



January 30, 2023

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

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

Dear Assembly Chief Clerk Blazel and Senate Chief Clerk Queensland:

In compliance with 2009 Wisconsin Act 78, the Child Welfare Public Disclosure Act, please accept the Department of Children and Families' 2022 annual report on alleged sexual abuse of children residing in out-of-home care. The data presented below addresses incidents of alleged sexual abuse for the period January 1 through December 31, 2022, and fulfills the Department of Children and Families' reporting requirements under Section 48.981(9)(b) of the Wisconsin Statutes. The data has been updated to reflect new information learned during the preparation of the 2022 annual report relating to incidents that were pending at the time of the release of the quarterly reports for the 2022 calendar year, for example, updating the number of incidents initially reported.

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

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

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

Number of Reported Incidents: 162

Wisconsin child protective services agencies screened in and investigated 162 reported incidents of suspected sexual abuse to 128 children residing in out-of-home care.

Dates of the Incidents:

The 162 reported incidents are estimated to have occurred between July 2010 and December 12, 2022. Because children disclose abuse in different stages, it is common for children to report incidents months or even years after the incident occurred. Furthermore, in cases of alleged abuse involving non-verbal children, dates of alleged maltreatment are often difficult or impossible to determine.

Maltreatment Determinations:

Of the 162 reported incidents, maltreatment determinations were made for 135 (83%) of the reported incidents, while 27 (17%) maltreatment determinations are pending because the investigations are not complete.

Of the 135 reported incidents where the maltreatment determination was made, 109 (81%) were unsubstantiated (i.e., preponderance of the evidence indicating that sexual abuse occurred was not found), 25 (18%) were substantiated, and one (<1%) was unable to be located.

Nature of Maltreater Relationship:

Of the 25 substantiated incidents, the relationships of the maltreaters to the children were as follows:

- A non-caregiver in eight cases
- Other minor maltreaters in seven cases
- Minor maltreaters in the placement setting in three cases
- Employees in a residential facility in two cases
- A relative non-care provider in one case
- An unknown maltreater in one case
- A stranger in one case
- A non-relative foster parent in one case
- An employee at a juvenile correction facility in one case

Nine of the 25 substantiated incidents included allegations of sex trafficking.

Types of Placement:

Of the 25 substantiated incidents, the placement types of the children were as follows:

- A non-relative foster family home in nine incidents
- A group home in five incidents
- A residential care center in three incidents
- Missing from out-of-home care in three incidents
- A non-relative treatment foster care family home in two incidents
- A shelter care facility in one incident
- A court-ordered kinship home in one incident
- A detention facility in one incident

Location of Substantiated Incidents:

Of the 25 substantiated incidents of sexual abuse to children residing in out-of-home care, incidents took place in the following 13 counties:

- Eleven incidents took place in Milwaukee County
- Two incidents took place in Lacrosse County
- Two incidents took place in Winnebago County
- One incident took place in Ashland County
- One incident took place in Burnett County

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- One incident took place in Douglas County
- One incident took place in Eau Claire County
- One incident took place in Grant County
- One incident took place in Green County
- One incident took place in Juneau County
- One incident took place in Marathon County
- One incident took place in Polk County
- One incident took place in Walworth County

Ages or Age Group of Children:

Alleged sexual abuse was reported for children ages 1 to 17 years. Of the 25 substantiated incidents of sexual abuse, there were 3 substantiated incidents for children 7 years and younger and 22 substantiated incidents for children 8 years and older.

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

Sincerely,



Emilie Amundson
Secretary

cc: Governor Tony Evers