



**Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect in Department of  
Children and Families/Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare**



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**Fredi-Ellen Bove, Administrator**  
**Division of Safety and Permanence**  
**Department of Children and Families**

# Overview of Presentation

- The Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (BMCW) handles a large volume of reports.
- Current Wisconsin Statutes provide a sound framework.
- DCF/BMCW has processes in place to handle incoming referrals effectively.
- DCF/BMCW is engaged in continually improving the quality of its services.
- DCF/BMCW engages in outreach to reinforce the importance of reporting to BMCW any concerns regarding a child's safety.

# Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (BMCW): Structure



- BMCW is administered by the state through the Department of Children and Families (DCF).
- BMCW follows the statutory criteria and DCF administrative policies described at the previous meeting related to child abuse and neglect reporting.
- Access and Initial Assessment functions in BMCW, which include responding to reports of child abuse and neglect, are carried out by state workers.
- Other functions in BMCW, including ongoing case management of cases, are carried out by contracted agencies.

# BMCW: Handles Large Volume of Child Abuse and Neglect Reports

- BMCW receives the largest number of child abuse and neglect referrals of any county.
  - BMCW accounts for 23% of all referrals statewide.
- BMCW has the capability to accept referral calls 24/7 through the phone line: 414-220-SAFE

# BMCW: Handles Large Volume of Child Abuse and Neglect Reports

- BMCW receives approximately 3,800 calls/month:
  - The vast majority, about 2,450 calls/month, are informational or referrals to other services (for example, information and referral for child care)
  - About 1,350 calls/month are child abuse and neglect referrals
    - Of the 1,350, slightly more than half, 52% or 700 calls, are screened in based on DCF standards
    - Of the 1,350, slightly less than half, 48% or 650 calls, are screened out based on DCF standards
- BMCW notifies mandated reporters by letter of the screening decision on the case.

# Processes are in Place to Handle Child Abuse and Neglect Calls Effectively



- Statewide computerized child welfare system, eWiSACWIS, is an important tool for BMCW and other counties in handling referrals.
- Child welfare workers document information on all referrals in a standard way in eWiSACWIS.
  - Information on all past referrals, including screen-outs, is maintained in eWiSACWIS.
- For an incoming referral, child welfare workers can determine easily and quickly if there have been past referrals on the child and/or family, to identify possible patterns that may be of concern.

# DCF/BMCW Engages in Continuous Quality Improvement

- DCF/BMCW is committed to continually improving the quality of its services
- The Department conducts Quality Service Reviews (QSR) of BMCW and non-Milwaukee counties on a regular basis
- The state's QSR process exceeds the federal requirements for a Quality Assurance system
  - The QSR is carried out by a unit that is independent of BMCW.
  - The QSR uses a standardized assessment tool, based on national best practice.
  - The QSR assesses the agency's practice through review of a sample of cases and interviews with workers and external stakeholders.

# DCF/BMCW Engages in Continuous Quality Improvement

- A QSR is conducted in BMCW every 1-2 years.
- Most recent review was completed in June 2012
  - In-depth review of 93 cases
  - Interviews with 364 stakeholders
- Key findings related to Access include:
  - BMCW workers use best practice protocols in responding to calls, including asking open-ended, clarifying questions
  - BMCW workers are entering detailed descriptions of the alleged maltreatment into the eWiSACWIS computer system
  - Screening decisions are made within 24 hours, as required

# BMCW Engages in Outreach to Public about Reporting

- DCF, including BMCW, encourages anyone who has a concern that a child may not be safe to call BMCW, regardless of whether the caller knows if the situation meets the criteria of child abuse and neglect.
- BMCW does significant outreach and training for external groups on child abuse and neglect reporting. Groups receiving training include:
  - Police, health departments, hospital social workers, Milwaukee County Department of Health and Social Services, Milwaukee County Housing Authority and youth serving agencies
  - BMCW staff trained a total of 675 external stakeholders in 2011 and 464 external stakeholders to date in 2012 on child abuse and neglect reporting.

# Summary

- Current statutory framework for child abuse and neglect reporting, including specification of mandated reporters, works well.
- DCF/BMCW has processes in place to handle incoming referrals effectively.
- DCF/BMCW is committed to continually improving the quality of its services.
- DCF/BMCW will continue to engage in outreach to reinforce the importance of reporting to BMCW any concerns regarding a child's safety.

# Conclusion



Comments and questions are welcomed.

Please feel free to contact me at 608-266-8710 or at:  
[FrediEllen.Bove@wisconsin.gov](mailto:FrediEllen.Bove@wisconsin.gov).

