research on Poverty, Project GAIN is the first randomized experimental evaluation to test whether assisting families in building financial stability through increased earnings, access to public and private benefits, and reduced financial stressors results in decreased subsequent contacts with CPS. Preliminary findings show that families with a history of CPS involvement are 39% less likely to be re-reported to CPS following their involvement with Project GAIN.

- **Triple P - Positive Parenting Program**

Through our Special Project grants, CTF is supporting the Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) at the Medical College of Wisconsin's downtown health clinic to build capacity to deliver evidence based parenting interventions in the primary care setting. Triple P is a five level prevention and intervention program aimed at building parents' capacity and skills to promote the healthy social and emotional development of their children. Triple P can be implemented as a system including all five levels or programs can choose specific levels based on their community's needs. Special Project grants are available for program planning, start-up or existing prevention services proposing to fill an identified need or gap in the community.

Although there are numerous evidence-based programs, innovative public awareness campaigns, and cutting-edge research evaluations that CTF proudly supports, there is still a need to develop a more comprehensive infrastructure to prevent child abuse and neglect and support the healthy development of children in this state. Previously, CTF and other partners engaged in an effort to collect information on prevention programs in Wisconsin counties to identify gaps. However, the prevention scan did not result in a complete accounting due to a lack of time and resources to conduct a full-scale review.

The Children's Trust Fund respectfully recommends that the Steering Committee initiate a Legislative Audit Bureau review of prevention services with the following scope:

*“The audit will (1) compile an inventory and conduct an assessment of child abuse and neglect prevention programs at the county and state level, including public and private agencies, and the funding sources utilized, and (2) recommend strategies for improved coordination among agencies and programs to leverage resources and build a comprehensive prevention infrastructure.*

The research today is resounding on the economic benefits of investing early. We must effectively invest in creating safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments for all of Wisconsin's children. An audit of prevention programs and funding streams, and how our efforts can best support families, will provide invaluable guidance as we continue to build the framework necessary to promote healthy early childhood development.

The Steering Committee is to be commended for its leadership and commitment to children and families. CTF looks forward to working closely with you in the 2015 legislative session to advance policies aimed at addressing and supporting healthy early brain development.