

WAFCA - Budget Item Talking Points (04.19)

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Do you have more talking points to share with WAFCA colleagues? Looking for additional information on other budget items? Contact Kathy Markeland (kmarkeland@wafca.org) with your questions and suggestions!

HOME VISITING

Invest \$10 million to double the number of families benefiting from home visiting supports. While half of Wisconsin counties and tribes are served by a home visiting program, as of 2017 only 29 counties and tribes 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 (FFPSA), evidence-based home visiting programs may be eligible for new Title IV-E federal match, increasing the value of state GPR investments going forward.

- **Current Investment.** The FFHV program is currently available to only 1600 families in 24 counties and 5 tribes. Thousands more families could benefit from this service. Of the \$14.2 million currently spent on FFHV, only \$1.1 million is GPR.
- **Return on Investment.** Outcomes research has shown that each dollar invested in evidence-based home visiting programs can yield up to **\$5.70 in savings** in the long run. Long term cost savings include: reduced health services use (including emergency department visits), reduced costs of child protection services, decreased special education placements and grade repetition, which results in higher educational attainment and economic success later in life (Sources: [NCSL](#), 4/18; [NASHP](#), 9/17))
- **New Federal Match Available.** Passage of the federal Family First Prevention Services Act creates an opportunity for Wisconsin to generate up to 50 percent federal match for new state investments in evidence-based home visiting programs. Effective 2019, states that have a plan in place may start claiming Title IV-E match for programs that prevent children from entering foster care – home visiting will be one of the key services that will qualify for matching dollars. Any new investments to prevent foster care entry made after FY 2014 will be eligible for the federal match. Investing now, means the state will be ready to start federal claiming as soon as Wisconsin's plan is approved. We will be able to double the coverage at half the cost.
- **Reaching More Families.** However you measure it, the need for home visiting services in the state far outpaces the current capacity. There are rural and tribal communities in the state with no access to home visiting services and other underserved regions of the state due to insufficient funding and service providers. With \$10 million the number of families served could double.
- **Statewide Support.** In statewide listening sessions held by the Legislature's Children's Caucus and the Speaker's Foster Care Task Force in 2017, home visiting consistently emerged as a key, primary prevention strategy shown to improve child school readiness, increase economic self-sufficiency and reduce child maltreatment.

SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH

Expand school mental health services by increasing grant funding to \$16 million annually, continuing MA-funded consultation between therapists and teachers, and allowing consultation to include contact with parents to facilitate family engagement in the treatment process.

Student Mental Health Consultation

- **Remove the Sunset.** Remove the sunset on the Medicaid student mental health consultation service code that allows therapists to speak with school personnel about student treatment plans and their implementation at school. In the 2017-19 biennial budget, Medicaid was required to establish a consultation code and begin paying for it beginning July 1, 2018 with a sunset date of June 30, 2019.
- **Supports Student Treatment and Classroom Teachers.** This service improves treatment planning, treatment goal achievement and support for classroom teachers.
- **Add Contact with Parents.** Expand mental health consultation to include consultation with parents to facilitate family engagement in the treatment process. Since students have their mental health sessions at school, parents are not present to participate. Allowing therapists to connect with parents is essential for family engagement which in turn improves therapeutic outcomes.

School Mental Health Collaboration Grants

- **Increasing Amount and Length of Grants.** Increase school mental health collaboration grants by at least \$16 million dollars annually. Allow grants of two or more years and variable amounts depending on the proposal and school size.
- **Big Demand.** Grant applications in 2018 totaled more than twice the \$3.25 million appropriated.
- **Increase Access Statewide.** Increasing the total grant amount will allow more schools to develop school mental health programs which are demonstrating improved mental health and academic achievement for students.
- **Improved Mental Health Means Reduced Behavioral Support Costs.** School mental health programs also significantly reduce school behavioral support program costs.

DRIVER'S LICENSE ASSISTANCE FOR FOSTER YOUTH

Support creation of a program to enable a child in foster care to obtain a driver's license while in out-of-home placement.

- **Driver's Education Courses and Insurance.** The Governor's budget proposes \$380,000 (GPR) over the biennium to begin a driver's license assistance program for youth in foster care. The program would include assistance finding driver's education courses, behind the wheel training and insurance. The resources would also cover course fees, licensing fees and the cost of insurance, including the additional cost of insurance on a motor vehicle owned by an out-of-home care provider and used by the youth.
- **Driving is a Life Skill that Supports Employment and Independence.** Obtaining a driver's license is an important step toward adult independence and can be essential for youth in care who are seeking employment and participation in normal adolescent extracurricular activities.

- **Priority Issue for Foster Youth.** This has been a priority issue for the Foster Care Youth Advisory Council for nearly a decade and is modeled on programs, such as the Florida Keys to Independence program, which has been operational since 2014.
- **Foster Parent Liability.** Under current law, foster parents may support youth through the licensing process, but some foster parents are understandably concerned about the liability associated with sponsoring a new driver or are unable to do so because of insurance restrictions.

RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH GRANTS

Support additional state resources grants for runaway and homeless youth programs.

- **Additional Funding Proposed.** The Governor's budget provides \$250,000 annually to increase the grant funding DCF provides to programs that provide services for runaway and homeless youth.
- **High Need for Services.** According to data collected for the DPI Homeless Student Enrollment by Public School District report, in the 2016-17 school year there were 2,283 unaccompanied minors identified by school districts.
- **Aligns with Bipartisan Agenda to Reduce Homelessness.** This proposed funding increase aligns with findings in the 2018 WI Interagency Council on Homelessness statewide action plan.
- **Runaway Services Provide Crisis Intervention.** There are insufficient runaway and homeless youth resources across the state. These services provide critical intervention and safety services that help divert youth and families from youth justice and child welfare systems reducing costs for state and county government.