



July 28, 2023

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

Michael 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' 2023 second quarter report on alleged sexual abuse of children residing in out-of-home care. The data presented below addresses reports of alleged sexual abuse for the period April 1 through June 30, 2023, and fulfills the Department of Children and Families' reporting requirements under Section 48.981(9)(a), Wis. Stats.

We appreciate the Legislature's interest in Wisconsin's child welfare system and their commitment to supporting DCF, county and tribal child welfare agencies, and the hundreds of non-profit organizations who work to protect Wisconsin children every day. Like you, we are saddened by all cases of child maltreatment and are committed to strengthening families. Wisconsin is fortunate to have dedicated and passionate child welfare professionals 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 [link](#):

*Number of Reported Incidents: 57*

Wisconsin child protective services agencies screened in and investigated 57 reported incidents of suspected sexual abuse to 55 children residing in out-of-home care.

*Dates of the Incidents:*

The 57 reported incidents are estimated to have occurred between December 2020 and June 2023. 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.

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*Maltreatment Determinations:*

Of the 57 reported incidents, maltreatment determinations were made for 23 (40%) of the reported incidents, while 34 (60%) maltreatment determinations are pending because the investigations are not complete.

Of the 23 reported incidents where the maltreatment determination was made, 19 (83%) were unsubstantiated (i.e., preponderance of the evidence indicating that sexual abuse occurred was not found) and four (17%) were substantiated.

*Nature of Maltreater Relationship:*

Of the four substantiated incidents, the relationship of the maltreater to the child was a stranger in two incidents, a non-caregiver in one incident, and a biological parent in one incident. Three of the substantiated incidents included allegations of sex trafficking.

*Types of Placement:*

Of the four substantiated incidents, two incidents occurred while the child was missing from out-of-home care, one incident occurred while the child was placed in a Group Home, and one incident occurred while the child was placed at a relative foster home.

*Location of Substantiated Incidents:*

Of the four substantiated incidents of sexual abuse to children residing in out-of-home care, two occurred in Marathon County, one occurred in Milwaukee County, and one occurred in Washington County.

*Ages or Age Group of Children:*

The alleged sexual abuse was reported and investigated for children 2-17 years of age. The four incidents of sexual abuse were substantiated for three children, one of whom was 5 years old, one of whom was 15-years-old, and one of whom was 17-years-old at the time of maltreatment.

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

Sincerely,



Emilie Amundson  
Secretary

cc: Governor Evers