



WAFCA 2019-21 Legislative and Biennial Budget Priorities

BACKGROUND: The Wisconsin human services delivery system is a complex network that crosses over multiple other systems from health care to schools to corrections. Services are delivered through both public and private sector providers who ideally work in concert with one another to meet families where they are, help them build stronger foundations and restore stability in the face of challenges that can emerge for any family unit, in any community in Wisconsin.

As representatives of private child and family serving agencies, WAFCA promotes policies that reflect trauma-informed care, the emerging science regarding brain development, the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences, and the importance of investing resources in services to address the social determinants of health. Human services practice is undergoing radical shifts that challenge us to work across systems to increase collaboration, focus on developing person-centered responses, and deliver durable results.

Wisconsin is making strides in re-visioning our service delivery systems. In recent years we have seen continued expansion of community-based mental health with programs like Comprehensive Community Services; increases in Medicaid rates for mental health and substance use treatment; investments in school-based mental health services; reforms in criminal justice responses to substance abuse; creation of systems of care and positive movement toward more family-focused supports.

At the same time, we know that our state faces real challenges to advance equitable access to mental health and other services across our communities, address racial and economic disparities, and turn the tide on increasing rates of anxiety, depression and suicide across our population, especially among our elders and youth.

As partners in the transformative mission of Wisconsin's human services delivery system, WAFCA seeks advances across a number of policy priorities this session to continue:

- **Moving Forward on Mental Health**
- **Building Strong Youth and Families**
- **Reforming Regulations to Improve Access to Quality Care**

WAFCA is a member association that works to improve the lives of families and children in Wisconsin. Our member agencies provide a wide array of prevention and supportive services such as foster care, in-home support, counseling, and mental health treatment. WAFCA represents over 50 child and family serving agencies and leaders in the field and advocates for the more than 250,000 individuals and families that they serve each year.



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Moving Forward on Mental Health

- **Expand school mental health services** by increasing grant funding, continuing MA-funded consultation between therapists and teachers, and allowing consultation to include phone contact with parents to facilitate family engagement in the treatment process.¹
- Build on current Wraparound models for children and youth to **create Family Wraparound**, which would enable the whole family system to access needed supports, including mental health and substance use treatment for parents. Evidence-based substance use and mental health treatment for parents of children at-risk of out-of-home placement is eligible for federal match under the Family First Prevention Services Act.²
- **Invest in the mental health and substance use treatment workforce** by reimbursing providers for the provision of clinical supervision for “in-training” professionals pursuing full certification and licensure.

Building Strong Youth and Families

- Invest in **in-home visiting expansion** statewide. While half of Wisconsin counties and tribes are served by a home visiting program, as of 2017 only 29 programs were funded through the state [Family Foundations](#) program. The majority of home visiting services across the state are funded with a combination of federal, local and foundation dollars with very limited state GPR investment. Under the Family First Prevention Services Act,³ evidence-based home visiting programs, like Healthy Families America, may be eligible for Title IV-E federal, increasing the value of state GPR investments going forward.
- Advance successful futures for **youth in the foster care system** by supporting: 1) extension of foster care to age 21 for all youth in care; 2) adoption of [2017 AB 777](#) to provide tuition remission and make higher education more accessible; and 3) access to driver’s licensing for foster youth by adopting a program like the [Florida Keys to Independence](#) program, a comprehensive program that addresses the financial and insurance barriers to driver’s licensing for foster youth [[Florida CS/HB 977](#)].
- **Increase child & family community aids** to address increasing workloads, caseloads and out-of-home care costs. Child and family aids have not kept pace with growing child protective services referrals. Inadequate support for caseworkers increases turnover and impacts the stability and well-being of children in care.
- Fully fund the **Children’s Long-Term Care Services (CLTS) and Birth to Three programs** to allow providers to increase available services so more families can benefit from these in-home supports that prevent more intensive and expensive services.

¹ [DRAFT School-Based Mental Health 2019-20 Legislative Priorities](#) (12.18);
[Background - Advancing School-Based MH Services in WI](#) (03.15)

² [DRAFT WAFCA Overview FFPSA 12.18](#)

³ *Ibid.*, Pg. 1

- **Return 17-year-olds to the youth justice system.** The youth justice system provides a better array of services and supports for youth and their families than is possible through the adult system. Adopting 2017 AB 660 would be a step in the right direction to begin the process of returning 17-year-olds to the youth justice system while providing sufficient funding to offset new costs to county government.

Reforming Regulations to Improve Access to Quality Care

- Permit **video recording in out-of-home care settings** to improve safety for children and staff. Other states, including states where Wisconsin youth are currently being served out-of-state, permit the use of cameras and recording to monitor for the safety of children and staff and aid in quality assurance and training.
- **Establish liability protections** for private child placing agencies, group homes and residential care centers similar to protections granted to other similar types of facilities, such as community-based residential facilities and nursing homes.
- Require DHS and DCF to recognize **national accreditation** when renewing out-of-home care licenses and clinic licenses.
- **Eliminate “re-licensing” requirements** for out-of-home care agencies when a provider relocates or changes their agency name.
- Support additional **clarification of regulations governing substance use treatment providers** to increase access to services.