

# 2021–23 BIENNIAL REPORT

October 2023

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## **Introduction – Agency Description**

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) works in partnership with local governments, tribes, health-and-social-services agencies, private and non-profit providers, and concerned individuals to protect and promote the well-being of children, families, and communities through:

- Supervising the statewide child welfare system to protect children at risk of neglect or abuse, and to make permanency plans for the care and placement of children who have suffered it.
- Directly managing child protective services in Milwaukee County.
- Regulating the health and safety of child care by licensing child care providers statewide, certifying qualifying Milwaukee providers, and supervising the certification of non-Milwaukee providers through counties and tribes.
- Encouraging improvements in the quality of child care statewide through the YoungStar quality rating program and financial assistance to child care workers to attend professional development training.
- Administering the Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy program for low-income parents, including maintaining computer systems, establishing payment rates and statewide policies for MyWICildCare, and providing funding under contracts with counties, consortia, and tribes for local eligibility and authorization workers outside Milwaukee County.
- Supporting county services to establish paternity and child support orders, including maintaining statewide computer and financial systems to maintain accurate case records and disburse support payments promptly.
- Administering Wisconsin Works (W-2) and other employment programs to promote self-sufficiency among parents and young adults.

- Provision and coordination of services that help refugees achieve economic self-sufficiency and social adjustment upon their arrival to the U.S.
- Overseeing community-based juvenile justice services and associated Youth Aids to counties.

## Vision Statement

Our vision is that:

**All Wisconsin children and youth are safe and loved members of thriving families and communities**

To reach our goal, we are focused on reducing racial and ethnic disparities in our programs and services, focusing on five key priorities:

- Systematically increasing access to quality early care and education programs that support the needs of children and families statewide.
- Putting families in the center of successful child support and good-paying jobs programs.
- Safely transforming the child welfare and youth justice system to dramatically increase the proportion of children supported in their homes and communities.
- Dedicating additional resources to support vulnerable and historically underserved youth, specifically teenage girls, kids with complex care needs, and youth transitioning out of the foster care system.
- Fostering a workplace where agency staff feel engaged, valued, and connected to our vision.

## Structure

The department is headed by Secretary Emilie Amundson, who is appointed by Governor Tony Evers.

The secretary administers the department with the assistance of an appointed deputy secretary, assistant secretary, and administrators for the department's divisions:

- Division of Early Care and Education
- Division of Family and Economic Security

- Division of Management Services
- Division of Safety and Permanence
- Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services

The secretary also appoints the general counsel, legislative advisor, senior manager, inspector general, and Office of Urban Development director. The Secretary's Office also includes the tribal relations director, communications director, and the Office of Budget and Policy.

Succeeding portions of this report provide additional detail about the internal structure of the five divisions and their programmatic accomplishments during the 2021-23 biennium.

### **Position Utilization**

As of June 30, 2023, the department had 825.66 authorized full-time- equivalent (FTE) positions, including permanent and project positions in both the classified and unclassified service. 20 individuals were working in part-time positions, representing 12.6 FTE.

### **Attached Statutory Councils and Boards**

There are three statutory councils attached to the department: The Governor's Council on Domestic Abuse, which advises the secretary and the legislature on matters of domestic abuse policy; the Rate Regulation Advisory Committee, which advises the department on rate setting issues for residential care centers, group homes, and child welfare agencies; and funding the Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council, which advises the department on Milwaukee County child welfare issues. In addition, the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board is attached to the department for limited administrative purposes. It has typically published its own, separate biennial report.

## Division of Early Care and Education

The Division of Early Care and Education (DECE) is comprised of five bureaus:

- Bureau of Child Care Subsidy Administration (BCCSA)
- Bureau of Early Care Regulation (BECR)
- Bureau of Operations and Planning (BOP)
- Bureau of YoungStar (BOY)
- Milwaukee Early Care Administration (MECA)

### Division Overview & Administrator's Office

The Division of Early Care and Education Administrator's Office is committed to the vision of increasing access to high-quality, affordable child care for families across the State of Wisconsin. The administration of services that promotes this vision lives within DECE across five bureaus that support programming surrounding child care licensing, quality, subsidy, and program integrity efforts. DECE also supports the visioning and administration of the Preschool Development Grant (PDG), child care subsidy authorization services for Milwaukee County residents, and most recently responsible for creating and administering innovative programs (e.g., Child Care Counts, etc.) in response to COVID-19 pandemic via time-limited funding sources (CRRSA, ARPA Stabilization, etc.).

### Accomplishments

- The department was awarded a Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Renewal, totaling \$30 million over the next three years. The [PDG B-5 Renewal Grant](#) is based on the [strategic plan](#) developed by DCF, the Department of Public Instruction, and other partners and includes feedback and guidance from the department's early care and education stakeholders. The grant is focused on some of the following activities:
  - Attracting and retaining early childhood education professionals
  - Empowering families to make the best choices for their children
  - Building regional networks of support
  - Increasing overall quality of early childhood programs
  - Completion of a Needs Assessment
  - Development of a systemic and sustainable structure
  - [Development of a PDG Birth to Five Statewide Strategic Plan](#)

- COVID-19 Child Care Resources - The Department of Children and Families (DCF) compiled resources to help essential workers, providers, and families navigate the child care landscape during the COVID-19 crisis.
  - Developed the Child Care Counts payment program which provides direct payments to child care providers. This program has supported necessary operational, quality, and workforce expenses for over 4,300 child care providers statewide. Through the Child Care Counts payment programs, over \$626 million in COVID-19 related funds have been distributed, with additional monthly funding rounds continuing through January 2024. DCF developed a [Child Care Counts Payments Dashboard](#) to provide payment data for all funding recipients for each round of the program.
    - As an additional component of the Child Care Counts Program, approximately \$3,450,000 was paid to over 2,400 child care providers as one-time funding to increase program accessibility for children with disabilities or developmental delays.
  - DECE developed a Workforce Retention and Recognition Stipend program and contracted with [Wisconsin Early Childhood Association](#) (WECA) to disseminate Workforce Retention and Recognition stipends using the existing [REWARD](#) Stipend Program system. These stipends were made available through the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) of 2021, and \$10 million in funds are being directed to support child care professionals through the Workforce Retention and Recognition Stipend Program.
  - DECE also developed a Technology Access Program to support quality, access, and affordability in Wisconsin's child care programs by supplying the child care workforce with technology to continue their professional development and grow their businesses.
  - DECE utilized federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to support the cost of child care for approximately 1,200 children who participate in the Department of Health Services' [Birth to 3 Program](#).
  - DCF contracted with WECA to support the development and expansion of the [Wisconsin Early Education Shared Services Network \(WEESSN\)](#). The program brings together family and center-based child care providers to share knowledge, pool resources, and leverage economies of scale in purchasing, allowing programs to save time and money.



- The Provider Assistance for Licensing (PAL) program, funded by ARPA and administered by WECA, supports prospective or newly licensed child care providers in northern and western Wisconsin. PAL assists with costs of start-up and sustainability, connects providers to available services, and increases public awareness of the benefits of licensed child care.
- Over \$20 million in federal funding was allocated to support partnerships between businesses and regulated child care providers through the purchase of child care slots for employees through the [Partner Up!](#) grant program.
- DCF contracted with the Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health (WI-AIMH) to build an infrastructure for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC). Through this contract, WI-AIMH will hire and train mental health consultants and coordinate service requests and referrals for mental health consultation in Wisconsin child care programs.
- DECE has partnered with the Wisconsin Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board (CANPB) to provide funding to Family Resource Centers (FRCs) throughout the state. The funded FRCs provide programming and services designed to strengthen families and build family protective factors, including professional development trainings for child care providers and parent cafes for parents and caregivers.
- 53206 Early Care and Education Initiative
  - The department continues to provide needed financial and professional development supports to the early care and education (ECE) workforce in the 53206 ZIP code to create movement in increasing [YoungStar](#) ratings of child care programs. This program serves over 30 child care programs in Milwaukee County, with a growing number of programs and staff enrolled in this program.
  - The direct services available to 53206 residents who receive Wisconsin Shares are now able to receive funding for their children up to 59 months versus the previous 36 months, due to an age-expansion within the program. This change allows families to ensure the affordability of child care need for 53206 families.

## **Bureau of Operations and Planning**

The Bureau of Operations and Planning (BOP) exercises overall administration of division-wide activities including: IT services; data sourcing, policy and program communications; customer and stakeholder communication/training; contract management and support; and quality assurance functions. The bureau also leads the division in the completion of federal and state reporting requirements.

### **Accomplishments**

- Completion of the FFY 2022-2024 [Child Care Development Fund State Plan](#) for federal approval.

## **Bureau of Early Care Regulation**

The Bureau of Early Care Regulation (BECR) is responsible for the licensing and regulation of child care in Wisconsin. The bureau regulates family and group child care centers and day camps, monitors public school operated child care programs, regulates certified programs in Milwaukee County, and conducts background checks on all licensees, household members, and employees of licensed and certified child care programs. The bureau has a central office, a child care background unit, and five regional licensing offices throughout the state.

### **Accomplishments**

- [2021 Licensing Annual Report](#)
- Updates to rules outlined in DCF 250, DCF251, and DCF 252, which were effective as of March 1, 2023.
- Lead exposure and the clean water needs of Wisconsin's youngest children are public health issues that DCF and the Department of Health Services (DHS) are working in partnership to address for early care and education facilities.
- [Water Infrastructure](#) Improvements for the Nation Act (WIIN) Grant: worked in partnership with the Department of Health Services to address lead exposure and clean water in early care and education facilities. Implemented program to provide child care centers with lead testing and remediation services, such as filter installation and maintenance, replaced lead fixtures, and provided bottled water and clean water filling stations. The program is funded by the Wisconsin Preschool Development Grant and funding from a [Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act \(WIIN\) Grant](#) from the Environmental Protection Agency.
- Launched the Early Childhood Health Consultation program funded by the Wisconsin Preschool Development Grant in collaboration with UW-Madison

School of Human Ecology and School of Medicine and Public Health's  
Department of Pediatrics.

## **Bureau of Child Care Subsidy Administration**

The Bureau of Child Care Subsidy Administration (BCCSA) oversees the statewide implementation of the [Wisconsin Shares](#) program. This program helps low-income families with the cost of child care while they are working or preparing to enter the workforce. Wisconsin Shares is implemented at the local level by 71 counties and 9 tribes. In Milwaukee County, the [Milwaukee Early Care Administration](#) (MECA) provides direct services for child care authorizations, and the Department of Health Services' Milwaukee Enrollment Services (MILES) determines financial and non-financial eligibility. BCCSA includes two sections: Wisconsin Shares Policy and Program Integrity.

The Wisconsin Shares Policy section maintains the accuracy of the [Wisconsin Shares Handbook](#) and remains informed of the Child Care Development Fund and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families regulations, as these are the federal funding sources for the program. The team works with the Wisconsin statutes and administrative codes that regulate the program. The team also staffs the Child Care Help Desk where technical assistance and policy guidance is provided to local agency staff, regional operations staff, child care providers, and families.

The Program Integrity section oversees the audit and investigation of referrals and red flags alleging Wisconsin Shares violations and potential fraud, waste, and abuse of subsidy funds.

### **Accomplishments**

- The Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy program continues to provide monthly payments for approximately 35,000 children and 17,000 families across the state. Additional Wisconsin Shares statistics are available on [DCF's website](#).
- The [2022 Market Rate Survey](#) indicated that 74 percent of the child care slots in the state are considered affordable for families participating in the Wisconsin Shares subsidy program.
- Wisconsin Shares successfully implemented the payment of subsidy benefits on a full-time/part-time basis rather than hourly and began paying provider registration fees on October 1, 2023.

- Program Integrity randomly samples and audits Child Care Counts recipients. Program Integrity have audited 977 child care providers and reviewed a total awarded amount of over \$18 million.
- In SFY 2021-23, Child Care Program Integrity received over 4,200 referrals from red flag reports and the child care fraud mailbox. Program Integrity also established over \$1.6 million in child care provider overpayments over this period.

## **Bureau of YoungStar**

The Bureau of YoungStar (BOY) oversees the department's quality initiatives, most importantly [YoungStar](#), Wisconsin's Quality Rating and Improvement System for Child Care programs. In November of 2021, the Bureau issued the required, regularly scheduled Request for Proposal and in November 2022 the department signed a contract with Shine Early Learning to administer the YoungStar program. Following a transition period between the previous vendor and Shine Early Learning, Shine Early Learning started administering the YoungStar program under the name of YoungStar Connect in the May of 2023.

The Bureau of YoungStar, in partnership with YoungStar Connect, is working to improve the quality of care for Wisconsin's youngest children. The YoungStar program drives quality improvement in child care by:

- Helping child care providers who want to improve the quality of their care.
- Creating financial incentives that encourage providers to deliver better services to children they serve.
- Giving parents meaningful information they need to make informed child care decisions for their children.
- Supporting ongoing child care quality improvement by linking higher quality care to higher subsidy amounts and tiered quality incentive payments.

## **Accomplishments**

- Successful transition to a new vendor to administer the YoungStar program. The transition included listening sessions, in multiple languages, in the division's five regions.
- BOY staff played a significant role in the Division's Child Care Count program. Bureau staff served as the Project co-lead and was heavily involved in the communication, the pay structure and the administration of the program.
- Recruited, hired, and trained bureau staff that focus on infant mental health and Tribal relations

## **Milwaukee Early Care Administration**

On January 1, 2010, the state assumed responsibility for the administration of Milwaukee County's Wisconsin Shares program. Authorization for child care subsidies and certain program integrity activities are provided by the Bureau of Milwaukee Early Care Administration (MECA). The department contracts with the Department of Health Services for basic eligibility determination for Milwaukee County residents applying for Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy assistance. MECA oversees child care authorizations for over 50 percent of the state's Wisconsin Shares population.

### **Accomplishments**

- MECA IT Enhancements were completed to improve systems navigations for all end users of the CSAW system. These enhancements were critical to support parent's accessibility to the DCF online parent portal and ensuring MECA workers, in addition to balance-of-state, could navigate assessments more efficiently while eliminating duplicating efforts and/or extensively time-consuming practices.
- Established virtual services for families requesting child care authorization services. This includes options for a virtual video appointment and phone appointment focused supporting convenience for parents, based on their availability.
- Re-established external outreach efforts, supporting our engagement with local families, community partners, and providing education about MECA and the Wisconsin Shares program, including the process of application/eligibility, authorization and the authorization payment method. These efforts also served to address concerns or questions from local partners/agencies and groups regarding Wisconsin Shares as well.
- Bureau reorganization inclusive of adding two authorization units and aligning teams with a Supervisor, lead, and re-aligning teams. The purpose of the reorganization allowed an improvement to the supervisor to staff ratio for each team supporting balance across units and ensuring adequate support of unit staff person.

## Division of Family and Economic Security

The Division of Family and Economic Security (DFES) is comprised of four bureaus:

- Bureau of Working Families (BWF)
- Bureau of Child Support (BCS)
- Bureau of Refugee Programs (BRP)
- Bureau of Analytics and Research (BAR).

### Bureau of Working Families

The Bureau of Working Families (BWF) is responsible for administering the Wisconsin Works (W-2), Emergency Assistance, and Job Access Loan programs; the Transform Milwaukee Jobs program; the Transitional Jobs program; the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG); Skills Enhancement Program; Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG), Civil Legal Services; Literacy and GED Services programs through the Wisconsin Chapter of the Boys and Girls Club of America; the Homeless Case Management Services (HCMS) grant program; and Pillars.

#### Program: Wisconsin Works

Wisconsin Works (W-2) is Wisconsin's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program for low-income parents. W-2 is a work-based program designed to assist parents with children to prepare for, obtain, and maintain employment. In addition, the W-2 program assists parents with disabilities to apply for either Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) as a means of providing economic stability for their families.

#### Accomplishments

- In calendar year 2021, W-2 participants obtained 6,981 jobs. In calendar year 2022, W-2 participants obtained 6,240 jobs. From January 2023 through September 2023, W-2 participants obtained 3,925 jobs.
- In calendar year 2021, 452 W-2 participants earned a vocational training certificate. In calendar year 2022, 404 W-2 participants earned a vocational training certificate. From January 2023 through June 2023, 340 W-2 participants earned a vocational training certificate.
- From January 2021 to December 2022, the total caseload decreased from 8,563 to 5,829 W-2 participants. From January 2021 to December 2022, the number of paid W-2 participants decreased from 7,215 to 4,673.

- In calendar year 2021, 164 W-2 participants were determined eligible for disability payments (SSI or SSDI). In calendar year 2022, 100 W-2 participants were determined eligible for disability payments. From January 2023 through September 2023, 94 W-2 participants were determined eligible for disability payments.

**Program: Transform Milwaukee Jobs Program**

BWF administers the Transform Milwaukee Jobs (TMJ) program, which is a transitional employment program to assist low-income adults in Milwaukee County who are not eligible for the W-2 program because they are not custodial parents. The goals of the TMJ program are to:

- 1) Transition individuals into stable unsubsidized employment.
- 2) Increase child support payments.
- 3) Support family reunification plans by enhancing parental capabilities and long-term child safety.
- 4) Transition former foster youth into independent living.

**Accomplishments**

- In calendar year 2021, 486 TMJ participants entered subsidized employment through the TMJ program. In calendar year 2022, 483 TMJ participants entered subsidized employment. From January 1, 2023, through June 30, 2023, 246 participants entered subsidized employment.
- In calendar year 2022, 202 TMJ participants successfully obtained unsubsidized jobs. In calendar year 2022, 207 TMJ participants entered unsubsidized employment. From January 2023 through June 30, 2023, 83 TMJ participants found unsubsidized employment.
- Over 288 businesses and organizations participated as program partners and worksites. Number and types of TMJ worksites include:
  - 257 for-profits;
  - 28 non-profits; and,
  - 3 government entities.
- During Calendar year 2022, a Job Transition Stipend was added to assist participants obtaining unsubsidized employment with the transition to work.

### Program: Transitional Jobs Program

BWF administers the Transitional Jobs (TJ) program which is a transitional employment program to assist low-income adults in certain Wisconsin counties who are not eligible for the W-2 program because they are not custodial parents. The goals of the TJ program are the same as the Transform Milwaukee Jobs program, which are listed above.

### Accomplishments

- In calendar year 2021, 125 TJ participants entered subsidized employment through the TJ program. In calendar year 2022, 177 TJ participants entered subsidized employment. From January 2023 through June 2023, 92 TJ participants entered subsidized employment.
- In calendar year 2021, 68 TJ participants successfully obtained unsubsidized jobs. In calendar year 2022, 326 TJ participants entered unsubsidized employment. From January 2023 through September 2023, 203 TJ participants found unsubsidized employment.
- Over 154 businesses and organizations participated as worksites. Number and types of TJ worksites include:
  - 118 for-profits;
  - 31 non-profits; and,
  - 5 government entities.

Three program regions were added in January of 2021. During 2022, a DCF workgroup developed an RFP for the Transitional Jobs contracts, all of which expired June 30, 2023. DCF issued a Request for Proposals in February of 2023 and awarded contracts for six regions, including three new regions, beginning July 1, 2023. In addition, a Job Transition Stipend was added to assist participants with the transition into unsubsidized employment.

### Program: Community Services Block Grant

The purpose of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) is to empower people and communities to overcome the effects of poverty and to support their progress toward greater self-sufficiency. Federal and State statutes mandate that at least 90% of CSBG funds be distributed by formula to 16 Community Action Agencies and two statewide agencies that focus on serving special populations. Each of the agencies is a not-for-profit corporation that provides direct services to low-income individuals, families, and communities within specific geographic areas. Direct services provided by these agencies include employment and training; adult literacy; financial literacy; housing



assistance; small business development; transportation assistance; affordable housing development; parenting and family support; emergency food and clothing; energy assistance; weatherization; and special projects for child and youth development. Each agency conducts a community needs assessment every three years and tailors programming to the specific needs of its service area.

### **Accomplishments**

- In 2020, CSBG agencies served 181,138 low-income individuals in 92,649 families. This included 38,770 children, 18,520 people with disabilities, 14,801 seniors, 1,542 veterans and active military persons, and 18,520 people who lacked health insurance.
- In 2021, CSBG agencies served 225,044 low-income individuals in 104,478 families. This included 44,179 children, 20,722 people with disabilities, 16,776 seniors, 8,803 people who lacked healthcare, and 3,116 veterans and active military persons.
- 2022 data is still under review by the Office of Community Services (OCS) and cannot be reported on at this time, however preliminary data indicates 2022 outcomes surpass the prior years.
- In 2020 and 2021, CSBG agencies helped:
  - 178,910 low-income households with housing insecurity. This includes outcomes such as obtaining and maintaining housing, avoiding eviction or foreclosure, and reducing energy burden.
  - 51,797 in the health and social/behavior development domain. This includes outcomes such as increasing nutrition skills, improving physical or mental health, and living independently.
  - 20,904 outcomes were obtained in the income and asset building domain. This includes outcomes such as maintaining a budget, opening a savings account, increasing assets and net worth, and improving financial well-being.
  - 16,450 individuals reaching their educational goals. This includes outcomes such as improved literacy skills, school readiness and obtaining additional education and diplomas.
  - 4,887 people obtaining and maintaining a job, increasing income, and obtaining benefits.
- CSBG agencies mobilized thousands of volunteers. In 2020 and 2021, these volunteers gave 865,500 hours of their time to assist people in need in their communities.

- CSBG agencies are centrally located to serve their communities and for maximum impact they partnered with 1,063 non-profits, 697 for-profits, 298 faith-based organizations, and 230 school districts.

#### Program: Skills Enhancement Program

The Skills Enhancement Program (SEP) provides General Purpose Revenue grants of approximately \$20,833 per year to 12 Community Action Agencies across the state. Additionally, based on the SFY23-25 biennial budget that was passed on July 5, 2023, an additional \$500,000 of TANF funds each year has been provided to the program (this funding will not automatically renew in the next biennial budget). These funds are to assist low-income, working individuals to obtain the skills needed to compete for living wage jobs. The program assists with tuition, books, and training-related transportation and child care costs that participants could not otherwise afford. To be eligible, individuals must work at least 20 hours per week and have incomes at or below 150% of the federal poverty guidelines. They must pursue training for occupations that pay a living wage and typically offer employer-sponsored health coverage.

#### Accomplishments

- In state fiscal years 2022 and 2023, 282 SEP participants were served statewide. Of 100 participants who exited the program, 71 percent obtained new jobs and increased their wages by an average of \$21,331 per year. Seventy-nine percent of those obtaining new jobs now have access to employer-sponsored health insurance.

#### Program: Jobs for America's Graduates

The Wisconsin Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) program supports keeping Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) eligible at-risk youth in school through graduation and to provide supportive services to assist participants with transitioning to work, military, and/or post-secondary education. Forward Service Corporation (FSC) administers the program and must follow the National JAG Model Components and their associated standards to each contracted school which include mastering 37 Core Employability Skills Competencies delivered in the classroom; remediation assistance to meet graduation requirements and address learning loss; promote student leadership through the JAG Career Association; support students in overcoming challenges outside of the classroom; assist students in securing part-time employment while in school; and provide 12 months of follow-up services to ensure college and employment success. The JAG program has a total one million dollars of TANF funds to be spent annually.

## Accomplishments

- In the first half of state fiscal year 2023 (SFY2022 didn't have this data), there were 256 youth served and total 56 employers engaged.
- In the second half of state fiscal year 2023, there were 235 youth served and a 100 percent graduation rate amongst all Wisconsin JAG participants.
- Sixty-nine percent of graduates are in training or post-secondary education.
- The average JAG graduates hourly wage increased to \$2.20 above their previous hourly wage upon graduation.
- JAG had a total of 45 employers engaged.

### Program: Civil Legal Services

The 2021-2023 biennial budget allocated \$1 million in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds for grants to support civil legal services for low-income individuals and families, with a special focus on victims of domestic violence and sexual assault (DVSA). In state fiscal years 2022 and 2023, 11 legal service providers and domestic violence shelters that are partnering with legal service providers received grants ranging from \$15,000 to \$50,000. The Wisconsin Trust Account Foundation (WisTAF) acted as the lead agency to administer these grants.

## Accomplishments

- In 2022-2023, DVSA grantees reported that they helped 1,288 low-income domestic abuse and sexual assaulted survivors. The most common areas of law where civil legal services were provided in this program are family law, guardianship, public benefit, and health. DVSA helped clients receive or recover more than \$2.2 million as a result of legal services provided through this program.
- In state fiscal years 2022 and 2023, the grantees provided civil legal services ranging from limited advice to representation in civil litigations to 1,644 low-income domestic abuse and sexual assault survivors in 60 Wisconsin counties.
- The outcomes of each case not only affect the individuals receiving legal help, but they also affect the Wisconsin court system, which runs more effectively and efficiently when legal professionals are available to expedite cases. They affect local resources such as homeless shelters and police and rescue personnel, by removing people from dangerous situations and providing the legal help they need to become independent. They affect local economies, allowing employees

who had previously missed workdays due to abuse to keep regular work schedules, benefiting the employer as well as the employee.

#### Program: Literacy and GED Services

The 2022-2023 biennial budget allocated \$718,800.00 in TANF funds to support literacy and General Education Development (GED)/High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED) services for low-income adults. DCF contracted with Wisconsin Literacy, Inc., a statewide member organization for literacy and GED services providers, which distributed the funds to 14 literacy service providers and 23 GED service providers throughout the state. The program's main impact has been to connect GED and literacy services providers with W-2 agencies to encourage referrals for W-2 participants and other TANF-eligible adults to education services that will increase their employability.

#### Accomplishments

- In 2022, on average at any given time 1,485 people were receiving GED/HSED instruction. A total of 571 participants earned their GED/HSED as a result of this instruction.
- In 2023, the average of people receiving GED/HSED instruction increased to 1,626 with their being a total of 579 people earning their GED/HSED.
- In 2022, there were an average of 307 people receiving Literacy Instruction, with 178 of them making literacy gains, which is defined by improving their reading skills by one or more grade levels. In 2023, an average of 278 people received literacy services with a total of 138 people making literacy gains.

#### Program: Boys and Girls Club of America

The 2021-2022 biennial budget allocated \$2,807,000.00 in TANF funds annually to the Wisconsin Chapter of the Boys and Girls Club of America. This included an additional \$132,000.00 increase from previous budgets to assist with expansion of the to expand the BE GREAT: Graduate program to Boys and Girls Clubs in Wausau and Sheboygan. Funds provided to the Boys and Girls Clubs support programs that improve social, academic, and employment skills of youth. Funding was provided to the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Fox Valley who acted as the fiscal agent and provided funding to other clubs throughout Wisconsin. The grants included funds to operate the Be GREAT: Graduate program in 19 locations, and the Wisconsin After 3 program in 32 locations. The Be GREAT: Graduate program is a comprehensive, targeted dropout prevention intervention designed to enhance youth's engagement with learning by providing consistent support to develop the academic, emotional, and social skills necessary to

achieve academic success. Wisconsin After 3 focuses on improving fluency in reading, math, and career preparation.

### **Accomplishments**

- Annually, 718 unduplicated TANF-eligible students were served in the Be GREAT: Graduate program and over 3,605 unduplicated TANF-eligible students were served in the Wisconsin After 3 program.
- Boys and Girls Clubs utilizes a variety of tools and strategies to reach their goals and adjusts programs periodically to maximize effectiveness. In 2021, the Stride Online Academy phased out, and was replaced by the NBA Math Hoops program to help improve participant outcomes.

### **Program: Homeless Case Management Services Grant**

The Homeless Case Management Services (HCMS) grant program was created through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant program and through Wisconsin Act 59 (statute §16.3085). As such, all funding provided via the grant is subject to TANF rules and regulations. The grant centers on providing families experiencing homelessness intensive case management services across four focus areas: financial management, employment, ensuring school continuation for children, and enrolling unemployed or underemployed parents in W-2 or the Food Share employment and training program (FSET).

### **Accomplishments**

- In SFY 2022, HCMS served 1,543 households and a total of 3,990 individuals of which 2,989 were children. The following number of individuals were referred to or enrolled in the following:
  - 517 – Wisconsin Works
  - 338 - Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy
  - 404 – FSET
  - 59 – Department of Vocational Rehabilitation
  - 1,267 – other employment or training programs.
- There were 273 individuals that gained employment that were previously unemployed and 398 individuals that increased the number of hours worked per week.
- Of the 2,989 children served, 1,691 received services to ensure continuation of school enrollment or to promote regular school attendance.

- In SFY 2023, HCMS served 641 households and a total of 1,694 individuals of which 957 were children. The following number of individuals were referred to or enrolled in the following:
  - 115 – Wisconsin Works
  - 62 – Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy
  - 82 – FSET
  - 24 – Department of Vocational Rehabilitation
  - 538 – other employment or training programs.
- Of the 957 children served, 653 received services to ensure continuation of school enrollment or to promote regular school attendance.

#### Program: Pillars

Pillars provides shelter, support, and solutions to address housing needs in Outagamie, Winnebago and Calumet counties through emergency shelter funding provided by the department (statute §49.139). Pillars meets needs all along the housing continuum by providing services related to health, employment, education, housing resources, and a place of welcome and respite.

#### Accomplishments

- From October 1, 2020, through September 30, 2021, Pillars served a total of 634 clients – 483 adults and 151 children. They provided 23,412 nights of sleep. From October 1, 2021, through September 30, 2022, Pillars served 534 clients – 412 adults and 122 children. They provided 24,735 nights of sleep.
- Their diversion/prevention program, which finds creative solutions and provides case management and financial assistance to keep individuals and families in their homes, served some 52 households, including 67 adults and 71 children, last month. This program succeeds more than 90% of the time in avoiding shelter stays for households served.

#### Program: Wisconsin Community Services, Inc.

Wisconsin Statute §49.175(1)(w) grants a payment of \$400,000 each fiscal year to Wisconsin Community Services for the community building workshop, and the planning and implementation of a capacity building initiative.

Community Building is an intense interpersonal group process and experience that promotes social and emotional learning and improves or builds on the core competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship building, and responsible decision-making skills in participants. The Community

Building Workshop (CBW), as developed by M. Scott Peck, M.D. and offered by the nonprofit Community Building Institute (CBI), is a three-day, small group process that teaches communication skills. The process is highly experiential and designed to create an atmosphere of unusual safety for participants to work "below the surface" and experience a deep emotional connection with one another.

The larger goals of the Community Building Milwaukee (CBM) initiative are to: increase engagement of fathers in the lives of their families; reduce risk for youth who are aging out of the foster care system; reduce the number of youth and adults being incarcerated; reduce violence amongst youth; reduce rates of adult and youth recidivism; increase employment in targeted populations; reduce costs of incarceration; and increase trust, coordination and cooperation between local programs and agencies.

### **Accomplishments**

- In 2021, WCS Community Building Milwaukee (CBM) provided online Community Building Skills Trainings (CBSTs) to W-2, TANF and other priority groups such as reentry and group home participants. The one and three-day online CBST is based on the original three-day in-person Community Building Workshop (CBW) format and was created due to the Covid crisis. A three day online public CBST was conducted in collaboration with Dimitri Topitzes, Ph.D., and his Community Building and Mindfulness Class at UW-Milwaukee's Helen Bader School of Social Welfare. This workshop also resulted in several new CBW/CBST facilitator candidates.
- In 2021, WCS conducted four public community building workshops, held 21 facilitator workshops, integrated CBW into five new programs, and engaged three school districts in Milwaukee County.
- In 2022, WCS expanded the network of certified facilitators to 132, and conducted two Public Community Building workshops, held 15 facilitator workshops, held one 5-day facilitator training intensive, and offered two facilitator- in-training sessions.

### **Other: Modernizing Automated Systems**

As part of administering work programs and services, BWF works independently and in partnership with other state agencies to develop and enhance complex automated systems, including the CARES Worker Web (CWW) eligibility system, the ACCESS public facing web portal to apply for benefits and manage program participation, the Benefit Recovery Investigation Tracking System (BRITS), and the Wisconsin Work Programs (WWP) case management system.



During this biennium, BWF focused its systems work on 1) financial and case management services to support family hardship brought on by COVID; 2) increased access to public facing tools so individuals and families can easily apply for our programs and access information about their participation; 3) W-2 eligibility changes resulting from amendments to state statute; and 4) new case management tools for certain W-2 immigrant families.

## **Accomplishments**

- 2015 Wisconsin Act 55 reduced the W-2 state lifetime limit from 60 to 48 months and amended statutory language surrounding availability of extensions to conform to federal law. The W-2 time limit functionality in WWP was rebuilt to support this statutory change.
- To support families experiencing crises resulting from domestic violence compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, DCF created the Living Independently through Financial Empowerment (LIFE) program. The application process for the LIFE program was completed by processing a Request for Assistance in the WWP system. Approved applicants received \$3,500 over three consecutive months. Payments were automated and sent through the State of Wisconsin STAR system.
- The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) awarded funding to the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) to develop and implement a sustainable approach to enhancing existing W-2 programs and services to meet the unmet needs of eligible participants and their families, who are Refugees, Asylees, Victims of Trafficking, Cuban and Haitian Entrants, and certain Amerasians from Vietnam. To support this program, new functionality was added to the WWP, allowing workers to document the enrollment and foundational case management activities/services provided to WFTCP participants.
- Through a phased approach, BWF continues to work with our partner agencies to replace the Benefit Recovery subsystem of CARES mainframe with new functionality in the BRITS system. BRITS is the web-based system for the creation and tracking of public assistance overpayment and fraud investigation referrals for Wisconsin Works (W-2), Child Care, BadgerCare Plus, Medicaid, and FoodShare. In December 2021, enhancements were implemented including improvements to workload performance, the addition of mass assignment/reassignment functions, workload action item indicators and priority indicators.



- In recent years, BWF has made multiple automation enhancements to support the Emergency Assistance (EA) program, its applicants, and agency workers. During this biennium, functionality was added to give applicants the ability to complete a full EA application in ACCESS and give workers an EA ACCESS inbox to identify and process the EA ACCESS applications. When processed from the EA ACCESS Inbox page, most fields that applicants complete in ACCESS auto-populate into WWP from the ACCESS application.
- In June 2023, the first phase of the new electronic signature (E-Signature) functionality was implemented in WWP and ACCESS. With this enhancement, workers can request that a W-2 participant review and sign their employability plan electronically. Participants are directed to their ACCESS accounts to complete the e-signature. Future phases are planned to support participants' ability to electronically sign other types of work program documents.

## **Bureau of Child Support**

The Bureau of Child Support (BCS) operates under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act and administers the state's child support program in collaboration with 71 county child support agencies. In addition, BCS supports the work of nine tribal child support agencies operating in Wisconsin.

The child support program operates within a complex system of legal procedures to establish paternity and obligations for support and collect payments for these obligations. It delivers services to families on more than 508,761 cases<sup>1</sup> statewide and processing almost \$1 billion in child support and spousal support payments annually.

### **Program: Child Support**

BCS provides policy guidance and financial assistance to county child support agencies, which help custodial parents obtain court orders for financial and medical support for their children. Specifically, the program provides several types of services, including:

- Locating noncustodial parents;
- Establishing paternity;
- Establishing child support orders;
- Reviewing and modifying child support orders
- Collecting and distributing child support payments; and,
- Establishing and enforcing medical support.

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<sup>1</sup> Of the 508,761 cases, 171,438 of them receive payment processing-only services, amounting to over \$232 million in child support and spousal support payments annually.

Families may request these services on their own, or if they receive public assistance, they are referred to the child support program. County child support agencies accept the requests and referrals in KIDS, an automated computer system maintained by BCS, to manage their caseloads and interface with parent location resources.

Paternity and child support orders are established through the county courts. Effective tools for enforcing child support obligations are income withholding orders and intercepting federal and state income tax refunds.

BCS oversees the Support Collections Trust Fund (SCTF), which receipts electronic funds transfer files and paper checks and prepares payments for disbursement. Most disbursements are electronic and primarily loaded to debit cards issued to the custodial parents, and some by direct deposit to the custodial parent's bank account.

### **Accomplishments**

- Nationally, Wisconsin is ranked 4th in current child support collected for federal fiscal year (FFY) 2022 and collects 8.9% more in total payments on cases with arrears compared to the national average.
- During FFY 2022, 24,418 child support orders were established.
- During FFY 2022, Wisconsin's child-support collections were \$882,110,046.
- Of the almost \$1 billion annually receipted for child-support cases, most is disbursed to families within two business days.
- In FFY 2022, the national average cost-effectiveness for child-support collections was \$4.71 collected for every dollar spent. Wisconsin's cost-effectiveness, \$5.95 per dollar spent, is better than the national average.

### **State Disbursement Unit**

The number of calls handled by Conduent, the child support state disbursement unit contractor, in CY2022 were 42,000.

The amount of information available to child support customers on their cases continues to increase through improvements to the Child Support Online Services website. The site now receives over 81,000 web visits from child support customers each week.

**Program: Supporting Parents Supporting Kids/Five County Demonstration Project**  
Following Wisconsin's successful completion of the CSPED pilot project – made possible via a \$2.4 million federal grant, titled Supporting Parents Support Kids (SPSK) and implemented in Brown and Kenosha counties from 2012-2018 – the Five County Demonstration Project (FCDP) was launched in April 2019. FCDP is an expansion and

evolution of the CSPED model and was implemented in five Wisconsin counties under the name of ELEVATE (Empowering Lives through Education, Vocational Assessment, Training, and Employment).

- Through SPSK, 1,428 non-custodial parents (NCPs) were recruited in Brown and Kenosha counties. The final CSPED evaluation results showed that a significant culture shift occurred through the duration of the project, which had a positive impact on both the child support agencies (CSAs) and the NCPs' perception of child support. NCPs felt an increased sense of responsibility for their children. Ten-year projections show that the model is likely to have long-term gains in terms of the program's cost-benefit ratio. The evaluation also showed that the barriers to employment and child support compliance faced by NCPs are significant and include incarceration and major or severe depression.
- Wisconsin requested and was granted a Section 1115 waiver from the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE), which enables the state to draw down up to \$2 million in federal participation rates (FFP) to grant to the five counties implementing the project. A project workgroup developed a transparent application process to identify the three new counties that would incorporate ELEVATE into their CSA operations. The new program was launched in April 2019 and new NCP participants have since been enrolled in ELEVATE in Brown, Kenosha, Marathon, Racine, and Wood counties beginning in January 2020. To date, 1,400 unique individuals and their associated family systems have been served through the project and 2,366 new employments have been reported by those enrolled in the project.
- The program is again being evaluated by the University of Wisconsin's Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP). In anticipation that the ELEVATE evaluation results from IRP to be released in December 2024 will support broader implementation of the program, all five Wisconsin demonstration counties have expressed an interest in continuing to pursue the objectives of ELEVATE and a willingness to share their gained expertise to aid other Wisconsin counties newly undertaking similar efforts to overcome the challenges of implementation.

#### Program: Children First

The Children First program provides employment services to noncustodial parents to promote the emotional and financial responsibility that noncustodial parents (NCP) have for their children. An NCP who is unemployed or underemployed and is not meeting their child support obligation may be ordered to participate in the program by a

court under an action to create or modify a support order or in a contempt of court proceeding to enforce a child support order.

For calendar year 2022, BCS contracted with 12 counties agencies to operate a CF program in 13 counties. During 2020, courts ordered 1,475 parents owing support to participate in Children First. Of those persons, 753 participants successfully completed the 16- week program and another 310 parents became consistent in making their child support payments.

#### Child Support Modernization (CSM) Project

DCF has a long-term goal of modernizing the child support program and the Kids Information Data System (KIDS), the case and financial management system that supports the program. The KIDS mainframe-based system is more than 25 years old and, during that time, has been enhanced and supplemented with ancillary systems.

The age and architecture of KIDS constrains program performance and limits DCF's ability to maintain and significantly enhance the system. The limitations of the mainframe-based system on DCF's ability to modernize the child support program will only grow more challenging if left unaddressed. To proactively address these limitations and modernize the child support program, DCF initiated the Child Support Modernization (CSM) Project in 2019.

The vision of CSM is to expand the ability of state and partner agencies to provide efficient and quality service to customers while ensuring that children and families receive financial and medical support.

To accomplish this, the child support program will incorporate national best practices, utilize modern technology and business intelligence, and re-engineer its business processes to meet the ongoing needs of the child support program.

The CSM Project is currently in the closeout of its planning phase. The project successfully completed the following goals of the planning phase:

- Identified a cost-effective modernization solution that best meets the child support program's business and technical needs;
- Secured funding for the next phase of the project, which is the design; development, and implementation (DDI) phase;
- Selected a DDI vendor;
- Identified over 7,000 detailed solution requirements; and,
- Continued organizational change management activities to create awareness, desire, and knowledge of the project.

## Accomplishments:

- Successfully branded the new modernized system as “THRIVE”
- Completed a Business Process Re-engineering of all functional areas of child support.
- Completed a Final Detailed Solution Requirements Definition Document and Requirements Traceability Matrix.
- Completed a DevOps Proof of Concept.
- Loaded all detailed requirements into the DevOps application.
- Completed all Project Management Templates to prepare for the DDI phase.
- Completed a Planning Phase Project Close Out with planning vendor, Maximus US Services, Inc.
- Developed and issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a modernization Project Management Office.
- Selected Maximus US Services, Inc., as the modernization Project Management Office for the DDI phase.
- Developed and issued an RFP for a modernization Quality and Assurance (QA) vendor.
- Selected CSG Government Solutions as the modernization Project Quality Assurance contractor for the DDI phase.
- Developed and issued an RFP for a modernization DDI vendor.
- Held demonstrations of vendor modernization solutions.
- Selected Conduent State and Local Solutions, Inc. as the DDI contractor.
- Completed an Additional Modernization Planning and Preparation Guide identifying work to be completed prior to the DDI vendor joining project.
- Continued organizational change management to create awareness, desire and knowledge of the project status and goals.

## Other: System Improvements / Upgrades

### *Child Support Online Services*

Enhancements to the Child Support Online Services (CSOS) application continue. In 2023, we added automated address validation. When a participant adds or updates their address, we automatically validate it against U.S. Postal Services addresses. The system asks the user if they really mean what they typed, if they mistype the details.

### *LIFT Wisconsin*

Approximately 70,000 Dane County residents have civil legal problems that cause financial instability and reduce earnings, not quite half of those residents have child support cases. LIFT Wisconsin intends to empower citizens to identify and clear up civil legal problems on their own, or with streamlined help from trusted professionals. The work requested has been submitted by LIFT Wisconsin is for the purpose of supporting the work of their mission by attempting to use public data to help people efficiently resolve civil legal problems, using grant funds to develop software. The LIFT Wisconsin team is attempting to engage several state departments and has resources available to start development.

The final LIFT Wisconsin product will be beneficial for those Dane County Child Support participants (and subsequently, participants outside Dane County) with arrears and other financial obligations tracked by the State of Wisconsin. LIFT Wisconsin's development of the Legal Tune-up application will provide the user with an easy to use cross-services platform to access information and generate court filings.

This project was implemented in September 2023.

### *E-Filing Interface with Wisconsin Court System*

In 2023, DCF completed a multi-year, multi-million dollar interface between wiKIDS and the Wisconsin Courts System, CCAP. This allows child support agency staff to electronically file court documents, saving considerable time by no longer needing to re-enter case information. After initial implementation there have been several enhancements, including the ability to do a mass change of attorney whenever a child support attorney retires or moves on.

### *Bankruptcy Processing and History*

The Bankruptcy Abuse and Prevention Act of 2005 was signed on 4/20/05 becoming Public Law 109-8, which is effective 10/17/05. This law requires additional changes to our current KIDS bankruptcy processing because the system is inadequate and inaccurate. Despite the age of the request, it has been confirmed that these changes are still required. There is no automated processing to reset case status and workable status when bankruptcy ends. KIDS cannot maintain a history of bankruptcy episodes.

This project, completed in June 2023, updated the bankruptcy process in KIDS to be automated according to the Bankruptcy Abuse and Prevention Act of 2005.

## **Bureau of Analytics and Research**

The Bureau of Analytics and Research (BAR) was established in Fall 2020 and manages statewide data analytics and reporting on behalf of the Division of Family and Economic Security. BAR provides operational reporting, research, evaluation, and performance monitoring support to the program areas in DFES including, but not limited to, child support, Wisconsin Works (W-2), and refugee programs. Bureau staff coordinate with division and agency counterparts including information technology, performance management, and budget partners, in addition to meeting the needs of local agency partners across Wisconsin.

### **Accomplishments**

- BAR continues its ongoing work to migrate and modernize operational reports in response to case management system releases and enhancements. Specifically, the BAR team has delivered substantive reporting assets in support of the ongoing development of BWF's WWP case management system. BAR also supports the Bureau of Refugee Programs through the automation of their federal reports.
- The team has worked to uncover both racial/ethnic disparity and disproportionality across program areas, including Wisconsin Works and child support. BAR has made significant progress in developing analytics to understand the impact of service delivery across historically marginalized groups.
- BAR led DFES efforts to evaluate the impacts of the TANF provisions included in the Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA) of 2023 and continues to plan for implementation of data and reporting requirements specified in the FRA.
- BAR staff developed a robust data strategy roadmap for the modernized Child Support System, THRIVE. This data strategy roadmap will position the Wisconsin child support program to leverage advanced analytics in their decision making when the new system is fully implemented.
- BAR staff developed a number of interactive data dashboards aimed at supporting decision making within the agency. These dashboards include information about DFES program participants across our state, and also provide resources aimed at identifying economic self-sufficiency standards.

## **Bureau Refugee Programs**

The Bureau of Refugee Programs BRP was established to ensure the provision and coordination of services that help refugees achieve economic self-sufficiency and social adjustment upon their arrival to the U.S. by responsibly administering refugee

programs in partnership with our contractors. Contracted partner agencies provide direct services and supportive resources, including health screenings, English as a Second Language instruction, case management, job development, mental health screening, citizenship classes, cultural orientation, and services for specific subgroups such as older refugees with specific needs. With funding from the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, BRP also administers income support medical assistance programs for refugees for up to 12 months after arrival. The Refugee Cash Assistance program provides cash benefits to refugees who do not qualify for W-2. The Refugee Medical Assistance program provides eligible refugees with a basic level of health care when they do not qualify for Medicaid or BadgerCare Plus.

### Accomplishments

- As of September 15, 2023, the total of 1,418 refugee and Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders arrived in Wisconsin, and they all received new arrival services (cash assistance, health screening and health education services). This does not account for Ukrainian parolees and other ORR eligible individuals who did not arrive through a traditional refugee resettlement model, but rather through private sponsorship and other channels. We estimate that just as many individuals have arrived during this period through the alternative resettlement channels. Below is the breakdown of how many refugees were served by the listed refugee programs in FFY 23. Most people were served by multiple programs.

<b>Program</b>	<b># of People Served</b>
Afghan Immigration-Related Legal Services (AIRLS)	238
Afghan Refugee Health Promotion (ARHP)	373
Afghan Refugee Support Services (ARSS)	210
Afghan Services for Older Refugees (ASOR)	4
Refugee Career Development Services (RCDS)	256
Refugee Health Promotion (RHP)	1,676
Refugee Medical Screening (RMS)	2,374
Refugee Mental Health Initiative (ReMHI)	81
Refugee School Impact (RSI)	817
Refugee Support Services (RSS) - ESL	1,061
Refugee Support Services (RSS) - Other Services	2,333



Refugee Youth Mentoring (RYM)	123
RSS - Employment & Employability (RSS E&E)	1,251
Services to Older Refugees (SOR)	54

## Division of Management Services

The Division of Management Services is comprised of four bureaus and one section:

- Agency Operations Section
- Bureau of Information Technology
- Bureau of Finance
- Bureau of Performance Management
- Bureau of Regional Operations

### Overview/Administrator’s Office

The Division of Management Services (DMS) is responsible for providing department-wide business services and functional support to the Secretary’s Office (SO), individual divisions, and DCF programs. These supportive infrastructure services include, but are not limited to, information technology services and application development, data management, metric development, program evaluation, contract administration and monitoring, payment-issuance and other accounting-related services, and programmatic compliance. Additionally, staff within the DMS Administrator’s Office are responsible for facility management, staff change processes, forms, publications, management of DCF policies, and continuity-of-operations activities.

During the 2021– 2023 reporting period, DMS was responsible for DCF’s hybrid work model, ensuring the stability and sustainability of hybrid work, while ensuring that agency business needs were met. DMS focused on applying DCF’s hybrid workplace policy and agreements into operational decision-making and implementation by adjusting space and technology needs based on hybrid work agreements to ensure continued high quality department services and processes while supporting a hybrid environment.

In 2022, DMS began implementation of a global space strategy to consolidate DCF office space for a functional hybrid workplace that will sustain productivity and agency performance, support staff, demonstrate fiscal responsibility with taxpayer dollars, and provide economic benefits across Wisconsin. DMS also supported DCF’s implementation of an “Anywhere WI” hiring model for positions that could work

primarily remotely, resulting in increased geographic diversity and economic opportunities for communities outside of Madison/Milwaukee.

Other ongoing efforts to operationalize the hybrid work model and refine it through continuous improvement include integrating hybrid work into the DCF culture through resources, training, and communication, ensuring DCF's technology meets the needs of a hybrid workforce, continued measurements and metrics to monitor hybrid work productivity and impact, and continued monitoring of feedback as needed for continuous improvement efforts. All areas in DMS have supported these efforts through IT equipment distribution, space moves and modifications, policy development, and evaluation of cost savings and other metrics.

Additional functional program-support services provided by DMS include leading the department's Continuous Improvement (CI) initiative, managing public assistance collections for both DCF and Department of Health Services programs, providing DCF's regional operations staff liaison services to local governments and program agencies, ongoing program performance evaluation for child protective services in Milwaukee County, and ad-hoc assistance to the SO and divisions on specific program, policy, legislative, and automation initiatives.

## **Bureau of Regional Operations (BRO)**

The Bureau of Regional Operations (BRO) provides support to DCF program divisions by overseeing contracts with local agencies administering DCF programs, including child care, child welfare, child support, and Wisconsin Works (W-2). BRO conducts program monitoring, provides technical assistance, reviews customer complaints about local-agency services, and facilitates regional meetings for local agency staff. BRO monitors compliance by contractor agencies with federal and state civil rights requirements.

### **Accomplishments**

- Completed year three of the 2021-2023 Triennial Monitoring process for child support agencies, including monitoring those on corrective action plans. BRO initiated planning for the next monitoring cycle.
- Implemented the Triennial Child Welfare Onsite Visit pilot monitoring process with counties. BRO also monitored key program performance measure.
- Monitored local child care administrative agencies (counties and tribes), including monitoring corrective action plans. BRO issued updated monitoring instructions for child care.

- Implemented new W-2 monitoring initiative in partnership with the Bureau of Working Families and completed W-2 Agency Performance Assessments for all W-2 agencies in the balance of state.
- Assisted local agencies in all DCF program areas to adapt their services due to the COVID-19 pandemic, modify their programs to deliver services virtually, and protect the health of clients and staff during face-to-face interactions.
- Provided intensive technical assistance and ongoing support to multiple counties through staff changes and acute staffing shortages.

## **Bureau of Finance (BOF)**

The Bureau of Finance (BOF) is responsible for accounting and financial reporting for all funds administered by the department (approximately \$1.5 billion annually). BOF coordinates all DCF expenditures and provides procurement and contract services, collection services for public assistance benefit programs, audit and review services, and financial consultation for the program divisions in order to promote fiscally-informed decisions and consistent financial policy and procedures. BOF also reviews and sets payment rates for child-placing agencies, group homes, and residential care centers.

### **Accomplishments**

- Issued 1,800 contracts with grantees and service providers (including local governments, tribes, and both for-profit and non-profit entities).
- The Public Assistance Collections Section recovered over \$30.8 million in overpayments from parents receiving Badger Care Medical Assistance, Wisconsin FoodShare, W-2, or Wisconsin Shares child care benefits, and from Wisconsin Shares providers.
- Completed business requirements and moved into User Acceptance Testing on the second phase of Benefit Recovery Investigation Tracking System (BRITS). This application facilitates the creation and tracking of fraud-investigation referrals for the Badger Care Medical Assistance, Wisconsin FoodShare, Wisconsin Shares, and W-2 programs. Over 33,000 referrals for investigation were created between 2021-2023 and totaling more than 294,000 since BRITS go-live in November 2016. After the implementation of Phase II, the application will also house the receivables of improper overpayment claims.

- Exceeded the governor’s 5% goal for Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) spending for the 13th consecutive year, with 13.6% in the 2021-2022 fiscal year and 14.8% in the 2022-2023 fiscal year.
- Reviewed and responded to 553 single audit reports from partner agencies, and completed 26 fiscal reviews of sub-recipients of federal funds.
- Collected approximately \$1.2 million as a result of audits and reviews (including unallowed profit or excess reserves from regulated non-profit providers, and disallowed costs from any provider type).
- Processed over \$1.5 billion in payments to DCF partners through the SPARC subrecipient reporting and payment system.

## **Bureau of Information Technology Services (BITS)**

The Bureau of Information Technology Services (BITS) is the primary full-service IT provider and strategic partner for the Department of Children and Families (DCF) program areas.

Our goal of providing technical and operational excellence generates solutions that are innovative, reliable, and secure as we keep pace with the Department’s need for advancing technology. The responsibility of enterprise-wide, flexible, and adaptive information technology services and support is met with a commitment to professionalism and continuous improvement. We strive to deliver efficient, strategic technology results by staying abreast of technology trends and maintaining alignment with our business partners.

### **Accomplishments**

BITS completed many major projects and software upgrades to meet business partner objectives, including:

#### *Child Care Systems*

- Developed and deployed Phase 1 of Part Time/Full Time based on updated Federal guidance.
- Enhanced the fingerprinting and background checks for certified providers.
- Continued the Child Care Counts program through the stabilization period post COVID. Continued transparent reporting for this program, in addition to providing data for long-term research.
- Developed additional updates to the provider and parent portals to streamline communication and accessibility.

### *Child Support Systems*

- Began the multi-year effort to modernize the Child Support program and the current automated child support system. Planning steps included federal approvals, procurement, budget, and resource planning.
- CCAP E-Filing Interface was piloted and rolled out statewide by region. Additional enhancements include mass change of attorney and paternity filing.
- Automated the Self-Assessment reporting to proactively assess performance measures with each agency.
- Coordinated with the child support program to support various audits (IRS, SSA, OCSS).

### *Child Welfare Systems*

- Six major eWiSACWIS releases were implemented in September 2021, February 2022, June 2022, October 2022, February 2023, and June 2023.
- Continued modernization of this system, while making updates for the Family First Prevention Services Act and the updated federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System.
- Partnered with DSP on a long-term recommendation for their data platform to build upon their existing data warehouse, including new areas such as youth justice.

### *Work-Program Systems*

- Enhancements to the WWP system for work programs included participant tracking, Wilson Fish updates, program time limits, and electronic signatures.
- Emergency Assistance Phases 1 and 2 were added to WPP, which included real-time data integration with DHS, improved workflows, enhanced Income Eligibility Verification, and improved data quality.
- Federal Reporting Database (FReD) modernization was completed and successfully submitted quarterly files to ACF through the TANF Data Portal.

### *Refugee Program Systems*

- Integrated with a new cloud vendor for case management, including user security and encrypted data exchanges.

### *Benefit Recovery Investigation Tracking System (BRITS)*

- Phase 2 of the BRITS System was restarted and is progressing well after timeline for production roll-out was pushed back due to realized risks.

### *DMS Finance Systems*

- Links between finance applications were established to reduce duplication of data and increase data quality. Also initiated the contract routing redesign to improve and automate workflows.
- Developed the PERFORM data warehouse for tracking supplier compliance.

#### *DCF Wide IT Initiatives*

BITS also completed major technical upgrades and productivity improvements, including:

- Reorganization of the bureau, aligning data and technical needs.
- Created new units to focus on Enterprise & Data Architecture and Security.
- Automated the connections to ingest and maintain the metadata for the DCF data catalog.
- Kicked off a new effort to modernize the IT portfolio to increase project health transparency and communication.
- Developed a security roadmap to proactively strengthen DCF applications and piloted the first web application scan.
- Upgraded and migrated the DCF Virtual Desktops to a newer version and backend storage.
- Implemented the state's new external identity management system, MyWisconsinID, in a new DSP application and to manage access to the KIDS mainframe system.
- Continued to refine hybrid work needs including hardware onboarding, remote device management, and performance needs of collaborative tools such as Zoom or Teams. Completed installing video conferencing units at all DCF office locations.
- Migrated to DOA DET SMARSH texting services.
- Implemented E911 RedSky to meet Ray Baum's Act.
- Relocated staff from the Coggs building and MSOB to the Milwaukee 26<sup>th</sup> Street location.
- Initiated the server Windows 2012 update.

### **Bureau of Performance Management (BPM)**

The Bureau of Performance Management (BPM) provides objective analysis of program and policy effectiveness and efficiency in support of the department's mission and vision. BPM staff support the development of performance metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs), and sponsor forums for DCF's staff and management to support data-driven solutions. BPM is responsible for growing the department's performance management maturity and integrating performance management at all

levels of the department. At a staff-level, BPM has engaged the department's contract administrators, helping ensure contracts are developed and monitored with performance outcomes in mind. To support program improvement and efficiency, BPM leads the department's Continuous Improvement (CI) initiative, working closely with DOA's CI program, and supporting DCF's CI coordinators. Additionally, significant effort is placed on improving child welfare practice through quality reviews, and through supporting the management of the Jeanine B. Settlement Agreement in Milwaukee County, which was dismissed in September 2021.

### **Accomplishments**

- In collaboration with the Secretary's Office, BPM developed the Wage Analysis of Government Employees (WAGE) dashboard tool which helps make data-driven decisions regarding equity and compensation. The launch of this tool, and collection of data, prompted the creation of a meaningful human resources' metric related to compensation, which BPM developed and maintains.
- Completed over 600 child welfare case reviews and produced publicly available dashboards which visualize the findings. These dashboards continue to be valuable for Wisconsin counties to better understand their performance. Finished pilot of targeted case reviews (TCR) which is an ad-hoc, time-limited, review that focuses on specific practice areas tied to stakeholders' priorities.
- BPM continued its responsibilities related to the independent and objective reporting on Jeanine B. Settlement Agreement measures. All reports were completed timely and with validity. Results were presented publicly, on a semi-annual basis, to the Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services' (DMCPS) Partnership Council. BPM developed the Independent Monitoring Report (IMR) and will continue to report information about the overall functioning of Milwaukee county's child welfare system.
- Solidified and grew the department's Contract Administration Program to support contract administrators in all aspects of their role. This included developing technical solutions, creating training and resources, providing forums for communication and feedback, and targeted technical assistance.
- BPM coordinates and manages the department's data governance program and oversees the coordination of data sharing requests.
- Initiated a department strategic planning tool to assist program areas develop strategic plans. Piloted the tools and facilitated the development of a Division of Management Services strategic plan as well as a Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services strategic plan.
- In collaboration with the Division of Early Care and Education (DECE), assisted with several research projects, including True Cost of Care; Licensing Equity

Phase 1 and 2; Child Care Counts; Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Implementation Research; 53206 Governor's Initiative; Family Engagement Framework; Child Care Partnership Grant; Wisconsin Shares; and Needs Assessment. Additional collaboration with DECE on Preschool Development Grant (PDG) projects such as Caregivers Survey; Suspension and Expulsion Reduction Phase 1; Child Care Access; PartnerUp!; DreamUp!; Risk and Reach; and the Birth – Five needs assessment.

- Completed the 2021 CRC Census Dashboard project including research and the dashboard development.

## **Division of Safety and Permanence**

The Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) directs the administration of relevant child welfare (including child protective services and community-based youth justice (YJ)) systems and monitors compliance with key state and federal policies and legislation. The division establishes a mission and vision for the child welfare system and oversees initiatives focused on improving safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children. The vision for the youth justice system is to serve each youth, individually, within the context of their family and culture, to acquire the tools to thrive in adulthood, while protecting public safety. DSP also operates domestic violence services; the kinship care benefit program; adoption services including finalization of public adoptions, adoption assistance benefits, and adoption search; and licensing of child welfare service providers.

### **DSP Administrator's Office**

The Administrator's Office (AO) oversees the operations of the division and directly administers high priority policies and programs that are cross-cutting across multiple DSP bureaus, DCF divisions and/or state agencies.

## **Accomplishments**

- Launched a collaborative strategic planning effort that led to our child welfare transformation initiative. That effort helped us create the following future framework for our child welfare system:

*Vision: All Wisconsin children are safe and loved members of thriving families and communities.*

- The Wisconsin child welfare system will strengthen all Wisconsin families to support their children because children belong with their families.



- We then focused our child welfare transformation efforts on the following four key priority areas:
  - To strengthen local communities and build services to support families in their homes.
  - To keep children in family settings whenever possible.
  - To support our workforce with solutions and improvements
- The strategic transformation has been driven in part by the Family First Prevention and Services Act (FFPSA) as a tool to transform our child welfare system. Wisconsin's Five-year Prevention Plan was approved to the Children's Bureau as part of Wisconsin's FFPSA requirements. The plan calls to support a constellation of existing support services to Wisconsin's families and will focus on three of Wisconsin's home visiting program evidence-based models, the Nurse Family Partnership, Healthy Families America, and Parents as Teachers.
- DSP launched several projects to support the development and implementation of the above priorities as part of the division's efforts to Put Families First. Leadership and support were provided to DSP bureaus to achieve goals related to Putting Families First.
- The division successfully negotiated a Program Improvement Plan in response to the 2018 Child and Family Services Review process that concluded in 2018. A PIP was negotiated in 2020 that articulates child welfare initiatives focused on improving safety, permanency and well-being outcomes for children and families. First year deliverables of the PIP have been successfully completed. The PIP time frame ended on May 31, 2022. The division continues to work with federal partners regarding data and performance.
- To embrace and accelerate this transformation, stakeholders must understand the why, what, and how of Family First. DCF created a Putting Families First Playbook as a resource for agency directors and managers that was created and reviewed in collaboration with stakeholders. The goals of the playbook are to generate conversation and buy-in across the state, leverage and grow local partnerships, and help system partners better understand Wisconsin's child welfare system.
- In 2022, The division held a Kinship Consultation with the 11 federally-recognized tribes in which several key priorities regarding supporting families and like-kin were discussed. An action plan to support this ongoing partnership was created, and DSP launched the Kinship Coordinator Quarterly Meeting to ensure a regular forum with tribal partners for discussing this key practice area.

- DSP partnered with the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS) to enhance training for new child welfare professionals. The new workforce training is called WiLearn. At the end of WiLearn, new professionals will acquire the foundational knowledge and skills at a basic level to assume job responsibilities. Implementation of WiLearn began on January 1, 2023.
- DSP hired a Lived Experience Coordinator to elevate and leverage the voice of lived experience in all child welfare work more consistently and systematically. This position has enabled DCF to launch the Child Welfare Parent Leaders Stakeholders Group, in conjunction with the Office of Children’s Mental Health. In addition to the Youth Advisory Council and Relative Caregiver Stakeholder group, this group of leaders with child welfare experience, meets frequently and informs a variety of system-wide change efforts. In 2023, DSP held its first Lived Experience Summit, which brought together lived experience voices from various areas.

## **Bureau of Youth Services**

The Bureau of Youth Services (BYS) is responsible for improving outcomes for youth in, previously involved in, and at risk of entering the child welfare and youth justice systems. These responsibilities include administering the federal Independent Living program for youth aging out of out-of-home care, the state Runaway and Homeless Youth and Brighter Futures programs, and programs serving youth who have experienced child sex trafficking. In 2016, the bureau became responsible for state supervision and fiscal administration of the community-based youth justice system. This includes state supervision of the counties direct service work for youth on delinquency orders, and development of state infrastructure related to the community-based youth justice system.

The purpose of all programs under the direction of BYS is to enable youth to thrive in adulthood.

### **Accomplishments**

- In response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, expanded funding for independent living services for youth who have aged out of foster care, including the provision of direct financial support to youth for the first time.
- Implemented the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI), a risk/need assessment tool. Phases 1, 2, and 3 were completed in the 2019-21 biennium, with Phase 4 completed in FY 2021-22.

- In 2021, Wisconsin expanded PATHS to provide distinct funding for one program in northcentral Wisconsin and one program in southern Wisconsin (Milwaukee). PATHS is a comprehensive housing-first program model serving youth transitioning from foster care who are at imminent risk of homelessness or currently homeless. In 2023, DCF received \$800,000 in state American Rescue Plan Act funding to continue the work supported previously by Division X funding within the PATHS programs.
- In 2022, Wisconsin began offering regional RHY programs \$25,000 in state anti-human trafficking funding annually to acknowledge and address the clear overlap in populations.
- DCF received \$2 million in state American Rescue Plan Act funding beginning in 2022 to support state runaway and homeless youth programs, and the increased needs of youth during and after the public health emergency.
- Continued development of the first statewide youth justice data system, including issuance annual public-facing reports on referrals to youth justice across the state and additional data tools for county youth justice professionals.

## **Bureau of Safety and Well-Being**

The Bureau of Safety and Well Being develops and issues child protective services (CPS) policy standards and practice guidance. The bureau supports several child abuse/neglect prevention programs and interventions for families at risk of entering the child welfare system and the development of cross-system supports and service approaches, such as those related to trauma-informed care, that benefit children and youth who are in or at risk of becoming involved in the child welfare system. The bureau also manages family violence prevention and intervention programs and oversees child welfare staff and provider professional development activities.

### **Accomplishments**

- Continued expansion of the Family Foundations Home Visiting program, which now serves 40 counties and six tribes as of July 2021. Programs provide evidence-based home visiting services to improve maternal and child health, prevent child abuse and neglect, encourage positive parenting, and promote child development and school readiness.
- Continued implementation and adaptation of the [Targeted Safety Services](#) funding (formerly In-Home Safety Services) that began in 2017 and in 2018 through expansion statewide. This effort helps keep children in families that have been reported to the child welfare system safe in their homes through

comprehensive support and services. DSP continues to explore expanding the program to support relatives and youth justice populations.

- Implemented a new Parent Partner model called [Parents Supporting Parents](#) (PSP) in three counties in January 2021. The program is an evidence-based model aimed at empowering parents with lived child welfare experience as mentors to parents currently within the child welfare system. PSP follows Iowa's parent partner model, and Wisconsin is the third state to implement and evaluate this model. PSP cultivates the leadership of Wisconsin's parents who have lived experience in the child welfare system. This group of parents serves as a model of hope and sources of support for parents currently experiencing public child welfare. It is parents with lived experience that will help to shape services and systems to promote child safety, permanency, and family well-being.
- Continued efforts to revise the safety decision-making process so it is easier for families to understand and for CPS professionals to implement, and so it increases equity and reduces disparities.
- Began efforts to streamline workforce responsibilities through the Initial Assessment Improvement Project, with the intent to clarify and streamline eWiSACWIS responsibilities and implement ways to center family voice.

## **Bureau of Permanence and Out-of-Home Care**

The Bureau of Permanence and Out-of-Home Care is responsible for administering the state public-adoption program; providing policy guidance to counties on foster care, kinship care, and other out-of-home-care placements; and licensing and monitoring group homes, residential care centers for children and youth, child-placing agencies, and shelter care facilities for children and youth. It also administers the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC), which regulates the safe placement of children across state lines. Programs promote the health, safety, and well-being of children and families in the child welfare system and achieve permanence for children placed in out-of-home care.

### **Accomplishments**

- Successfully implemented the out-of-home care components of FFPSA, including qualified residential treatment programs (QRTP), by October 1, 2021.
- Continued efforts to support quality in out-of-home care, while partnering with the provider community and child welfare agencies related to supporting children and youth with high acuity in out-of-home care.

- Continued resource support to allow for an additional five staff to focus specifically on strategic priorities across the division. The group is supporting significant reform in kinship care and like-kin resources as well as supporting and planning for changes to improve Wisconsin's safety and initial assessment practice.
- Restructured existing stakeholder groups to improve communication with key stakeholders, provide additional opportunities for technical assistance, and communicate easily key division and bureau priorities.
- Developed the Kin-First and Statewide Permanency Collaborative, in which the bureau regularly holds conversations about evidence-based, innovative programming approaches with child welfare professionals and stakeholders so stakeholders can shift their practice and provide feedback to DSP.
- In response to stakeholder feedback, began preparing for multiple rule revisions processes to better align kinship, foster care and group home rule with changing practice landscape.
- Began formal process for Foster Care Program Rule Revision, with the intent to make it easier for relatives and like-kin to become licensed placement providers so children can remain with those they know and love. This will include defining and implementing revisions to foster care licensing standards.
- Partnered with the Children's Court Improvement Project to specify court order language so orders are clear to families and address unique family needs. Developed training curriculum and best-practice techniques and began training implementation with child welfare and youth justice professionals, legal partners and court officials.

### **Bureau of Compliance and Research Analytics**

The Bureau of Compliance, Research, & Analytics (BCRA) manages statewide child welfare data analytics and reporting, Title IV-E program and policy, and DSP's fiscal and budget compliance. In addition, bureau staff consult and coordinate with budget, finance, information technology, and the Bureau of Performance Management as needed and work with county, tribal and private agencies involved in the delivery of child welfare services. The bureau also has oversight and management of the data analytics and program integrity of DSP programs and policies related to child welfare and youth justice, to ensure compliance with federal Title IV-E and IV-B requirements, state fiscal and budget compliance, and the overall evaluation of child welfare operations and programs in Wisconsin.

## **Accomplishments**

- Continuing efforts to develop, refine, and publish the annual Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN Report) and Out-of-Home Care (OHC) Reports. These two public-facing reports are published at the end of December of each calendar year for the prior year and contain a wealth of information. Links to these reports can be found on our Child Welfare Reports & Dashboards page.
- The team has worked to broaden and deepen the understanding of race and other demographic data, made significant efforts to enhance the way race/ethnicity are categorized and analyzed, and developed in-depth analytics to evaluate disproportionality across the child welfare system.
- In 2022, BCRA launched the Putting Families First dashboard which makes in-home, placement trend and racial disparity data publicly available.
- The Title IV-E team has been continuing their efforts in support of the strategic plan and implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). The team has continued to provide policy guidance and support in the areas of new worker training development, FFPSA prevention services, FFPSA congregate care requirements, rate regulation, and any/all IV-E related eWiSACWIS enhancements. The team has also continued to focus on ways to maximize funding to support initiatives and programs that improve child welfare programs and services in Wisconsin.
- Developed and submitted the CCWIS Data Quality Plan (DQP) and supplemental Biennial Data Quality Review (DQR) to the federal Administration for Children and Families. The DQP provides a single consistent document that identifies the quality, management, and governance structuring that supports the integrity of the eWiSACWIS system.

## **Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services**

The Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS) responds to reports of abuse or neglect in Milwaukee County. Referrals of abuse and neglect come into the Access Section through 414-220-SAFE. The Access Section is responsible for receiving and documenting the child abuse and neglect reports. The Access supervisor decides based upon the information provided in the Access document whether the case should be screened in and forwarded to the Initial Assessment Bureau (IAB).

The assigned initial assessment specialist (IAS) conducts a comprehensive assessment in compliance with the Wisconsin Initial Assessment Standards. The IAS engages the child and family and works to keep the child(ren) in their home safely, whenever possible. Where safety issues are present, or when a family is at risk of future CPS involvement, an IAS may assist the family with getting referred to or enrolled in home services intended to prevent the removal of children from the home.

If the IAS determines a child is not able to be maintained safely in their own home, the child will be removed from parental custody, placed with another protective caregiver including a relative or licensed foster parent, and a petition for protective services will likely be filed. In that event, a family will be referred to one of the two contracted ongoing services agencies for case management and service provision to assist them with resolving outstanding safety concerns and reunifying the child.

The Ongoing Services Section provides oversight and consultation to the contracted ongoing services agencies to ensure compliance with state policy. The Ongoing Services Section is involved monitoring and evaluating performance of the contract agencies. In addition, the Ongoing Services Section provides oversight and consultation for the DMCPs contracted out-of-home care providers which include assessment/stabilization centers, group homes, residential care centers and child placing agencies.

The Medical/Behavioral Health Services Section consults with internal and external partners to bring best practices to bear in all cases where there is a health alert. The section provides medical expertise to DMCPs IAS staff and ongoing services case managers in cases where there are identified medical concerns.

The Professional Development Section provides new hires in the Initial Assessment Bureau and Access Section with the requisite training and knowledge to equip them to perform their job duties. The intensive training is accomplished over approximately five months. The trainees engage in "shadowing" the training mentor as well as senior Initial Assessment Bureau staff as well as a formal statewide training curriculum. The Quality Operations Bureau provides fiscal, research, contracting and administrative oversight to DMCPs. The bureau provides valuable fiscal and case trend data as well as sophisticated analysis of many aspects of our work.

### **Accomplishments**

- DMCPs has continued to implement practices which complement the principles underlying the Family First Prevention Services Act by prioritizing the placement of children who can't be safely maintained in home with their relatives. More than

40% of children who are removed from parental custody are placed with a relative.

- Despite referral numbers increasing to near pre-pandemic levels, staff continue to prioritize seeing children who are the subject of referrals quickly and closing cases timely.
- More than 80% of children who are placed in out-of-home care are placed in family settings. DMCPS has partnered with Casey Family Programs to reduce its use of group care. Over the past 2 years, there has been a 15% reduction in the number of youth who are placed in group homes or residential care. There has also been a reduction in the number of youth who are placed out-of-state for residential care.
- DMCPS has actively worked to end ineffective service contracts and work to procure more needed services for families. Most recently, it successfully redesigned and procured its contract to provide services to families who need them to care for teens without having to come to child protective services to receive support.
- The number of children in out-of-home care continues to decline and children who are in out-of-home care continue to stay safe overall. Maltreatment in out-of-home care remains below the best practice standard.
- Staffing has improved over the last several years and caseloads are more aligned with national best practice standards.



# Goals & Objectives Developed for 2023-25 Biennial Budget

## Program 1: Children and Family Services

Goal: Achieve permanency for children in out-of-home care.

Objective/Activity: Increase the percentage of children who transition from an out-of-home care placement within 12 months to a permanent family setting.

Goal: Reduce the revictimization of children.

Objective/Activity: Increase the percentage of children with a substantiated report of maltreatment who are not revictimized within 12 months of substantiation.

Goal: Provide timely initial contacts for reports of child maltreatment.

Objective/Activity: Increase the percentage of all initial contact visits during the month that were completed or attempted timely.

Goal: Contact children in out-of-home care on a monthly basis.

Objective/Activity: Increase the percentage of children in out-of-home care who were visited by their caseworker in the month.

Goal: Provide stability for Milwaukee children in out-of-home care.

Objective/Activity: Reduce the number of children who experience episodes of placements in group care settings.

## Program 2: Economic Support

Goal: Participants in the department's employment programs obtain employment.

Objective/Activity: Increase the percentage of individuals served by the department's employment programs who started a job in the past 12 months.

Goal: Engage Wisconsin Works (W-2) participants in employment activities.

Objective/Activity: Increase the percentage of participants receiving a cash grant under the W-2 employment program who are engaged full-time in federally qualifying activities such as work experience, job search, and education and training.

Goal: Increase the quality of child care programs.

Objective/Activity: Increase the percentage of child care programs participating in the state's child care quality rating and improvement system (YoungStar) that are rated as high quality (3-, 4- or 5-star quality level).

Goal: Connect families receiving child care subsidies under the Wisconsin Shares program with high quality child care programs.

Objective/Activity: Increase the percentage of children receiving subsidized child care under Wisconsin Shares who are attending high-quality child care providers (3-, 4- or 5-star quality level as rated by YoungStar).

Goal: Establish child support court orders.

Objective/Activity: Increase the percentage of child support cases with a court order established.

Goal: Increase the payment of current child support.

Objective/Activity: Increase the percentage of child support paid in the month that it is due.

Goal: Increase the payment of past child support.

Objective/Activity: Increase the percentage of child support cases with unpaid debt balances (past child support or arrears) that have a collection during the federal fiscal year.



## Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

To learn more about the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, visit [www.dcf.wisconsin.gov](http://www.dcf.wisconsin.gov) or follow @WisDCF on Twitter and Facebook.