

**STATE OF WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND
FAMILIES**

AGENCY PRIMER: “WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW”

JANUARY 2023



**INSTITUTE FOR
REFORMING GOVERNMENT**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| FROM THE DESK OF CJ SZAFIR | 2 |
| REPORT SUMMARY | 3 |
| BACKGROUND | 4 |
| AGENCY DESCRIPTION, MISSION, & FUNCTION | 5 |
| AGENCY BUDGET TRENDS | 7 |
| AGENCY LEADERSHIP | 8 |
| ORGANIZATIONAL CHART | 10 |
| ATTACHED COUNCILS, TASK FORCES, COMMITTEES | 11 |
| MAJOR PAST INITIATIVES (2011-Present) | 12 |
| STAKEHOLDERS | 13 |
| PAST EXECUTIVE ORDERS | 14 |
| GOVERNMENT REFORM OPPORTUNITIES | 15 |
| CONCLUSION | 16 |

FROM THE DESK OF CJ SZAFIR

Freedom and Opportunity. Those are ideals that bind us together as a state. Unfortunately, the size and scope of state government too often gets in the way of individuals and families being able to achieve their full potential as they build their share of the American Dream.

We can do better, and we must do better. We all should ask, – “Is the mission of state government, — of each and every agency, bureau, and division —, aligned with the vision that everyday Wisconsinites have for Wisconsin? Is state government set up to help citizens succeed, or is it a roadblock to success? We need a conservative vision for state government, indeed for each and every agency.

Last spring, with support from our donors and Board of Directors, the Institute for Reforming Government started an ambitious project to help answer those questions about the biggest state agencies to help answer those questions because we believe the best way to enhance liberty is to improve transparency. This project was the work of eight experts in Wisconsin state government, including three senior-level cabinet officials, a budget director, and subject matter experts. In addition, our team had regular meetings with former top officials in state government as well as business leaders and other experts outside of government. We looked at past revenue and spending trends. The findings are not surprising.

State agencies are massive. They spend record amounts of taxpayer dollars year over year. They too often get in the way of individual success and are set up as enforcement agents instead of partners in creating a better Wisconsin. They need reform. We need leaders to bring forward conservative visions to the agencies.

In these briefings, we shine light onto state agencies to help all citizens diagnose what is broken. Later, based on these and discussions with people all over Wisconsin, we'll offer government reform ideas and detailed budget analysis to help chart a new course for Wisconsin, - one where each and every individual in our state has the freedom and opportunity to succeed.

Sincerely,

CJ Szafir

President

Institute for Reforming Government

SUMMARY

“Light and liberty go together”

Thomas Jefferson, In a letter to Tench Coxe, 1795

This document prepared by the Institute for Reforming Government (IRG) is intended to inform policy makers and the public of the full scope of the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF). Our partners at the IRG Action Fund will release conservative, free market, and liberty minded policy reforms specifically for the DCF in a separate document.

For the general public, the executive branch of Wisconsin state government can be a mystery. There are countless agencies with billions of tax dollars flowing through them. Although some may have an understanding of an agency because of their daily work or real world experience, few people in Wisconsin have a handle on the entirety of the executive branch. Each agency has its own mission, functions, and programs. Some agencies generate their own revenue, some rely on state tax dollars and many of them take some sort of federal funding. Each agency has unique powers and authorities. The goal of this briefing document is to pull back the veil and show Wisconsinites how their government taxes, spends, and regulates.

Over the course of months, a team of policy experts at IRG poured through all of the information on Wisconsin's biggest agencies. In this briefing document, you will see agency functions, budget trends, a list of past appointees, and policy concerns. These items create a basis for understanding the scope and history of each agency in an effort to inform policy makers in Madison as they carry out their work in the coming legislative session. By doing this, we hope to inspire the next generation of policy makers and cast a conservative vision for Wisconsin.

The Department of Children and Families oversees numerous government programs related to child protection, child adoption, and foster care. DCF works closely with and through county health and human service departments. Almost all of the department's programs run through these county agencies with the exception of Milwaukee as their programs are run by DCF directly. The department is responsible for programs including Wisconsin Works (W-2), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Wisconsin Shares. The department also has regulatory authority over the state's child care centers.



Wisconsin was one of the first states in the nation to adopt laws providing for general child welfare. When Wisconsin enacted the Wisconsin Children's Code in 1929, it was among the most comprehensive at the time. It wasn't until the 1930's that the federal government, in the throes of economic calamity, would enact welfare programs. In 1939 the Wisconsin legislature consolidated all of the state's welfare functions into one agency with the creation of the State Department of Public Welfare. In 1967, the state's executive branch was reorganized and the Department of Health and Social Services was created. The agency retained this title until 1996, when it was renamed the Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS).

Finally, DHFS split into two agencies known today as, the Department of Health Services and the Department of Children and Families. Under the new law, DCF would be charged with overseeing county programs to assist children and families including, adoption, child care and child welfare. DCF then took over the following programs from the Department of Workforce Development: Wisconsin Works, child care subsidy program, child support enforcement, and programs related to temporary assistance for needy families. Today the Department of Children and Families has a nearly \$3 billion biennial budget and employs roughly 800 people.

AGENCY DESCRIPTION, MISSION, & FUNCTION

Information in this section was pulled directly from public sources on the Department of Administration and Department of Children and Families websites.

Agency Descriptions

The department is headed by a secretary, who is appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate, and has five divisions. The department works in partnership with local governments, health and social services agencies, private providers, and concerned and affected citizens to:

- Protect and promote child, family and community well-being through integrated programs offering a family-centered approach to service delivery.
- Manage child protective services in Milwaukee County.
- Administer the statewide child welfare system by working with local governments, health and social services agencies, and private providers to protect children and establish permanency plans for the care and placement of these children.
- Administer the home visiting program.
- Administer the Wisconsin Works (W-2) and Wisconsin Shares (child care subsidy) programs to promote self-sufficiency through employment.
- Maintain systems to collect and disburse child support payments, and encourage county efforts to establish paternity and support.

Mission

All Wisconsin children and youth are safe and loved members of thriving families and communities.



Function

Division of Early Care and Education

Administers the Milwaukee County Child Care Administration, YoungStar Program, Wisconsin Shares, and regulates child care facilities and operators.

Division of Management Services

This division oversees professional services of the agency including IT, contracts, purchasing, facilities management, and project management among other administrative responsibilities.

Division of Family and Economic Security

This division administers Wisconsin Works (W-2), Child Support, refugee services and the Transform Milwaukee and Transitional Jobs programs.

Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services

The primary duty of this division is to ensure child safety in Milwaukee County. Services provided through this division are similar to what is administered through health and human service departments in other counties. With the goal of keeping children in their homes, the division provides temporary foster care when needed, and will place children in alternative care who cannot live with their parents.

Division of Safety and Permanence

This division focuses on protecting the most vulnerable in our society, child victims of abuse, sex trafficking, and neglect. It administers the Bureau of Youth Services, juvenile justice programs and domestic abuse prevention.

AGENCY BUDGET TRENDS

The state budget process begins in September of every even year when each agency sends its budget requests to the Department of Administration. The Governor then has several months put together the executive budget proposal that is forwarded to the Legislature. The Legislature, through the work of the Joint Finance Committee, then holds hearings and votes on the budget through the spring and summer of the odd year. This culminates with the signing of the budget document that summer. While technically due by July 1 of the budget year, often budget debates will drag into the Summer and sometimes the Fall. However, the government does not shut down in Wisconsin as it does at the federal level when there is a budget impasse - it simply continues on the current spending plan until a new budget is adopted.

DCF is funded mainly by federal dollars, receiving over \$800 million in a \$1.4 billion annual budget. The federal block grant, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the state's maintenance of effort (MOE) dollars, annually consumes over 25% of all GPR dollars in the department, or approximately \$131 million.

Agency Budget Trend

| Fund | 2017 ACT 59 | 2019 ACT 9 | 2021 ACT 58 |
|--------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| GPR | \$925,615,200 | \$954,415,800 | \$993,563,800 |
| FED | \$1,395,870,500 | \$1,540,989,800 | \$1,624,100,300 |
| PR | \$223,543,400 | \$244,065,900 | \$239,728,400 |
| SEG | \$18,549,400 | \$18,549,400 | \$18,549,400 |
| TOTAL | \$2,563,578,500 | \$2,758,020,900 | \$2,875,941,900 |

FTE Position Summary

| Fund | 2017 ACT 59 | 2019 ACT 9 | 2021 ACT 58 |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| GPR | 231.92 | 232.92 | 232.92 |
| FED | 3776.93 | 375.73 | 385.74 |
| PR | 174.31 | 179.51 | 179.51 |
| SEG | | | |
| TOTAL | 783.16 | 788.16 | 798.17 |



As the head of a cabinet agency, the Secretary is appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate and serves at the pleasure of the Governor. The Secretary of each agency then must appoint the other members of their team to help them carry out the duties and responsibilities of the agency. Descriptions of each appointed position are listed below:

Secretary

Appointed by the Governor, the Secretary leads and represents the agency. The position is responsible for directing and managing the agency to execute the Governor's agenda while ensuring the efficient operation of the agency per state statute. The position is also responsible for reporting on the agency's matters to the Governor and Legislature.

Deputy Secretary

The Deputy Secretary serves at the pleasure of the Secretary and is primarily responsible for assisting the Secretary with carrying out the mission of the agency including but not limited to, personnel management, day-to-day operations, and external affairs.

Assistant Deputy Secretary

The Assistant Deputy Secretary also serves at the pleasure of the Secretary and is responsible for assisting both the Secretary and Deputy Secretary. Responsibilities may include but are not limited to day-to-day operations and external affairs aligned with the agency's mission.

Chief Legal Counsel

The Chief Legal Counsel serves at the pleasure of the Secretary and provides legal counsel and support involving the agency's affairs.

Legislative Liaison

The Legislative Liaison is primarily responsible for facilitating and managing relationships with the Legislature and external stakeholders to provide information as needed and requested. The position also helps develop the agency's legislative agenda to align with the Governor's priorities, current industry standards and respond to stakeholder concerns.

Communications Director

The Communications Director supports the Secretary's Office in strategic communications and responds to media inquiries. The position may also speak on behalf of the Secretary and represent the agency in the media.

Division Administrator

The Division Administrator, appointed by the Secretary, is responsible for providing leadership, personnel management and guidance on day-to-day operations for the agency's assigned division. This position typically reports to the Deputy Secretary, communicating activities and providing advice to ensure the division is in line with the agency's mission.

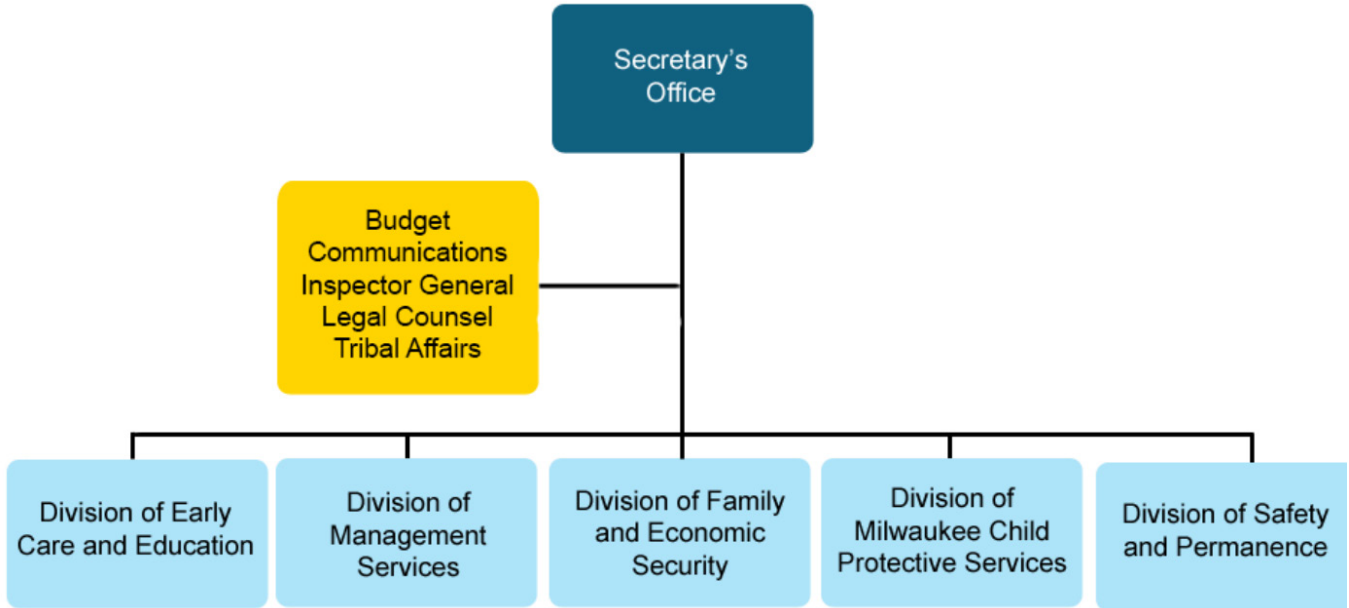
These appointments may change during the 4-year term of a Governor. Listed here are the teams serving under Governor Evers in mid-2022, as well as the team who served at the end of Governor Walker's final term.

Agency Leadership

| POSITION | EVERS | WALKER |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------|
| SECRETARY | Emilie Amundson | Eloise Anderson |
| DEPUTY SECRETARY | Jeff Pertl | Ron Hunt |
| ASSISTANT DEPUTY SECRETARY | Nadya Perez-Reyes | Sara Buschmann |
| CHIEF LEGAL COUNSEL | Therese Durkin | Randy Keys |
| COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR | Thomas McCarthy | Sara Buschmann |
| LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR | Amanda Merkwae | Lonna Morouney |
| DIVISION ADMINISTRATORS | | |
| DIVISION OF EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION | Erin Arango-Escalante | Judy Norman-Nunnery |
| DIVISION OF MANAGEMENT SERVICES | Bob Nikolay | Bob Nikolay |
| DIVISION OF FAMILY AND ECONOMIC SECURITY | Connie Chesnik | Kris Randal |
| DIVISION OF MILWAUKEE CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES | Charmian Klyve | Deanna Alexander |



ORGANIZATION CHART



ATTACHED COUNCILS, TASK FORCES, & COMMITTEES

Like most agencies, the Department of Children and Families administers boards and councils charged with various responsibilities. Generally, these entities either provide advice to the Secretary or they are part of the regulatory process itself.

Governor's Council on Domestic Abuse

Provides policy and input to the legislature on how to address domestic abuse issues

Rate Regulation Advisory Committee

Advises the department regarding rates for child welfare agencies, residential care centers, and group homes.

Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board

The board administers the Children's Trust Fund and provides advice to the governor and the legislature on changes needed to reduce child abuse and neglect. The board is attached to the department for administrative purposes.

Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council

Provides advice to the Wisconsin Legislature regarding policies and ideas to improve child welfare in Milwaukee County.



MAJOR PAST INITIATIVES (2011-Present)

Most major policy initiatives happen during the budget process. The Governor, and sometimes the Legislature, will propose a major reduction or increase in spending for any number of programs. The major initiatives dating from 2011 to the present for the Department of Children and Families is listed below:

Major Past Initiatives

| INITIATIVE | ORDERS | ENACTED | NOTES |
|---|--------|---------|----------------|
| Transfer Foodshare from DHS to DCF | Walker | No | Deleted by JFC |
| Transfer SSI and Caretaker programs from DHS to DCF | Walker | No | Deleted by JFC |
| Transitional Jobs Demonstration project | Walker | No | Deleted by JFC |
| Created the office of inspector general | Walker | Yes | |
| Created the Tribal Family Service Program | Walker | Yes | |
| Star system - transfer hr, payroll benefits to DOA | Walker | Yes | |
| Free internet for people on W-2 | Evers | No | Deleted by JFC |
| Community Services - "We Got This" program | Evers | No | Deleted by JFC |
| Drug screening, testing, and treatment, exempts marijuana | Evers | No | Deleted by JFC |
| Child care subsidies to parents instead of providers | Walker | Yes | |
| Reform Youngstar rating system for child care centers | Walker | No | |
| Streamline social programs into a 'one stop shop' | Walker | No | |

STAKEHOLDERS

Every agency has a number of organizations, professions, and industries that are uniquely interested in the policy or regulatory decisions that could affect their membership or industry. The groups are commonly organized into trade associations and are represented by registered lobbyists that stay in touch with agency leadership. These lobbyists keep their membership informed on current policy debates and use their expertise to educate policy makers on the issues important to their industries. Below is a non exhaustive list of stakeholders that are interested in the Department of Children and Families.

| STAKEHOLDER | TYPICAL ISSUES |
|---|--|
| W-2 vendors | Transitional Job/Milwaukee Jobs vendors |
| Childcare providers | Youngstar ratings, workforce issues |
| Wisconsin Child Care Administrators Association | Childcare regulations |
| Wisconsin Council on Children & Families | Child welfare |
| Milwaukee County | Operation of Milwaukee related services |
| Wisconsin County Association | Represents county HHS departments |
| Wisconsin Association of Family & Childrens Agencies | Represents the interests of family & children agencies |
| End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin: the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence | Advocates on issues related to domestic violence |



PAST EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Formal actions by the Governor are conveyed through executive order. These orders often direct state agencies to carry out the Governor's policy goals within their statutory authority. They can be used to create councils to explore public policy solutions, bring the state into compliance with federal requirements, direct agencies to take certain actions, and carry out powers granted to the Governor under Chapter 14 of the Wisconsin Statutes. Below is a list of executive orders that pertain to the Department of Children and Families.

Executive Orders

| GOVERNOR | EO # | DATE | DESCRIPTION | STATUS |
|----------|---------|---------|---|---------|
| Evers | 3,18,26 | 4/13/20 | Suspension of various child care regulations during COVID-19 pandemic | Expired |

GOVERNMENT REFORM OPPORTUNITIES

Wisconsin government has grown too big and too expensive. This has precipitated issues across the whole of the executive branch that have become a barrier to the success of Wisconsin residents and businesses alike. The Institute for Reforming Government endeavors to shine light on these issues as prime opportunities for bold reform. Below you will find a non-exhaustive list of policy concerns that we have highlighted for the Department of Children and Families.

Child Care Access

Challenges with the cost and access of childcare impact how Wisconsin parents work, or whether they are able to work at all. If a family does find care, it is a steep cost to the family budget, often rivaling college tuition, a time when a family's earnings are likely low as they are typically just starting their careers. Improving child care access is a workforce issue, important to families and employers alike. While no one reform will solve the issue, there are proactive steps lawmakers can take. Other reform-minded governors, like Governor Reynolds in Iowa, have formed task forces of stakeholders to work on the issue. It may be desired in Wisconsin in order to develop a comprehensive reform agenda for child care access. However, waiting for the creation of a task force and its conclusions does not help those with immediate needs.

Adoptions

Adoption can be a confusing, time consuming process for parents and for the child. Although there are a number of resources for those seeking to adopt, it is often a difficult maze of government regulations to work through, even with the help of well-intentioned nonprofit organizations.



At the Institute for Reforming Government we know that the government isn't the way of the future - people are. And we believe that in order to empower people and ideas to flourish, our government needs to get out of the way.

This is nothing new for Wisconsinites- we have a long history as the standard bearer for government reform - we were the first state to implement unemployment insurance, Wisconsin Works (W-2), and we were on the cutting edge of major collective bargaining reform. But today the state we love is beginning to lag behind. Our executive branch has become bloated, slow, and expensive - a burden to the state's economy instead of a catalyst.

The solution to this problem isn't more government, it's less. What we need is a conservative vision for the state. This introductory document lays bare the issues and problems that are standing in the way for Wisconsin. In the coming months, IRG will be releasing a series of reforms that will cast a conservative vision for key executive branch agencies in the state.

Now is the time to renew our faith in the people of Wisconsin, not the government.