



TO: The Honorable Tony Evers, Governor of Wisconsin
FROM: Kathy Markeland, Associate Director
DATE: June 27, 2019
RE: Support for Initiatives in the 2019-21 Biennial Budget

On behalf of the Wisconsin Association of Family & Children's Agencies (WAFCA), thank you for advancing a state budget proposal that provided targeted investments to strengthen and support children and families in our state. While the final package approved by the Legislature does not fully align with the vision you advanced, as a statewide association of agencies providing counseling, foster care, mental health and substance use treatment and other supportive services for children and families, we believe that there are elements in 2019 AB 56 that will improve the quality and availability of behavioral health services and other family supports.

The Legislature modified some of your funding proposals in child and family services, but we believe that the overall investment in child welfare prevention and safety services along with the proposed increased funding for child and family aids will help counties expand their capacity to meet the growing caseloads in out-of-home care, while also creating opportunities to invest in more preventative services for families. In addition, while the non-institutional provider Medicaid rate increase approved in AB 56 falls short of your original initiative, we are hopeful that the funding will ultimately lift rates for mental health and substance use treatment services. In the area of school-based mental health, we are pleased that the Legislature supported your proposal to eliminate the sunset on Medicaid consultation services.

In terms of new initiatives, AB 56 creates a new workforce related program that is of significant interest to our member agencies -- Qualified Treatment Trainee (QTT) Program Grants (AB 56, Section 1763m).

WAFCA highly endorses this new grant program which will grow our state's capacity to train the next generation of clinicians with specialization in child, adolescent and family treatment. WAFCA member agencies across the state provide the necessary clinical supervision to facilitate the development of these master's level practitioners as they pursue their 3,000 hours practice. QTTs obtain their practice hours in a range of service settings from residential care centers to outpatient mental health clinics to hospitals. Currently these agencies provide this clinical supervision without financial support. The QTT program grant in AB 56 is a great first step toward helping programs provide a quality learning environment for these new clinicians.

As currently drafted, the program limits eligible applicants to health care providers, which leaves a significant number of programs outside of the potential grantee pool. Ultimately, we would like to see eligibility expanded to include other child, adolescent and family serving programs that are running clinical development programs in community-based services and we hope your administration and the Legislature will support us as we seek such future expansion in the program.

Thank you for your enduring commitment to the children and families of Wisconsin and your support for these budget initiatives, which promote family and community stability, mental health and well-being.