

CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

State statute requires all counties, except Milwaukee County, to provide child welfare services and employ personnel who devote all or part of their time to child welfare services. Child welfare services include initial assessment of reports received, investigation, the provision of services to children and families, as well the removal of children from their homes to ensure their safety.

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) distributes Children and Family Aids to counties for services related to child abuse and neglect and to unborn child abuse, including prevention, investigation, and treatment. Funding may also be used for community-based juvenile justice services. Base funding for the Children and Family Aids allocation is \$68,787,492.

States across the nation, including Wisconsin, are seeing an uptick in the number of individuals using, and ultimately becoming addicted to, substances such as heroin, other opiates, and methamphetamines. The drug-addiction epidemic is increasing the need for child welfare services across Wisconsin.

As an example, the number of Child Protective Services (CPS) referrals has increased significantly over the past several years. The following chart lists the number of CPS referrals from 2007 to 2015.

Calendar Year	Number of CPS Referrals
2007	55,895
2008	56,934
2009	56,619
2010	61,763
2011	64,132
2012	70,266
2013	68,943
2014	72,698
2015	76,442

The In-Home Safety Services (IHSS) program provides services to children and families while children are in the home to address safety issues and prevent the need for removal of children into out-of-home care placement.

CURRENT STATUS:

- The Governor's budget increases the Children and Family Aids allocation by \$5 million annually beginning in CY18.
- The Governor's budget also provides additional funding for in-home safety services (IHSS): \$889,800 in FY18 and \$1,921,600 in FY19. With this increased funding, the IHSS program will be expanded to all counties across the state.

REQUESTED ACTION: Support the Governor's budget recommendations.

TALKING POINTS:

- The Governor's Task Force on Opioid Abuse recommends additional state resources for Children and Family Aids to help counties hire the social work staff they need to care for the additional victims of the opioid epidemic – children and family members.
- Excluding increases for the payment of increased foster care rates, counties have not received an increase in the Children and Family Aids allocation since the creation of the Department of Children and Families (and even prior to that). The Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services receives annual increases.
- The number of child welfare referrals has increased by 36.8% from 2007-2015.
- It is imperative that counties have sufficient resources to keep children safe in our communities.
- The number of children in out-of-home care (excluding Milwaukee County) has increased by 8% from 2011-2015. Prior to 2011, the number of children in out-of-home placements was decreasing.
- Counties continue to look for ways to keep families safe and together while avoiding costly out-of-home placements.
- Excluding Milwaukee County, the number of screened-in CPS reports has increased on an annual basis – a 9% increase from 2011-2015.
- Counties have seen an increasing number of Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) petitions filed statewide – from 4,392 in 2012 to 4,942 in 2015. A number of counties, by July 2016, had already exceeded their total number of 2015 CHIPS petitions.
- The workload of county child welfare caseworkers has been increasing with the increase in CPS referrals.
- Parental substance abuse cases in the child welfare system are complex and require intensive case management.
- The stress of increased workloads is taking its toll on child welfare workers. Experienced child welfare workers are leaving the profession.

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- Increased opioid and methamphetamine usage in Wisconsin is contributing to increased child welfare referrals/out-of-home care placements.

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