

**WISCONSIN CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES PLAN (CFSP)  
CHILD WELFARE OBJECTIVES FOR 2005-2009  
FFY 2006 Plan - Submitted June 2005**

Wisconsin's five-year strategic objectives for improving child welfare services are reflected in this section of the plan. The objectives are organized based on seven overarching value statements. Under each value statement is a list of specific actions or initiatives that are or will soon be underway in partnership with counties, tribes, other departments, agencies or systems, consumers, advocacy groups, and other stakeholders connected to the child welfare service system. The Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) will implement these initiatives during the period of 2005-2009, with the implementation guided by the seven values.

The initiatives reflect the program range of child welfare and family services activities for which DCFS is responsible, so many of the initiatives are not directly related to the use of federal IV-B, CAPTA and Chafee funds. The specific initiatives were developed through several processes. The list includes items from the twenty (20) improvement strategies included Child and Family Services Review Program Enhancement Plan (PEP) approved effective November 1, 2004; Governor Doyle's Kids First agenda to invest in the future of children released in May 2004; and the Tribal Child Welfare Issues originally completed in February 2004 and subsequently updated. Other actions were identified as priorities for the CFSP by DCFS working collaboratively with counties, tribes, and other child welfare stakeholders that participated in PEP development and implementation. The source of each item is identified in parentheses.

For initiatives that involve federal IV-B, CAPTA or Chafee funds, more details about specific actions is described in Section VIII of the plan. More information about other initiatives is described in other documents:

- The PEP plan can be found at <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/cwreview/cfsr/PEP.htm>.
- The Kids First agenda can be found at <http://www.wisgov.state.wi.us/docs/kidsfirst.pdf>.
- The Tribal Child Welfare Issues are attached to this plan.

State Objectives/Values Statements

***1. Help families strengthen their capacity to provide safe and nurturing environments for their children:***

- Develop criteria, policies, and procedures that are designed to increase use of relatives as placement resources. (PEP-H)
- Enhance the role of non-custodial parents and other family members as placement resources by developing policies, procedures, and tools as well as increasing staff training to support efforts to locate, adjudicate, and involve non-custodial parents. (PEP-I)

- Reduce family violence by: (Kids First)
  - Improving coordination among law enforcement, child welfare agencies, corrections, and victim service agencies to effectively assess risks and respond accordingly.
  - Expanding Safe Haven sites, which provide a secure environment for visitation or transfer of custody of children.
  - Seeking legislation to permit judges to impose a penalty enhancement to a criminal sentence if the perpetrator of domestic violence committed violent acts in front of children.
- Promote family-focused child welfare case planning by implementing the values and philosophy of coordinated service teams, revising the *Child Protective Services Ongoing Service Standards and Practice Guidelines*, developing policies and procedures, and amending pre-service training for staff and foster parents. (PEP Team, DCFS)
- Ensure culturally competent child welfare practice by recruiting and retaining bilingual and bicultural staff and foster and adoptive parents; incorporating cultural competency into existing training and developing specialized courses in assessing for cultural needs; and collaborating with organizations that serve culturally diverse client groups. (PEP Team, DCFS)

***2. Improve Wisconsin's capacity to provide quality foster care to children when they cannot be safe at home:***

- Stabilize placement of children in out-of-home care and reduce re-entry and placement disruptions. (PEP-C)
- Maintain and support family connections by updating and implementing policies that promote sibling group placement. (PEP-E)
- Increase the effectiveness of support for foster parents by:
  - Enhancing pre-service and continuing training and technical assistance. (PEP-K)
  - Establishing a foster care and adoption resource center that provides telephone support and referral, training for foster care coordinators, and increased training for foster parents. (PEP-K, Kids First)
  - Developing a Foster Parent Handbook. (PEP-K)
  - Clarifying roles and responsibilities of foster parents and facilitating their participation in court hearings. (PEP-P)
- Sustain a recruitment campaign that is consistent with the AdoptUSKids national initiative and designed to achieve a diverse ethnic representation of foster and adoptive families. (Kids First, CFSP)
- Improve the foster care reimbursement structure by:
  - Increasing the basic maintenance rate. (Kids First)
  - Revising the rate structure (e.g., supplemental points, sibling group incentives, use of the exceptional rate). (PEP Team)

- Increase the number and timeliness of special needs adoptions (PEP-D and PEP-O)
- Improve the effectiveness of permanency planning (PEP-D)
- Increase support for kinship providers caring for children (DCFS)
- Implement a subsidized guardianship program in Milwaukee with potential expansion to other counties and to tribes. (Kids First, DCFS)
- Finalize adoptions for children needing permanent homes by providing permanency consultation, improving the timeliness of finalized adoptions, and evaluating the array and effectiveness of post-adoption services. (DCFS)

***3. Strengthen and diversify the child welfare workforce and build our capacity to serve families and keep children safe:***

- Establish minimum pre-service and foundation training requirements for child welfare caseworkers and supervisors. (PEP-R, Kids First)
- Develop additional options for county and tribal access to child welfare training, including use of technology and supplemental training providers to meet training requirements for staff and supervisors. (PEP-R, Kids First)
- Identify and address ongoing training needs related to eWiSACWIS. (PEP-R)
- Evaluate the caseload and workload of child protective services staff and supervisor to caseworker ratios. (PEP-T)
- Research the factors contributing to turnover in the child welfare workforce and implement strategies to improve staff recruitment and retention. (Kids First, PEP Team)
- Produce a Child Welfare Policy Manual for child welfare staff. (PEP Team)
- Increase efforts to develop and support supervisors. (PEP Team)
- Meet with Schools of Social Work to establish a match between current curriculum and Child Welfare Training Partnership's foundation training to further refine equivalencies or criteria for exempting staff from required training. (PEP-R)
- Improve practice in the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (DCFS)

***4. Assure that the expectations of families and actions of child welfare professionals are guided by clear and comprehensive policies and standards of practice:***

- Improve the safety of children and the efficiency of and consistency among child welfare programs statewide by defining the scope of CPS cases and the intake and assessment standards that guide caseworkers. (PEP-A)
- Update the *CPS Investigation Standards* and the *CPS Ongoing Services Standards and Practice Guidelines* on safety assessment and safety planning to help children remain safely at home. (PEP-B)
- Develop a policy to require a concurrent permanency plan no later than the first annual permanency plan review to move children more quickly to permanency. (PEP-D, PEP-O)

- Integrate the foster/adoptive family assessments into one and distribute the new assessment tool to counties for use in licensing foster and treatment foster homes under Chapters HFS 38 and 56, Adm. Code, and for the Adoption Program. (PEP-D)
- Promote interaction among family members and siblings by developing and implementing policy on family visitation and interaction. (PEP-F)
- Improve compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) by building DCFS capacity to implement ICWA and ensuring that all parties in the child welfare system are aware of and comply with ICWA requirements. (PEP-G, DCFS)
- Revise the *CPS Ongoing Service Standards and Practice Guidelines* regarding family assessment and case planning and convert family assessment practice guidelines to standards. (PEP-J, PEP-N)
- Develop and implement a policy on caseworker-parent/family face-to-face contact. (PEP-J)
- Work with children’s mental health professionals and county and tribal child welfare agencies to develop a statewide policy for mental health screening, assessment, and treatment and develop a treatment capacity improvement plan. (PEP-M)
- Develop policies (Chapter HFS 44) relating to reasonable efforts to prevent the removal of children from their homes and to return children placed in out-of-home care to their homes when appropriate and safe or be placed in permanent and stable alternative living arrangements. (PEP-N)
- Implement the DCFS child welfare legislative agenda (including eWiSACWIS confidentiality, further implementation of ASFA, TPR process improvement, and other priority legislation). (PEP-O, Kids First)
- Increase the DCFS capacity to provide technical assistance to local child welfare agencies to support improved case practice, policy implementation, and regional collaboration. (PEP-S)
- Review the current use of “substantiating” child abuse and neglect and its ongoing practicality in Wisconsin’s child welfare system. (PEP Team)
- Review the CPS role in non-caregiver maltreatment. (PEP Team)
- Develop a process and protocol for conducting reviews of cases involving the death or serious injury of children due to abuse and the involvement of children in egregious incidents. (DCFS)

***5. Collaborate with agencies and systems to improve family access to services that ensure children are safe and healthy:***

- Pilot a managed care program in Milwaukee that will provide every child entering foster care with mental, physical, and dental health care. (PEP-L)
- Assess the capacity of the Wisconsin child welfare system to respond effectively to the safety and permanency needs of children. (PEP-T)

- Expand MA eligibility for youth exiting out-of-home care at age 18 or older up to age 21 to ensure ongoing health insurance coverage. (Kids First)
- Increase Independent Living Program scholarships to \$5,000 per youth per year as long as other scholarship eligibility criteria (e.g., satisfactory progress) are met. (DCFS)
- Help youth transition to self-sufficiency by continuing to provide an array of services and supports that address secondary and post-secondary education, vocational and employment training, daily living skills, housing, connection to caring adults, health education, and risk prevention. (DCFS)
- Build Independent Living Program capacity to provide financial, housing, counseling, employment, education, and other supports and services to former foster care youth aged 18-21. (DCFS)
- Strengthen coordination with the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) on W-2 (TANF) services to families involved in the child welfare service system. (Kids First, PEP Team)
- Establish multi-agency work groups with other agencies and service systems to improve service delivery to children and families. (PEP Team)
- Improve mental health services for children served by the child welfare system. (DCFS)
- Improve availability of and access to AODA and other services for birth parents. (DCFS)
- Collaborate with the Department of Corrections (DOC) on services to juveniles and their families. (DCFS)
- Expand Chafee Foster Care Independence and Education and Training Voucher programs to include the Lac Courte Oreilles Tribe. (DCFS)
- Sustain the partnership with counties, tribes, advocates, consumers, and other stakeholders to improve child welfare outcomes through membership on or other involvement with: (DCFS)
  - Child Welfare Program Enhancement Plan Implementation Team
  - Milwaukee Partnership Council
  - Citizen Review Panels

***6. Improve the quality and usefulness of information needed to evaluate safety, permanence, and well being of children:***

- Develop a policy for processing multiple CPS reports for the same incident or episode of alleged maltreatment. (PEP-A)
- Improve the management of child welfare information systems and reporting of child welfare program data. (PEP-Q, DCFS, PEP Team)
  - Obtain federal certification of the eWiSACWIS system.
  - Integrate management of eWiSACWIS system into DCFS.
  - Develop a comprehensive eWiSACWIS training program.
  - Develop child welfare program performance indicators.

- Support local agency use of eWiSACWIS data reports.
- Improve quality of federal AFCARS and NCANDS reporting.

***7. Assure the quality and effectiveness of services for children and families by regularly reviewing our programs and practices:***

- Establish a statewide child welfare quality assurance (QA) program to improve practice and accountability. (PEP-Q, Kids First)
  - Agency review using CFSR-style case reviews and peer reviewers.
  - Coordination of statewide and Milwaukee QA processes.
  - Program reviews and special studies.
  - QA feedback into policy development.
  - Technical assistance to child welfare agencies from DCFS.
- Implement an ombudsman program for children served by the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (Kids First)
- Ensure compliance with federal and Legislative Audit Bureau Title IV-E eligibility reviews. (DCFS)