

Jim Doyle
GovernorKevin R. Hayden
Secretary**State of Wisconsin**
Department of Health and Family Services

March 22, 2007

Vicki Tylka, Director
Marathon County Department of Social Services
400 E. Thomas St.
Wausau WI 54403-6498

Dear Ms. Tylka:

The Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) received the 2006 Marathon County Citizen Review Panel (CRP) annual report and will include this information in the DCFS Federal Annual Progress and Services Reports: Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) State Plan submitted in 2007. This is the required written response to the annual report that DCFS must provide regarding the recommendations of the panel.

Advocate for an increase in the foster child clothing allowance

The DCFS continues to evaluate the possibility of an increase in the foster care child clothing allowance. We agree that this is an important issue for children in care. We are currently conducting an analysis of the policy and a fiscal estimate on the increase as proposed by Marathon County. It is our intent to respond in writing to your panel as soon as the analysis is completed.

Advocate for streamlining and improving the state eWiSACWIS documentation system

We agree that there continue to be ways that we can improve upon the eWiSACWIS. There is an eWiSACWIS Advisory Committee that makes suggestions on how to improve the system and there is a Marathon County representative on the committee. The committee has endorsed the goals of efficiency, effectiveness, and error reduction as primary considerations in determining what modifications are made to the system. Recent improvements have been made in reducing duplicate data entry and allowing more pre-fills and further improvements are made with each quarterly release. The Integrated Case Plan Committee will make recommendations regarding consolidation of the permanency plan and court report and other modifications, and those recommendations will be forwarded to the eWiSACWIS Advisory Committee for final approval before being scheduled for a release.

Increase efforts to recruit and train foster parents

In June 2006 the Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center implemented a statewide foster parent recruitment initiative that included radio ads with Jessica Doyle, brochures, billboards, a toll free telephone number and a website that allows interested parties to make inquiries and obtain information electronically. Other recruitment activities continue to be developed and implemented. This is an ongoing statewide recruitment campaign and is a high priority for the State.

Currently the State does not mandate training for foster families. The DCFS agrees that training for foster parents helps provide safe and supportive environments for children in care, but at this time there is not sufficient funding to mandate statewide training. The Foster Parent Training Committee, which consists of the DCFS, the University of Wisconsin Training Partnerships and stakeholders across the state are in the process of revising the PACE (Partners in Alternative Care Education) curriculum.

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The PACE curriculum is currently the most widely used curriculum in Wisconsin. Proposed revisions include dividing the training into two components, pre-placement and foundation training. Another proposed component would include ongoing training that is provided following the initial two-year licensing period. We will continue to work with local agencies and other partners to reinforce the importance of foster parent training in Wisconsin.

Establish and implement a reasonable caseload size for social workers

In November 2006 county departments and tribal chairpersons received DCFS Memo Series 2006-18 informing them that the DCFS would implement a workload management survey. Information was collected from all child welfare agencies to identify staffing patterns for CPS, foster care licensing and supervisor tasks. This information will be combined with caseload information to evaluate caseload ratios. We are in the process of compiling and analyzing this information, which will provide data that could be used for evaluation of statewide CPS program workload.

Regular and ongoing communication between the State and the CRPs

Communication and planning between the CRPs

The CRPs are an important partner to the DCFS in regards to enhancing CPS practice at the local level. In 2006 the DCFS designated a staff person to regularly work with the panels and act as liaison between the panels and the State agency. The Case Practice Review Specialist (CRP liaison) attended several CRP meetings in each county. She facilitated statewide communication via conference calls, soliciting panel input and attempting to strengthen collaboration among the local panels and between the panels and the State agency. The CRPs have indicated that they are interested in at least two statewide panel meetings in 2007, and the CRP liaison will work with the CRPs to coordinate these meetings. She is also scheduled to attend the National CRP conference along with CRP members in 2007. We intend to continue and expand the DCFS involvement with the CRPs and welcome your expertise and advice in identifying ways to do so.

Continued funding for CRP local projects

In 2006, the DCFS provided additional funding to two of the CRP counties in response to their requests for additional funds to support 2006 activities. Citizen review panel funding was increased in 2007 to support regular CRP activities and enable counties to send panel members to the National CRP Conference. We encourage you to continue to keep us informed as to the fiscal well-being of the CRP and to notify the Case Practice Review Specialist if additional funds are needed in 2007.

Please contact me or the Case Practice Review Specialist if you would like additional support or if you need assistance with specific CRP activities. We look forward to working with your panel to enhance child protective services for Wisconsin's children and families.

Thank you for your dedication to the Citizen Review Panel.

Sincerely,

Mark D. Campbell, Director
Bureau of Programs and Policies

c: Carolie Fox