



Wisconsin Department of  
Children and Families

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Parent/Caregiver  
Equity Advisory  
Cabinet:  
Past, Present, and  
Future

2023

# MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY AMUNDSON

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The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is pleased to share the first annual report of DCF's Parent and Caregiver Equity Advisory Cabinet (PCEAC). After nearly three years of meeting, holding community conversations, and more clearly understanding root causes, this report showcases the group's purpose, vision, priorities, and goals for 2024.

DCF is committed to elevating and amplifying the voices of Wisconsin families and caregivers so their lived experiences can shape and inform our agency's programs and priorities. Created in alignment with DCF's vision that all children and youth are safe and loved members of thriving families and communities, the PCEAC was co-designed with its members to be an advisory cabinet that supports engagement and collaboration with communities furthest from opportunity. In this spirit, I have attended every meeting of the PCEAC since its inception in 2022, and I am grateful for the continuing opportunity to learn from the members that commit so much time, energy, and leadership to this endeavor.

As families and caregivers who engage with programs administered across state government, the PCEAC is an invaluable resource for leaders seeking to advance Governor Evers' overarching vision of "what's best for kids is best for our state." While the group initially focused on child care – which remains a top PCEAC priority – its discussions naturally evolved to the integrated and complex systems families face daily, including housing, transportation, and maternal health care. To that end, my colleagues at DCF and I have made it a priority to share the PCEAC's work with leaders within DCF and across state government. In fact, PCEAC members have personally addressed key cross-sector coordinating bodies like Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) and the Leadership Council on Early Years (LCEY).

I look forward to continuing to work alongside the PCEAC in 2024 as we put children and families at the center of all we do. Their voices are a vital component to understanding what's best for kids and – ultimately - what's best for Wisconsin.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Amundson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

# INTRODUCTION

Established in April 2022 by the Division of Early Care and Education (DECE) within the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Parent/Caregiver Equity Advisory Cabinet (PCEAC) is a parent and caregiver leadership council comprised of eight members from five communities in Wisconsin, including: Adams County, Beloit, Lac Courte Oreilles Tribe (LCO), Madison, and Milwaukee. The PCEAC was created to ensure that the state’s early childhood programs, policies, and services reflect the needs of families with children ages 0-5\* and their caregivers.

The 2023 Parent/Caregiver Equity Advisory Cabinet Report provides a summary of PCEAC functions, accomplishments in 2023, and goals for 2024.

*\*As noted in the purpose and vision, the PCEAC will focus on children ages 0-8 in 2024.*



# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## Communities

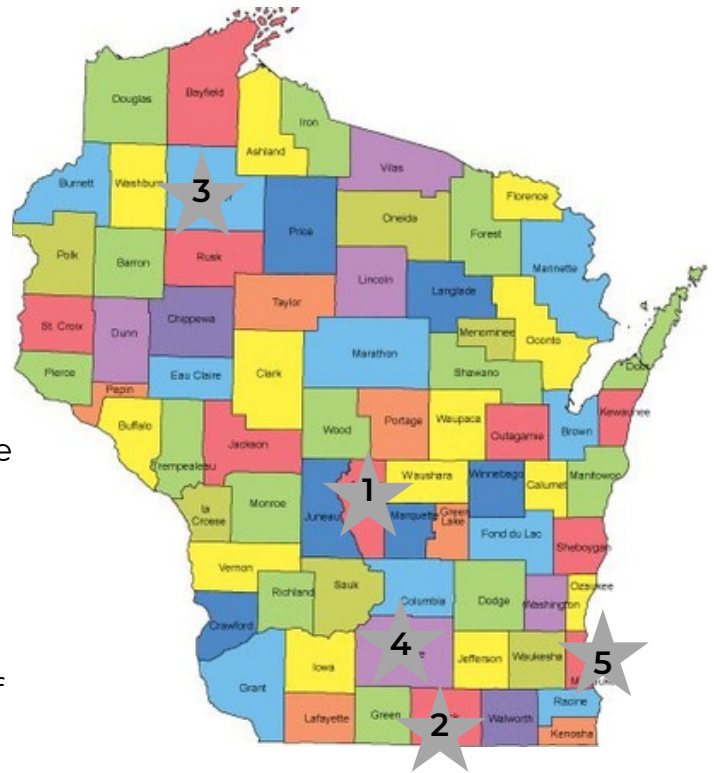
The first step in creating the PCEAC was to identify communities in Wisconsin that did not have the same outcomes and opportunities as elsewhere in the state.

Five communities were identified:

1. Adams County
2. Beloit
3. Lac Courte Oreilles Tribe (LCO)
4. Madison
5. Milwaukee

## Community Selection Process

DCF used data to select communities where children and families do not have the same opportunities and outcomes as families elsewhere in the state. The selected communities are representative of Wisconsin's diversity, with a cross-section of rural, tribal, and urban areas.



The following county-level indices and data points were used to identify communities:

- ALICE Data
- Child Care Deserts
- County Health Factors
- County Health Outcomes
- Opportunity Index
- Social Vulnerability Index
- Urbanicity

# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## Membership

Eight parents and caregivers from five identified communities in Wisconsin were selected to be PCEAC members.

## Member Selection Process

With support from community-based organizations, information about the PCEAC and a brief application, available in multiple languages, was disseminated in the five communities. Interested applicants completed the application which was scored by multiple people using a rubric that identified specific areas of expertise.

The top applicants were asked to participate in an interview, and the members were selected using pre-determined criteria.

In addition to being parents and caregivers in the five communities, the PCEAC members brought a wealth of expertise in the following areas:

- Identifies as African, Latinx, Asian, Arab, and/or Native American
- Speaks a language other than English
- Identifies as a non-traditional parent (e.g., foster parent, grandparent)
- Utilizes Head Start/Early Head Start/Tribal Head Start, child care, and other early care and education programs
- Receives Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy
- Has a child with special needs
- Has been or is involved in the child welfare system
- Has community connections and networks

## Coaching and Support

In addition to DCF, individual, ongoing coaching and support for PCEAC members was provided by the following organizations:



# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## Function

The Cabinet is structured around three core strategies to influence local and state-level action:

- *Connect*
  - The PCEAC brings together parents and caregivers who understand and represent the urgent needs of their community.
- *Listen*
  - Cabinet members work with community organizations to host feedback sessions to listen, share information, and gather feedback on state policy.
- *Inform*
  - Cabinet members represent their community's concerns, pose questions, and share information with DCF to inform state policy and priorities.

DCF *prioritizes* discussion, actions, and decisions that directly address questions, concerns, and challenges raised by members of the Cabinet.

At the start of the PCEAC, Cabinet members and DCF engaged in discussion around Wisconsin's child care system. After an initial discussion, the topics evolved from child care to the comprehensive birth to five community system.

Figure 1 represents the Birth to 5 system in which child care is connected to the mixed delivery system and the community. As noted in the recommendations, the mixed delivery system and community directly impact child care in a multitude of ways, primarily those categories shown in Figure 2 - access, affordability, quality, and workforce.

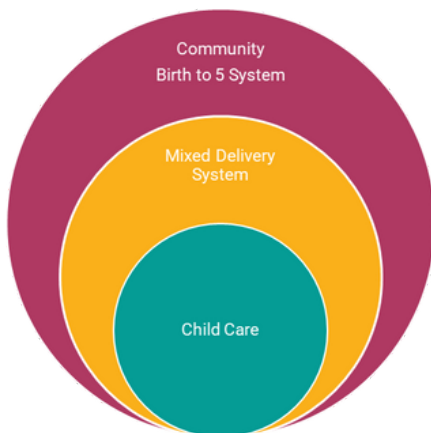


FIGURE 1. BIRTH TO 5 ECOSYSTEM

FIGURE 2. CHILD CARE COMPONENTS



# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The information below provides an in-depth look at the various PCEAC functions and activities.



## Connect

The PCEAC convenes quarterly as an advisory body to DCF to discuss pertinent topics to the early childhood system. In addition to participating in quarterly meetings, Cabinet members receive individualized coaching and support to authentically engage in discussion as a Cabinet, with a focus at the state level, and as community leaders, at the local level.



## Listen

The PCEAC organizes community-level conversations to listen and gather feedback on various aspects of state policy related to early childhood systems. The intent is to establish feedback loops to support DCF's ability to prioritize and respond to the needs of communities, families, and caregivers across the state.



## Inform

PCEAC members have provided input to Preschool Development Grant (PDG) funded initiatives and presented to members of the Leadership Council on Early Years (LCEY). DCF is also discussing future connections between the Cabinet and the Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), as well as activities to inform current and future phases of the Birth to Five Statewide Strategic Plan.

# 2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

01

## 100% attendance at quarterly meetings

With all members present, building relationships and connections while identifying community and state birth to five priorities was the focus of the 2023 meetings.

02

## Six informative community conversations

The PCEAC facilitated six community conversations between March and September 2023, and disseminated a survey to families throughout the state. Quotes from these conversations and survey responses informed retreat findings and 2024 priorities.

03

## Three parents attended the Lived Experience Summit

Three members attended the Office of Children's Mental Health Lived Experience Summit in Wisconsin Dells with other parent leaders statewide.

04

## Three goals, purpose, and vision established

During the first annual PCEAC retreat, the Cabinet reviewed data from community conversations and created a working purpose, vision, and 3 priority areas for next year (see pages 10-13).

05

## Enhancing local and state cross-systems collaboration

PCEAC members participated in 6 cross-systems meetings to elevate lived expertise and build strong local and statewide connections, including: Leadership Council on Early Years, Preschool Development Grant transitions project, BUILD Equity Leaders Action Network (ELAN), and child care coalitions.



# PROCESS AND THEMES

To further operationalize the function of the PCEAC - connect, listen, and inform - members gathered quotes and themes from community conversations, surveys, quarterly meetings, and coaching conversations to create the PCEAC purpose and vision statements, and to establish three goals for 2024. Throughout the process of gathering and prioritizing information, the following themes were prioritized during a full-day retreat.



## **PRIORITY 1 “IT’S A START”**

- Identify community and state assets and gaps in supporting children, youth, and families
- Identify ways to support families in navigating local and state supports and services

## **PRIORITY 2 CHILD CARE**

- Address child care affordability
- Redefine quality child care
- Focus on child care workforce
- Address lack of child care

## **OTHER AREAS THAT WERE EXPLORED**

- Address food insecurity
- Focus on birth equity
- Share resources for financial supports
- Address lack of transportation
- Provide support and resources for grandparents and caregivers
- Facilitate local family councils
- Make connections between community programs and schools
- Address lack of housing
- Address lack of health care options
- Provide information and support on insurance and assistance
- Expand post-partum support and care
- Promote and expand Home Visiting
- Build awareness and connections to Birth to 3

# PROCESS AND THEMES

To following quotes from community conversations and surveys illustrate the needs in PCEAC communities and were instrumental in determining priority activities for 2024.

## PRIORITY 1 “IT’S A START”



Parents need more resources and supports.

We need these resources brought to the attention of the community more than they are already. They are out there, but most people are unaware!

Family Resource navigators are important in communities!

I do believe that alot of people are ashamed to ask for help even when they may need it most, so some form of assuring that its okay to ask for assistance.

## PRIORITY 2 CHILD CARE

The first thing would be for the prices to be affordable. [The aid] is based on what you earn but they don't take into account that with that salary, and even more so when you're a single mom, you have to pay rent, food, clothing and things that are needed at home. You have to live under the bridge to be able to qualify for those things (child care assistance).

It would be good if in the future that the state would revisit eligibility and maybe expand it more for working families so that they are able then to stay gainfully employed without having to have half of their paycheck or more go to child care providers.

Shortage in community is incredible, families are on waiting lists, parents have to quit jobs because [they] cannot afford, or do not have access to child care.

Quality is subjective...but the shortage is INCREDIBLE. Will I have to quit my job due to lack [of care]? If I don't feel confident in the place then it might as well not be there. People are risking their child's safety.



# PURPOSE AND VISION

By the end of 2023, the PCEAC created a working purpose and vision.



## Purpose

The PCEAC will ensure the lived experiences of parents and caregivers, as well as the needs and opportunities within their communities, are informing the prenatal through age 8 priorities, decisions, and actions within Wisconsin's early childhood programs, policies, services, and funding.

## Vision

The PCEAC will be authentically involved in the decision-making for Wisconsin's early childhood programs, policies, services, and funding to effectively meet the needs of historically marginalized communities.



# 2024 GOALS

Based on community feedback, the PCEAC will focus on the three goals and related activities in 2024. Each goal is illustrated using quotes from those with lived experience in each of the five PCEAC communities.

01

**Goal: Identify and communicate community and statewide prenatal through age 8 assets, opportunities, and gaps for children and families.**

Activity 1a: For each community, support the development and dissemination of a local list and contact information for prenatal through age 8 programs, services, and supports for children and families; list will include programs related to early care and education, K-12 school supports, health, housing, transportation, and financial resources.

Activity 1b: Support the creation and dissemination of a statewide list and contact information for prenatal through age 8 programs, services, and supports for children and families; list will include programs related to early care and education, K-12 school supports, health, housing, transportation, and financial resources.

Activity 1c: Identify information gaps and opportunities at local and statewide levels; create plan to address gaps.

“I take care of my four-year old grandson with special needs. I don’t know much about the resources that are here because I have little time in the country, that is, two years and I have preferred to take care of him myself. I know that daycares exist, but I wouldn’t know how to do that.”

# 2024 GOALS

02

Goal: Identify, share, and build awareness for local and state strategies to address accessibility and affordability of high-quality child care options.

Activity 2a: Facilitate community-wide conversations to identify 1-3 local activities to increase access to high-quality, affordable care.

Activity 2b: Create and disseminate community strategies among five communities and with DCF.



“The cost of child care may have some impact on the financial burden of the family, but it also provides the opportunity for children to receive quality education and care.”

“I have had to sacrifice allowing my children to attend a place that I was not fully comfortably because of the lower cost as well as the availability. There are not many options here and many have waiting lists.”

“I don’t trust people very well with my children. And if it’s not family or somebody that I really trust, they don’t go.”



# 2024 GOALS

03

Goal: Build awareness, garner support, and identify opportunities for PCEAC collaboration.

Activity 3a: Create an annual PCEAC report that builds awareness of the PCEAC, identifies progress on goals and activities, and foreshadows the following year’s goals and activities.

Activity 3b: Identify opportunities for collaboration with formal and informal groups at the local and state level.

Although this goal was not explicitly developed based on feedback from communities, it was identified during the PCEAC retreat as a priority. Below are quotes from PCEAC members.



In 2023, the PCEAC was funded by Wisconsin’s Preschool Development Grant and Pritzker Children’s Initiative funding.

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*Thank you to the parents, caregivers, and community members for supporting the PCEAC in 2023!*

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**2023 PCEAC Members:**

- Nailah Adama
- Sheila Cruz
- Meagan Grabarski
- Joyce Hall
- Trisha Murphy
- Drew Pennington
- Morgan Rowell
- Jordan St. Germaine

MORE INFORMATION

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcare/pceac>



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