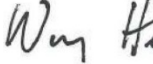


To: DCF/DMCPS Administrator
DCF Area Administrators
Child Placing Agency Directors
Child Welfare Agency Directors
County Departments of Community Programs Directors
County Departments of Human Services Directors
County Departments of Social Services Directors
Group Home Providers
Tribal Social Service/Indian Child Welfare Directors
Private Child Placing Agencies
Residential Care Center Providers
Shelter Care Providers
Tribal Chairpersons

From: Wendy Henderson 
Division Administrator
Department of Children and Families

Diane Cable 
President
Wisconsin County Human Service Association

Re: **Child Welfare Workload Study**

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to inform local child welfare agencies of the results of the formal child welfare workload study completed by ICF, Inc.

BACKGROUND

In 2017, the Wisconsin County Human Service Association (WCHSA) created a Child Protective Services (CPS) Caseload Study Committee to better understand caseloads across the state. This committee created recommended caseload standards for local agencies and requested that the Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) conduct a comprehensive child welfare workload study.

In response to this request and in collaboration with WCHSA, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a statewide workload study in May 2019 and in August 2019, the workload study contract was awarded to ICF, Inc. to complete a representative, statewide child welfare staffing and workload evaluation. Their work was directed by an oversight committee that included DSP and WCHSA representation, as well as local agency leadership from both county agencies and the DCF Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS).

In March 2020, a time study was conducted across the state of Wisconsin, including the following counties:

Region	Agency
Northern	Iron, Marathon, Portage, Sawyer, Vilas
Western	Burnett, Chippewa, Dunn, LaCrosse
Northeastern	Manitowoc
Southern	Dane, Juneau, Rock
Southeastern, DMCPs, and partner agencies	Children’s Hospital, DMCPs, Jefferson, Kenosha, SaintA, Waukesha

The overarching goal of the study was to review and recommend manageable workloads for county child welfare caseworkers, supervisors, case aids, and related staff. Seven objectives make up this goal:

1. To select a **sample of Local Child Welfare Agencies and staff** for including in each of the relevant study tasks that leads to drawing reliable and valid conclusions about the state’s child welfare program.
2. To conduct **local outreach** that provides the appropriate study communications to local child welfare agencies and DCF’s DMCPs regarding the purpose, methods, and participation requirements throughout the study.
3. To implement **data gathering** methods and procedures that optimally address the workload, staffing, and process factors across organizational, staff positions, case types, and other characteristics to draw conclusions about staffing adequacy, child welfare outcomes, and potential areas for improvement.
4. To conduct a **time study** of child welfare staff that is representative, efficient, and effective for informing staff caseloads and workload and child welfare success outcomes across all relevant staff positions.
5. To analyze data from the time study and county and statewide aggregate data in a way that enables a **determination of existing workload and caseload** to inform improved staffing, organization, and other process improvements throughout the state.
6. To implement additional information gathering that produces a **determination of suggested workload and caseload standards and staff needs** and provides decision tools to support these recommendations, including the ability to periodically analyze workload/caseload and staffing needs going forward.
7. To provide experiences, observations, and ideas about **operational efficiencies** that could be gained to improve Wisconsin child welfare system staffing, service delivery, and operations.

INFORMATION SUMMARY

An [Executive Summary](#) and [Final Report](#) have been completed by ICF, Inc. and present analysis on information gathered throughout the study. This includes qualitative data from interviews and focus groups and quantitative data from the time study.

Suggested caseload standards were calculated by ICF, Inc. from the monthly average time per case in each of the practice areas. These standards can be found in the [Workload Study Infographic](#). DSP cautions against utilizing this data in isolation, as many factors affect workload and caseload and the workload study results are just one piece of Wisconsin's caseload and workload puzzle. The following limitations should be considered when using the workload study results:

- The model reflects recorded practice during the March 2020 workload time study and does not necessarily reflect the time required to ensure optimal outcomes for children and families.
- Additionally, the model reflects data gathered prior to the Family First transformation. This transformation, when realized, will require more in-home cases necessitating smaller caseloads per case manager to address safety issues in the home with holistic case practices.
- Wisconsin's child welfare system is county-administered outside of DMCPs. Staffing structures and organizational operations of each agency vary widely across the state. As such, the study's results will not be a perfect match for every agency.
- These results were calculated using the average time spent on a case and do not account for the high variability in the amount of time spent on cases.

Additionally, there are several factors that make the suggested caseload standard for Youth Justice (YJ) less reliable than other practice areas. Youth Justice was included in this study to account for staff with mixed caseloads. However, the following factors should be taken into consideration when using this caseload guidance:

- There is statewide variability in YJ use of eWiSACWIS.
- The standards of practice for YJ casework are less defined standards of practice than those established for Child Protective Service casework.
- The multi-year implementation of the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) is still in progress and is intended to influence case practice in multiple ways, thus impacting time spent on YJ cases.

Given the limitations described above to ICF Inc.'s suggested caseload standard, DSP and WCHSA recommend that individual counties are in the best position to determine how these standards and the staffing tool referenced below best apply to their respective agencies and the caseloads of their child welfare workforce. An infographic has been created to easily view the highlights of this study.

A [staffing tool](#) that local agencies can use has also been created to assist in estimating local level staffing needs. Data from eWiSACWIS and internal staffing rosters or the DCF Random Moment Time Study (RMTS) rosters can be utilized with this tool to determine if current staffing levels are sufficient for attending to the work required to service a given caseload.

The staffing tool and an accompanying tutorial video can be found on the DCF website.

The suggested caseload standards and staffing tool should always be used in coordination with other forms of information and not in isolation or as a solution in and of itself. Our state's child

welfare system is complex and other factors such as job satisfaction, staff experience, agency structure and operations, local service array and performance outcomes for children and families should be taken into consideration. Additionally, family factors can add layers of complexity that may increase the amount of time required to provide high quality services. These family factors may include alcohol or substance abuse concerns, domestic violence, large families, youth justice dual involvement, or families covered by the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) or the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA), etc.

Through all aspects of the workload study, ICF, Inc. was able to identify operational efficiencies for consideration. These efficiencies are related to processes and procedures, training, technology, resources, staff shortage and employee turnover, and community outreach and education. DCF is committed to reviewing how these operational efficiencies align with future strategic improvements.

In addition to the information provided on the website, a series of webinars will be held throughout in spring 2022 to present the results of the workload study to child welfare professionals and agency leaders. These webinar dates can be found on the [DCF website](#).

DCF would like to thank all of the local child welfare agencies who participated in the workload study either by participating in the time study or in workshops, as well as those who served as members on the oversight committee.

CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT: Program and Policy Analyst
Bureau of Safety and Well-Being
dcfmbbswbcwpp@wisconsin.gov

MEMO WEB SITE: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy>

ATTACHMENT LINKS: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/workload-study>