

January 28, 2021

Ms. Kay Inabnet
Assistant Assembly Chief Clerk
17 West Main Street, Suite 401
Madison, WI 53703

Mr. Mike Queensland
Senate Chief Clerk
B20 – Southeast, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Assistant Assembly Chief Clerk Inabnet and Senate Chief Clerk Queensland:

In compliance with 2009 Wisconsin Act 78, the Child Welfare Public Disclosure Act, please accept the Department of Children and Families' 2020 fourth quarter report on alleged sexual abuse of children residing in out-of-home care. The data provided in this report addresses incidents of alleged sexual abuse for the period October 1 through December 31, 2020 and fulfills the Department of Children and Families' reporting requirements under section 48.981(9)(b) of the Wisconsin Statutes.

We appreciate the legislature's interest in Wisconsin's child welfare system and their commitment to supporting the Department of Children and Families (DCF), county and tribal child welfare agencies, and the hundreds of non-profit organizations who work to protect Wisconsin children every day. Like you, we are saddened by all cases of child maltreatment and are committed to strengthening families so that child maltreatment does not occur. Wisconsin is fortunate to have dedicated and passionate child welfare workers and we want to recognize and express our appreciation for their commitment and compassion as they engage in these cases on a daily basis.

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

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

Number of Reported Incidents: 36

Wisconsin child protective services agencies screened in and investigated 36 reported incidents of suspected sexual abuse to 34 children residing in out-of-home care.

Dates of the Incidents:

The 36 reported incidents are estimated to have occurred between 2011 and December 27, 2020. Because children disclose abuse in different stages, it is common for children to report incidents months or even years after the incident occurred. Furthermore, in cases of alleged abuse involving non-verbal children, dates of alleged maltreatment are often difficult or impossible to determine.

Maltreatment Determinations:

Of the 36 reported incidents, maltreatment determinations were made for 17 (47%) of the reported incidents, while 19 (31%) maltreatment determinations are pending because the investigations are not complete.

Of the 17 reported incidents where the maltreatment determination was made, 16 (94%) were unsubstantiated (i.e., preponderance of the evidence indicating that sexual abuse occurred was not found), one (6%) was substantiated, and there were no incidents that were unsubstantiated/unable to locate source.

Nature of Maltreater Relationship:

Of the one substantiated incident, the relationship of the maltreater to the child was sibling(s), step siblings(s). The substantiated incident did not include an allegation of sex trafficking.

Types of Placement:

The one substantiated incident took place while the child was living in a relative foster home.

Location of Substantiated Incidents:

The one substantiated incident of sexual abuse to children residing in out-of-home care occurred in Grant County.

Ages or Age Group of Children:

Allegations of sexual abuse in out-of-home care were reported and investigated for children one to 17 years of age. The one incident of sexual abuse was substantiated for a child who was 5 years of age at the time of maltreatment.

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

Sincerely,



Emilie Amundson
Secretary

Attachment

cc: Governor Tony Evers