

April 26, 2021

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

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

Dear Assembly Chief Clerk Blazel 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' 2021 first quarter report on alleged sexual abuse of children residing in out-of-home care. The attached data addresses reports of alleged sexual abuse for the period January 1 through March 31, 2021 and fulfills the Department of Children and Families' reporting requirements under Section 48.981(9)(b), Wis. Stats.

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:

Wisconsin child protective services agencies screened in and investigated 69 reported incidents of suspected sexual abuse to 59 children residing in out-of-home care.

Dates of the Incidents:

The 69 reported incidents are estimated to have occurred between January 2018 and March 30, 2021. Because children disclose abuse in different stages, it is common for children to report

Assembly Chief Clerk Blazel
Senate Chief Clerk Queensland
April 26, 2021
Page 2

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 69 reported incidents, maltreatment determinations were made for 23 (33%) of the reported incidents, while 46 (67%) maltreatment determinations are pending because the investigations are not complete.

Of the 23 reported incidents where the maltreatment determination was made, 15 (65%) were unsubstantiated (i.e., preponderance of the evidence indicating that sexual abuse occurred was not found), seven (30%) were substantiated, and one (4%) was unsubstantiated/unable to locate source.

Nature of Maltreater Relationship:

Of the seven substantiated incidents, the relationship of the maltreater to the child was non-caregiver in four of the incidents, a stranger in two of the incidents, and a family friend in one of the incidents. All seven substantiated incidents included sex trafficking allegations.

Types of Placement:

Of the seven substantiated incidents, four incidents occurred while the child was placed in a group home, one incident occurred while the child was placed in a residential care center, one incident occurred while the child was placed with an unlicensed relative, and one incident occurred while the child was missing from out-of-home care.

Location of Substantiated Incidents:

Of the seven substantiated incidents of sexual abuse to children residing in out-of-home care, six incidents occurred in Milwaukee County and one incident occurred in Sheboygan County.

Ages or Age Group of Children:

The alleged sexual abuse was reported and investigated for children 0 to 17 years of age. Incidents of sexual abuse were substantiated for seven children, one of whom was 13 years old, three who were 14 years old, two who were 15 years old, and one who was 17 years old at the time of maltreatment.

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