

Department of Children and Families

Child Protective Services (CPS) Funding

The Citizens of Northwest Wisconsin Request

That the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families increase the Children and Family Aids Allocation to counties in the 2019-21 state biennial budget by \$30 million annually to cover a greater share of out-of-home care costs and increase staffing levels based on the caseload standards developed by the Wisconsin County Human Services Association (WCHSA) and to create a legislative oversight mechanism to regularly review CPS resource needs as part of the biennial budget process.

Background

Northern Wisconsin's children have been significantly and negatively impacted by the current substance abuse crisis. The abuse of opioids and methamphetamine has created a situation where parents have little motivation to make the changes needed



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to create safety in their home. Counties are forced to remove children and place them in out-of-home care while trying to engage parents. A lack of inpatient treatment options and inadequate Medicaid funding make it difficult for parents to access needed and often required treatment. At present, these mandated services are adversely affecting county budgets and are depleting, or have depleted, county risk reserves in Northern Wisconsin counties. At present, the State provides insufficient funding to counties for child protective services and the costs are increasing each year.

In 2018, the Douglas County Health and Human Services Department was approximately \$1.5 million over budget due to the cost of child protective services. Douglas County out-of-home care costs increased 63% from 2015-2017. Bayfield County experienced a 79% increase in out-of-home care in the same time frame. Ashland County unsuccessfully attempted to pass a budget referendum to increase county taxes to cover the shortage in funding for out-of-home care costs due to a 56% increase in costs in 2016 and 2017.

The current State budget proposal of an additional \$5 million annually will not be adequate to address increased costs for mandated child protective services in northern Wisconsin. The impact of these increasing costs to counties is that other essential services are being decreased or eliminated to fund CPS out-of-home care costs.