



WAFCA – State Budget Talking Points (05.19)

Questions? Contact Kathy Markeland (kmarkeland@wafca.org)

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DCF – WAFCA Funding Priorities

HOME VISITING [Paper [191](#)]

- **Expand Home Visiting Services.** Support an investment of \$10 million in the Family Foundations Home Visiting Program to double the number of families benefiting from home visiting supports.
- **Return on Investment.** Outcomes research has shown that each dollar invested in evidence-based home visiting programs can yield up to **\$5.70 in savings** in the long run. Long term cost savings include: reduced health services use (including fewer emergency department visits), reduced costs of child protection services, decreased special education placements and grade repetition.
- **New Federal Match Available.** Passage of the federal Family First Prevention Services Act creates an opportunity for Wisconsin to generate up to 50 percent federal match for new state investments in evidence-based home visiting programs.
- **Statewide Support.** In statewide listening sessions held by the Legislature's Children's Caucus and the Speaker's Foster Care Task Force in 2017, home visiting consistently emerged as a key, primary prevention strategy shown to improve child school readiness, increase economic self-sufficiency and reduce child maltreatment.

CHILD WELFARE SAFETY SERVICES [Paper [191](#)]

- **Increase Safety Services Statewide.** Support the Governor's proposal to increase safety services funding by nearly \$5 million over the biennium to move toward statewide implementation.
- **Supporting Children in their Homes.** Safety services have been shown to successfully support families to prevent out-of-home placement. By wrapping services around the family, children

are protected from the trauma of removal from their family home.

- **Federal Law is Moving Funding to Support Prevention.** The new federal Family First Prevention Services Act is intended to shift more federal funding to supporting intact families and preventing the need for out-of-home placement. Continued investment in safety services will grow provider capacity and competence to serve families in their homes and align the state with future federal funding priorities in child welfare services.

CHILD AND FAMILY AIDS INCREASE [Paper [205](#)]

- **Support increased aid to address growing need for protective services.** Support the counties' request for increased funding to address the significant expansion of county child protective services caseloads.
- **Higher caseloads, means slower permanency for children.** Higher caseloads lead to caseworker burnout and increased turnover rates in the workforce. Turnover in caseworkers delays kids from getting to their forever families.

FOSTER CARE RATE INCREASES [Paper [205](#)]

- **Support increases in the basic rate for foster care and kinship care.** The Governor's budget in would increase basic foster care and kinship care rates by 2% in each year of the biennium. While these proposed rate increases show a continued investment in valuing foster homes, a more substantial rate increase, like the 6% suggested in the LFB paper, would begin nudging the basic rate closer to covering the basic costs of caring for a foster child.
- **Increase support for kinship homes.** Wisconsin does relatively well when compared to other states in the percentage of children in our system who are placed with relative caregivers. These kinship homes are a critical resource and their value should be recognized by continuing to increase the financial, emotional and professional support that these homes receive.
- **Foster parents are the #1 recruiters for new homes.** Foster parents who feel valued by the foster care system share those positive experiences within their communities and help to invite additional volunteers into foster care service. The basic payment is insufficient to cover the basic costs of care. Supplemental and exceptional payments are not guaranteed and should not be relied upon to cover the insufficiencies of the basic rate.

DRIVER'S LICENSE ASSISTANCE FOR FOSTER YOUTH [Paper [205](#)]

- **Support foster youth access to driving.** The Governor's budget proposes \$380,000 (GPR) over the biennium to begin a driver's license assistance program for youth in foster care. The program would include assistance finding driver's education courses, behind-the-wheel training and insurance. The resources would also cover course fees, licensing fees and the cost of insurance, including the additional cost of insurance on a motor vehicle owned by a foster parent and used by the youth.
- **Driving is a life skill that supports independence and employment.** Obtaining a driver's license is an important step toward adult independence and can be essential for youth in care who are seeking employment and participation in normal adolescent extracurricular activities.
- **Priority issue for foster youth.** This has been a priority issue for the Foster Care Youth Advisory Council for nearly a decade and is modeled on programs, such as the Florida Keys to

Independence program, which has been operational since 2014.

- **Foster parent liability.** Under current law, foster parents may support youth through the licensing process, but some foster parents are understandably concerned about the liability associated with sponsoring a new driver. Some are unable to do so because of insurance restrictions.

RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH GRANTS [no paper]

- **Support additional grant funding.** The Governor's budget provides \$250,000 annually to increase the grant funding DCF provides to programs that provide services for runaway and homeless youth.
- **High need for services.** According to data collected for the DPI Homeless Student Enrollment by Public School District report, in the 2016-17 school year there were 2,283 unaccompanied minors identified by school districts.
- **Aligns with bipartisan agenda to reduce homelessness.** This proposed funding increase aligns with findings in the 2018 WI Interagency Council on Homelessness statewide action plan.
- **Runaway services provide crisis intervention.** There are insufficient runaway and homeless youth resources across the state. These services provide critical intervention and safety services that help divert youth and families from youth justice and child welfare systems reducing costs for state and county government.

DHS – WAFCA Funding Priorities

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES [Paper [363](#)]

- **Support increased Medicaid funding to raise mental health and substance use treatment rates.** At a minimum, support the Governor's proposal to invest an additional \$69 million over the biennium into Medicaid rates to increase access to care. While the increases provided to behavioral health providers in 2018 were a step in the right direction, there continues to be a significant gap between the cost of behavioral health care and the Medicaid reimbursement rate.
- **Better Medicaid rates build more sustainable school mental health programs.** Schools use a variety of resources, including billing private insurance when available, to help provide sustainable funding to support school mental health services that deliver measurable benefits for individual students and the school community. More than 80% of students receiving mental health services in schools are Medicaid eligible, which means that sufficient Medicaid reimbursement rates are critical to long-term program success.

REIMBURSEMENT FOR CLINICAL CONSULTATIONS [no paper]

- **Remove the sunset.** Remove the sunset on the Medicaid student mental health consultation service code that allows therapists to speak with school personnel about student treatment plans and their implementation at school. In the 2017-19 biennial budget, Medicaid was required to establish a consultation code and begin paying for it beginning July 1, 2018 with a sunset date of June 30, 2019.

- **Supports student treatment and classroom teachers.** This consultation service improves treatment planning, treatment goal achievement and support for classroom teachers.
- **Add contact with parents.** Expand mental health consultation to include consultation with parents to facilitate family engagement in the treatment process. Since students have their mental health sessions at school, parents are not present to participate. Allowing therapists to connect with parents is essential for family engagement which in turn improves therapeutic outcomes.

CRISIS INTERVENTION SERVICES [Paper [362](#)]

- **Crisis intervention services prevent hospitalizations.** A comprehensive crisis response system is able to develop crisis plans for individuals and provide a rapid response that connects an individual with community resources on a voluntary basis and reduces the likelihood that the person will require involuntary commitment.
- **State funding for crisis will provide more equitable access.** An infusion of state funding into crisis services across the state will help build a more robust continuum of services for children, youth and adults and reduce some of the disparities that exist in the current county-funded system.