

Putting Families First: Child Welfare in Wisconsin



March 2022

A top-down view of several hands of different skin tones reaching towards a circle of papers laid out on a wooden floor. The papers are arranged in a ring, and the hands are positioned around them, suggesting a collaborative activity or a shared goal.

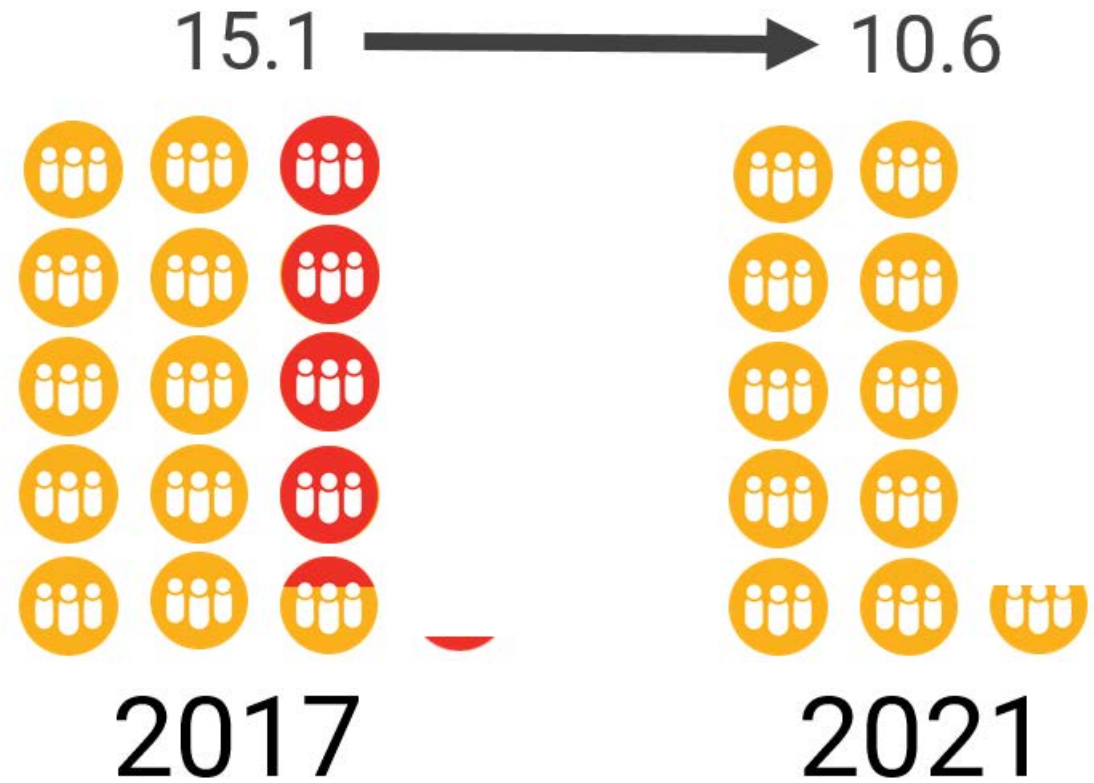
Our Vision

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

A group of diverse young people, including a young woman with blonde hair, a young man with dark hair, and a young woman with brown hair, are smiling and looking upwards. They are wearing casual clothing like denim jackets and sweaters. The image has a dark, semi-transparent overlay, and a white rectangular box is centered over the group, containing the text.

What the Data Tells Us

4.5
fewer children
removed per day
since the peak in 2017.



Nearly **half** the number of removals following a CPS report compared to 5 years ago.

Removals within 60 days of a CPS report

5,162

2015

2016

2017

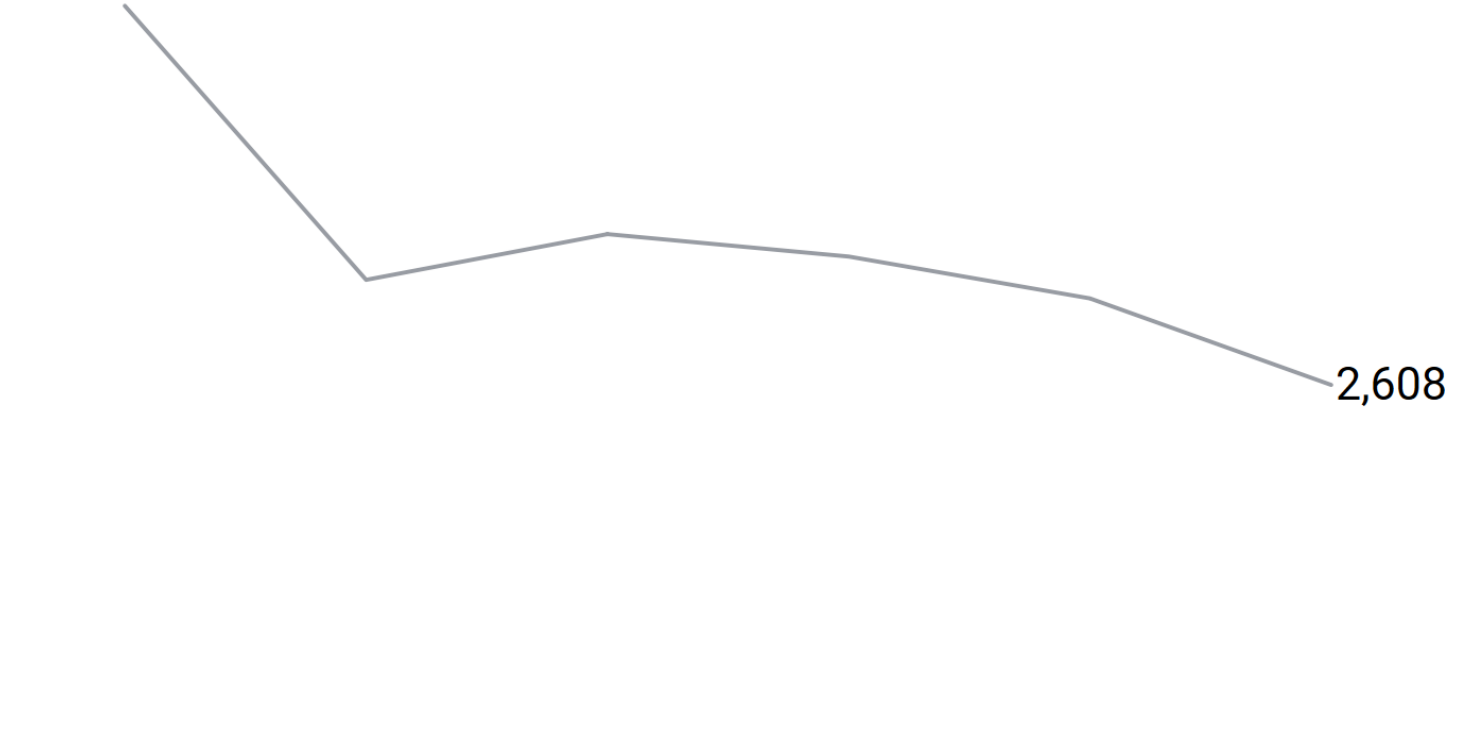
2018

2019

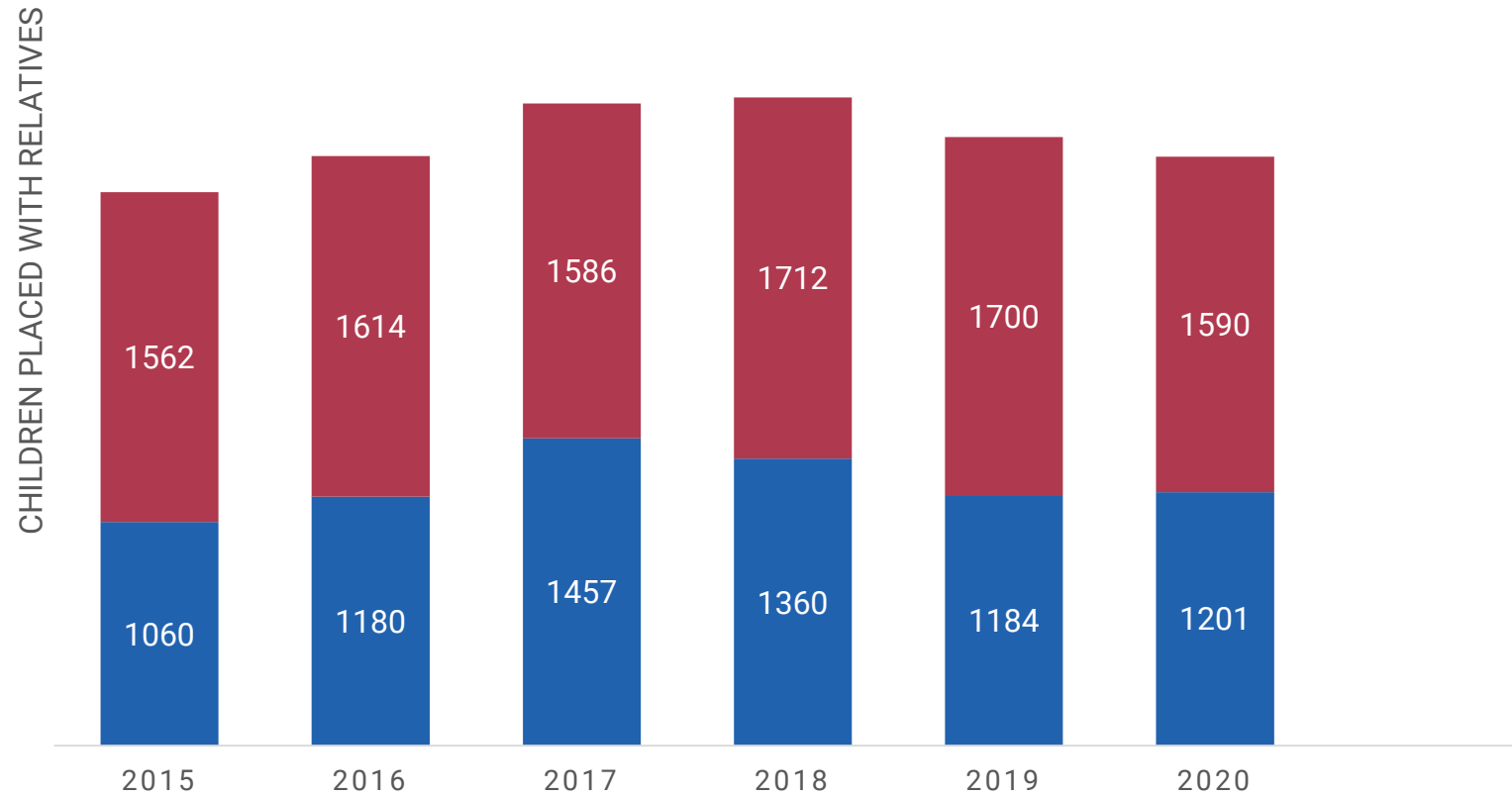
2020

2,608

-49%



Kinship Care Relative- Foster Home



Children experiencing a **relative placement increased** since 2015.



Continuing the Momentum



QRT P



CERTIFIED

Partnership for Kids with Casey Family Programs

- **Housing resources** and **concrete supports** for families at risk of removal
- Innovative **kinship** and **foster** care options for adolescents
- Child by child approach to **bring kids back in state**, closer to their homes and communities





Centering the Voices of Lived Experience





Lived Experience Defined

- Lived experience is the personal knowledge gained through direct, first-hand involvement of interacting with Wisconsin child welfare system. This individual provides an authentic perspective that contributes to a deeper understanding of service gaps and system improvement needs.

Lived Experience Journey

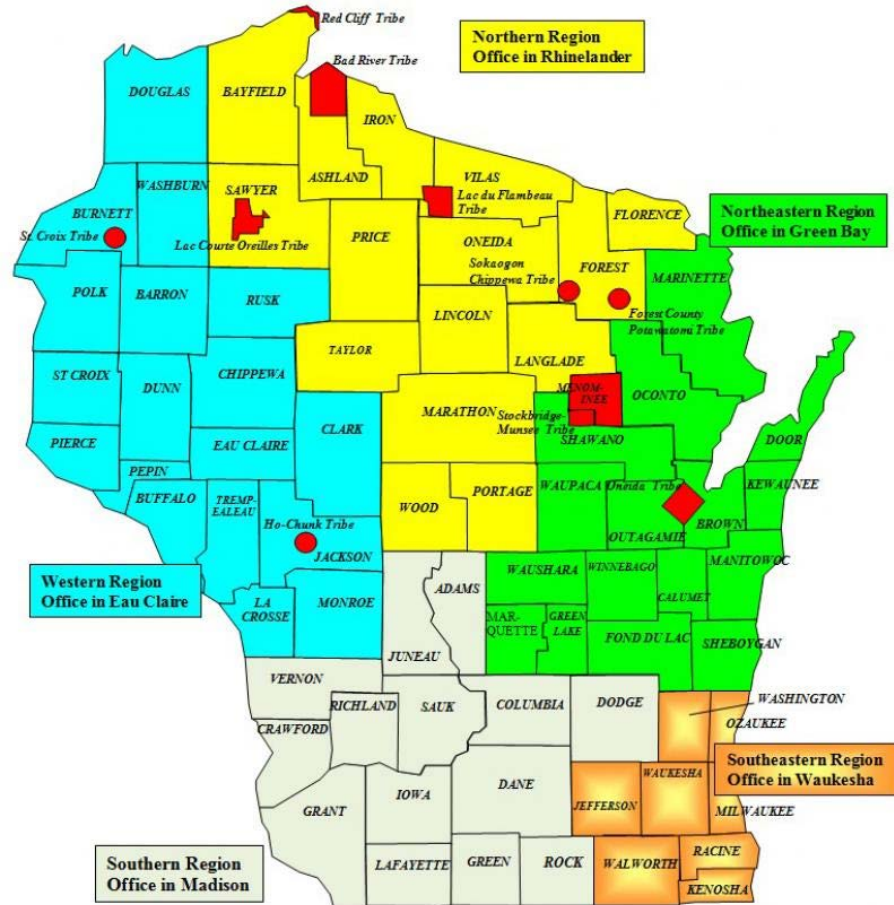
- Local Youth Advisory Councils formed **WI YAC** – 2005
 - Provided input from the **youth** perspective
 - Supported local **county** advocacy and **awareness** efforts
 - **Mandated** foster parent training
 - **Handbook** for Youth in Foster Care Publication

A photograph of an elderly man, a woman, and a baby smiling together. The man is on the left, the woman is on the right, and the baby is in the foreground. The image is slightly faded to allow text to be overlaid.

Lived Experience Journey

- **Kinship Caregiver Stakeholder Group – 2018**
 - **Supported the creation of the Kinship Navigator resource guide**
- **Parent Support Parents Implementation Zones – 2020**
 - **Parent Supporting Parents Program in Rock, Door & Jefferson**
- **Child Welfare Parent Leaders – 2021**
 - **Participated in hiring of Lived Experience Coordinator**

Demographics



- Lived Experience Partners represent all regions of the State and includes tribal representation.
- All those who have engaged offer a different perspective based on their agency's experience.
- Lived Experience Partners are diverse in age, ethnic groups, and case experience.





Lived Experience Impact

- Building **equity** and reducing barriers to care.
- Empowering individuals who demonstrate **resiliency** in their journey.
- Building compassion in **child welfare professionals** by hearing directly from **families** they support.

Lived Experience & Legislation

- Parent leaders educated on...
 - the legislative process and DCF's role.
 - public hearings regarding new bills that impact children and families.
- Lived experience input provided on drafted bills such as:
 - Foster Care Bill of Rights
 - Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)
- Captured diverse perspectives on legislative changes.

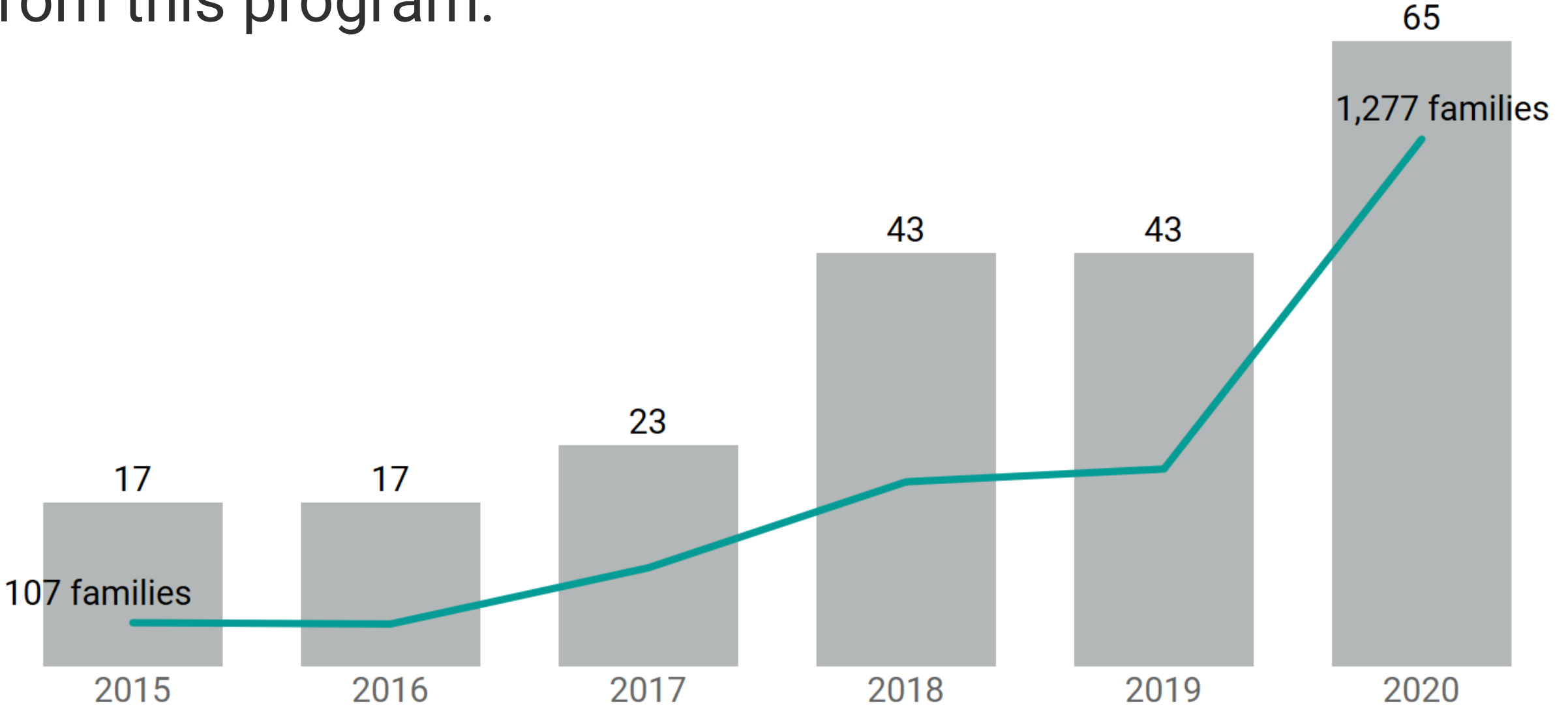


A group of diverse children are sitting on the ground outdoors, playing with bubbles. The children are smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with trees and foliage. The text "The Changes are Here to Stay" is overlaid in the center of the image in a white, bold, sans-serif font. The entire image is framed by a thin white border.

The Changes are Here to Stay

Counties and tribes using flexible in-home funding have **increased**, and so has the number of **families** benefitting from this program.

Counties/tribes (bar) and families (line)





Starting in 2022, DCF will begin reimbursing counties when children achieve permanency with relatives.

A group of diverse children are playing outdoors, blowing bubbles. The scene is bright and cheerful, with green foliage in the background. The children are smiling and reaching out towards the camera. The text "Seeing Change in Action" is overlaid in the center in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

Seeing Change in Action



Change in Action

“The unique examples are endless, and we have not seen a child enter care after utilizing our ‘little house’.”



Change in Action

“This youth made tremendous progress during her placement and really began taking pride in her ability to cope and debrief after dysregulation. It was a bittersweet goodbye, but she is happy to be with her mother once again.”

A group of diverse children are playing outdoors, blowing bubbles. The scene is bright and cheerful, with green foliage in the background. The children are smiling and reaching out towards the camera. The text is overlaid on the center of the image.

Working Together to Put Families First

Questions?

Emilie Amundson

Wendy.Henderson@Wisconsin.gov

Bregetta.Wilson@wisconsin.gov

Secretary

Division Administrator

Lived Experience Coordinator

