



January 29, 2024

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

Richard Champagne
Acting Senate Chief Clerk
B20 – Southeast, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Assembly Chief Clerk Blazel and Acting Senate Chief Clerk Champagne:

In compliance with 2009 Wisconsin Act 78, the Child Welfare Public Disclosure Act, please accept the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) 2023, fourth 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 October 1 through December 31, 2023, and fulfills the DCF 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 workers and we want to recognize and express our appreciation for their commitment and compassion as they engage in these very challenging situations with children and families 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: 43

Wisconsin child protective services agencies screened in and investigated 43 reported incidents of suspected sexual abuse to 39 children residing in out-of-home care.

Dates of the Incidents:

The 43 reported incidents are estimated to have occurred between October 2017 and December 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.

Maltreatment Determinations:

Of the 43 reported incidents, maltreatment determinations were made for 13 (30%) of the reported incidents, while 30 (70%) maltreatment determinations are pending because the investigations are not complete.

Of the 13 reported incidents where the maltreatment determination was made, seven (54%) were unsubstantiated (i.e., preponderance of the evidence indicating that sexual abuse occurred was not found), and six (46%) were substantiated.

Nature of Maltreater Relationship:

Of the six substantiated incidents, the relationship of the maltreater to the child was a stranger in two incidents, step parent in one incident, partner/friend sharing dwelling in one incident, other minor maltreater in one incident, and minor maltreater in a placement setting in one incident. Two of the six substantiated incidents included allegations of sex trafficking.

Types of Placement:

Of the six substantiated incidents, one occurred while the child was placed at a residential care facility, one occurred while the child was placed in court-ordered kinship care, one occurred while the child was missing from out-of-home care, one occurred while the child was placed with an unlicensed non-relative home, one occurred while the child was placed with a non-relative foster home, and one occurred while the child was placed in a juvenile correctional facility.

Location of Substantiated Incidents:

Of the six substantiated incidents of sexual abuse to children residing in out-of-home care, two occurred in Milwaukee County, two occurred in Racine County, one occurred in Grant County, and one occurred in Kenosha County.

Ages or Age Group of Children:

The alleged sexual abuse was reported and investigated for children ages 2 to 17 years. The six substantiated incidents of sexual abuse involved six children, ages 6, 9, 11, 13, 15 and 17 years old.

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