



CHILDREN'S SERVICE
SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN

ANNUAL REPORT

2025



DEAR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS,

As we look back on 2025, I am filled with both appreciation and optimism for what we continue to accomplish together. This year underscored the strength and dedication of the Children's Service Society of Wisconsin community, as we

met new challenges with innovative approaches and remained steadfast in our commitment to supporting children and families across our state. As part of Children's Wisconsin, we continue to advance our vision that every child in Wisconsin will be among the healthiest in the nation by addressing the full spectrum of well-being—physical, dental, social and mental health.

Throughout the year, our teams demonstrated remarkable adaptability and compassion, ensuring families had access to critical supports, resources and opportunities to thrive. Their commitment to continuous improvement and community partnership enabled us to respond to evolving needs while deepening our impact.

We are proud to share a few highlights that reflect the meaningful progress made together this year:

Setting the Standard for Quality and Impact Our programs proudly achieved reaccreditation from the Council on Accreditation (COA), affirming our steadfast commitment to the highest standards of care and practice. Through a rigorous evaluation of more than 1,000 requirements across administrative and service delivery areas, we were awarded continued accreditation. Reviewers commended the exceptional quality of our programs and the professionalism, expertise and engagement of our team members, with more than 100 staff, clients and partners contributing to the process. This achievement reflects our “One Team” dedication to continuous improvement, safety and impact—living these standards every day to ensure the well-being of children, families and communities we serve.

Expanding Access to Mental Health Services CSSW continued its commitment to children's mental and emotional well-being by expanding services across clinics, schools and community settings. This approach ensured more kids received timely, accessible support where they are. Focused on prevention, early intervention and healing, our work reduced barriers to care and stigma—supporting children and teens as they build healthy relationships, navigate challenges, and move toward hope and healing alongside their families.

Children's Service Society of Wisconsin

For more than 135 years, Children's Service Society of Wisconsin (CSSW) has changed the lives of children and families through effective, empowering programming that strives to build, sustain and enhance a nurturing environment for Wisconsin's children and youth. CSSW, under the Children's Wisconsin umbrella, has evolved to become the largest not-for-profit, nonsectarian provider of community-based child and family services and child welfare services in the state. Our work is a key part of advancing Children's Wisconsin vision for our state's children to be the healthiest in the nation.

CSSW's service providers positively impacted the lives of over 19,000 children and families in 2025 through our core service areas: community education and injury prevention, mental and behavioral health, family preservation and support, child welfare, and child advocacy and protection services.

Our services, combined with the medical expertise of Children's Wisconsin, bring child health and welfare together to transform the health and well-being of children, families and communities — because kids deserve the best.



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Deepening Community Partnerships Partnership continues to be at the heart of our work. In 2025, we strengthened collaborations with schools, health care providers and community organizations to build a more connected and responsive network of support for children and families. These relationships ensure that families are surrounded by coordinated care and do not face challenges alone. More than milestones, these partnerships represent the trust, shared purpose and collective commitment that drive our vision of making Wisconsin's children the healthiest in the nation.

Strengthening Families and Promoting Safety and Stability Statewide Preventing community violence requires sustained investment in children and families before and after crises. This year, we continued to provide trusted support, mental health care and resource connections to help youth and caregivers build safer, more stable communities. In addition, our Out-of-Home Care and Family Preservation programs improved access and outcomes statewide through coordinated, evidence-based services. Treatment Foster Care enhanced support for teens and caregivers with specialized clinical care and small caseloads, increasing stability and progress toward permanency.

Home Visiting programs continued to support pregnant and parenting families, while Milwaukee's Child Welfare program maintained strong safety and reunification outcomes and increased placements with relatives and like-kin caregivers.

Engaging Volunteers and Donors Our progress is made possible by the unwavering support of our volunteers and donors. Your generosity—through time, talent and resources—fuels our mission and broadens our impact across communities.

As we look to the future, we will continue to advance our efforts through advocacy and a commitment to listening to the families we serve—working together to ensure every child grows up safe, healthy and supported.

Together, we are building a brighter path forward—one filled with opportunity, resilience and hope for every child and family we serve.

Karen Timberlake
President, Children's Service Society of Wisconsin

Children's Service Society of Wisconsin Programs Earn Reaccreditation

Recently, our CSSW programs were reaccredited by the Council on Accreditation (COA). This independent and objective evaluation of **more than 1,000 requirements** verified best-practice standards in these areas, critical to whole-child health.



COA's accreditation process included three main phases: self-study, site evidence and a multi-day and multi-location site visit. **More than 100 team members** contributed to or directly participated in the three phases.

This year, COA evaluated **nine administrative and service delivery standards**:

- Administrative and service environment
- Client rights
- Finance
- Governance
- Human resources
- Performance and quality improvement
- Program administration
- Risk prevention and management
- Training and supervision

We were also evaluated on **11 service standards**:

- Adoption services
- Child and family development
- Case management
- Crisis response and intervention
- Coaching, support and education
- Family preservation and support
- Foster and kinship care
- Mental health and substance use
- Pregnancy support
- Respite care
- Supervised visitation

Within these 20 standards, we were rated on a total of **1,033 requirements**.

After a thorough survey, where COA **reported zero citations in need of remediation, we have successfully achieved COA accreditation through Sept. 30, 2029.**

STATEWIDE PRESENCE (as of Dec. 31, 2025)

Antigo

N4013 US Hwy. 45
Antigo, WI 54409
(715) 627-1414

Black River Falls

W11109 Rogers Rd.
Black River Falls, WI 54615
(715) 284-3001

Eau Claire

2004 Highland Ave., Suite M
Eau Claire, WI 54701
(715) 835-5915

Elkhorn

W4063 Hwy. NN
Elkhorn, WI 53121
(262) 741-1440

Janesville

32 E. Racine St., Suite 190
Janesville, WI 53545
(608) 314-9006

Kenosha

8207 22nd Ave., Suite 155
Kenosha, WI 53143
(262) 652-5522

6809 122nd Ave.
Kenosha, WI 53142
(262) 653-2266

Madison

1716 Fordem Ave.
Madison, WI 53704
(608) 221-3511

Marshfield

503 S. Cherry Ave., Suite 4
Marshfield, WI 54449
(715) 387-2729

Merrill

712 E. 2nd St.
Merrill, WI 54452
(715) 539-9228

Milwaukee

76th Street Office
620 S. 76th St., Suite 120
Milwaukee, WI 53214
(414) 453-1400

Sojourner Family Peace Center

619 W. Walnut St.
Milwaukee, WI 53212
(414) 277-8980

Neenah

333 N. Commercial St., Suite 400
Neenah, WI 54956
(920) 967-9127

Racine

8800 Washington Ave., Suite 100
Mount Pleasant, WI 53406
(262) 633-3591

Rhineland

3716 Country Dr.
Rhineland, WI 54501
(715) 361-6300

Stevens Point

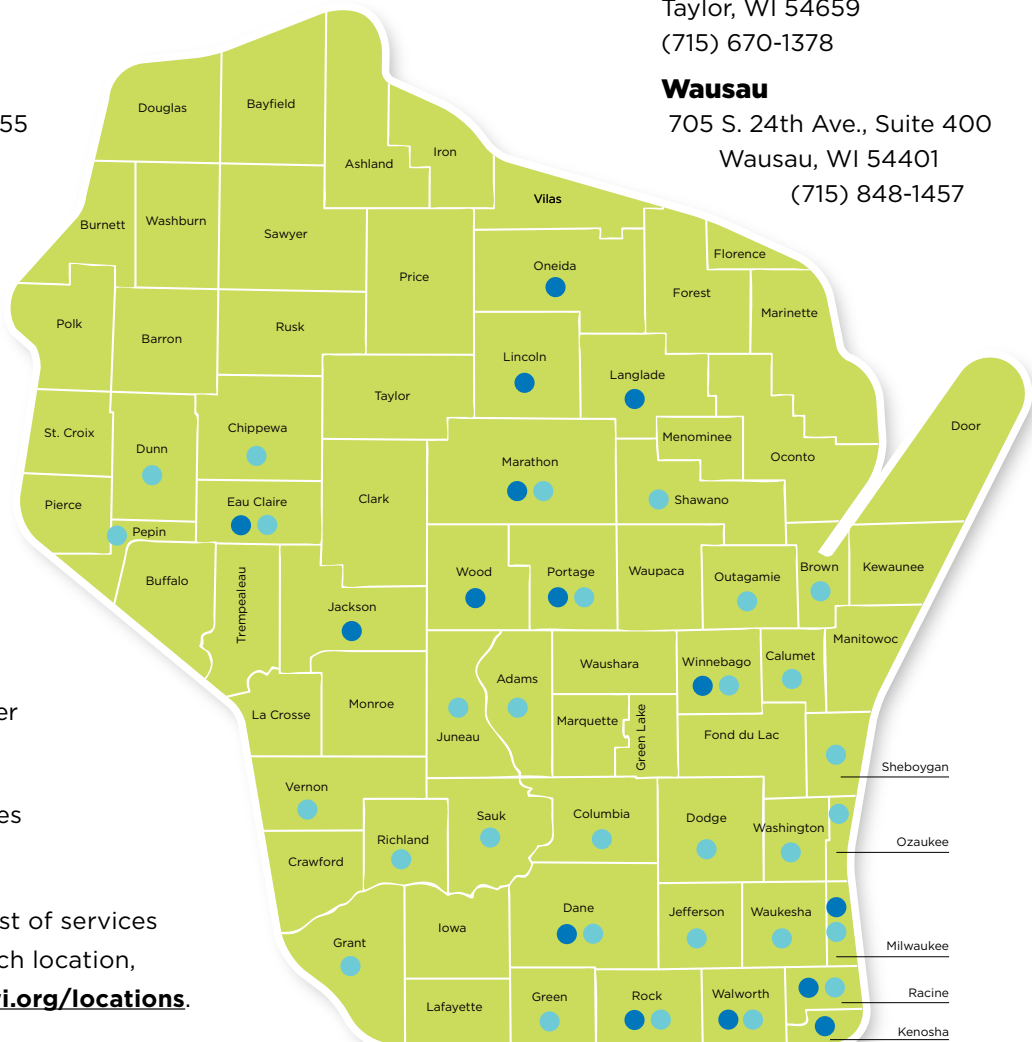
1466 Water St., Suite 2
Stevens Point, WI 54481
(715) 341-6672

Taylor

N7532 County Road P
Taylor, WI 54659
(715) 670-1378

Wausau

705 S. 24th Ave., Suite 400
Wausau, WI 54401
(715) 848-1457



2025 NUMBERS

Children's Service Society of Wisconsin

REACHED **19,043** FAMILIES AND KIDS through our core service areas:

Community Education and Injury Prevention

1,236

FAMILIES AND KIDS SERVED

- 1,236 Project Ujima

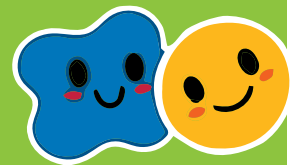


Mental and Behavioral Health

8,630

FAMILIES AND KIDS SERVED

- Includes individual counseling, psychological testing, group counseling and school-based mental health



Child Welfare

2,372

FAMILIES AND KIDS SERVED

- 1,364 Ongoing services
- 206 Intensive in-home services
- 89 Project Home
- 101 Respite
- 233 Public adoption
- 224 Treatment and regular foster care
- 155 Supervised visitation



Child Advocacy and Protection Services

1,146

FAMILIES AND KIDS SERVED

- Includes services provided at Child Advocacy Centers



Family Preservation and Support

5,659 FAMILIES AND KIDS SERVED

- 719 Home Visiting and Healthy Start (early childhood services)
- 423 Family Support, Education and Employment Specialist programs, Homeless Navigators and Youth Innovations
- 4,517 Family Resource Centers (including group-based programming and Triple P)





Your Support Makes a Difference

We're determined to make Wisconsin's children the healthiest in the nation, but we cannot do it alone. While we receive funding from government contracts, United Way and client fees, we could not continue providing many services without the generous support of individual, corporate and foundation donations. Critical services, such as mental and behavioral health care and Child Advocacy Centers, are only partially funded by sustainable revenue streams and depend on financial support from other sources. Your support helps us improve the health of our most at-risk children and families across the state.

2025 FINANCIAL RESULTS

Operating Revenue

Service fees.....	\$11,068,598
United Way.....	\$1,262,128
Fundraising.....	\$1,740,416
Purchase of service.....	\$42,987,548
Other.....	\$124,190

Total operating revenue **\$57,182,880**

Operating Expenses

Community Education and Injury Prevention.....	\$1,633,522
Mental and Behavioral Health.....	\$19,489,908
Family Preservation and Support	\$8,282,898
Child Welfare	\$33,459,757
Child Advocacy and Protection Services	\$1,703,285
Institute for Child and Family Well-Being	\$482,094
Other.....	\$3,855,995

Total operating expenses **\$68,907,459**

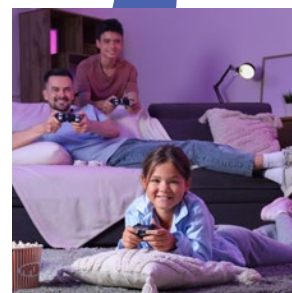
Income (loss) from operations **\$(11,724,579)**

Net nonoperating gains (losses) **\$(1,730)**

Excess (deficit) of revenue over expenses **\$(11,726,309)**

COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND INJURY PREVENTION

Factors outside the doctor's office impact a child's health — from home, school and neighborhood environments to choices about food, exercise and safety. That's why Children's Service Society of Wisconsin embraces opportunities to reach and support families outside of medical settings. Community Health and Education programs and services strive to improve the health of children, families and communities.



Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin (PCAW)

Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin's mission is to build community resources, provide training and public awareness, and advocate for programs that strengthen and support families to reduce child abuse and neglect. PCAW is a chapter of a national network of state chapters aimed at strengthening families to prevent child abuse and neglect.

The 2025 Together for Children conference was held in person for three days with over **200 professionals** gathered to hear the latest on the prevention, intervention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. These professionals attended two keynote sessions and 24 workshops. Seminars offered topics focused on Forensic Interviewing and Overview of Child Trauma Investigations from a Multi-disciplinary Team Standpoint. There were many sessions educating about various aspects of child sexual abuse, populations at higher risk, identifying and working with teens with problematic sexual behavior and accommodating child victims with disabilities.

The Kappa Delta sorority at Marquette University hosted its annual fundraising gala on Saturday, November 8, 2025, to benefit **Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin (PCAW)**, where they **raised \$6,092**. Each year, Kappa Delta organizes this elegant event—attended by family members, alumni and community partners—to raise awareness and funds for child abuse prevention and family strengthening initiatives.

Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin, a state chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America (PCAA), has a longstanding partnership with Kappa Delta. This relationship dates back nearly 50 years to the founding of PCAA by Donna J. Stone, a Kappa Delta sister. Since that time, chapters across the country have continued to support local prevention efforts.

PCAW received **71 requests** for its materials in 2025. These materials include Family Fun Activity Booklets and Kids' Coupons. Overall, 15 unique Children's Wisconsin locations across the state ordered materials for families they serve. These locations included hospital-based services, primary care and urgent care offices, family resource centers, and counseling and foster care programs. Over **16,000 individual materials** were sent to our internal partners throughout 2025.



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PCAW was invited to support Children's Wisconsin employees through involvement in Healthy Rewards in 2025. A total of **1,278 Children's Wisconsin employees** completed Family Strengthening

Month activities in Healthy Rewards this April, including a Family Strengthening Month quiz and Wear Blue Day activities. This engagement allowed PCAW to gain visibility and promote family strengthening messaging.

Similarly, PCAW worked to increase visibility in physical spaces during Family Strengthening Month by creating a display at Children's Corporate Center and decorating a large cafeteria window at the Milwaukee Hospital Campus in partnership with Creative Services and Child Life and Creative Arts Therapies. PCAW also distributed family strengthening materials aimed at promoting caregiver/child connections throughout Children's Wisconsin Primary Care and Specialty clinics.

Awareness to Action (A2A)

In the United States, it is estimated that at least one in ten children will experience sexual abuse before they enter adulthood (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2022). Child sexual abuse is preventable. By changing the conditions in organizations and communities that allow sexual abuse to persist, we give youth the chance to live, learn, play and grow without the adversity of child sexual abuse and the challenges associated with its impact.

Awareness to Action is committed to the health and well-being of kids and families by activating adults across the state to stay ahead of this epidemic with primary prevention strategies. We strive to ensure that kids have far more positive childhood experiences than they do adverse, giving them the foundation needed to remain healthy and well throughout their lives.

Across Wisconsin, Awareness to Action program staff and trainers facilitate a half-day workshop for organizations where children are in the care of adults and older youth – faith communities, school districts, mentoring programs, youth sports and arts programs, and various others. Through this education, we teach adults to care for kids by using best-practice policies and procedures. Following the half-day workshop, participants are tasked with implementing the plan that they create for child safety during the workshop.

During 2025, **73 individuals representing 26 organizations** or programs participated in Awareness to Action's "Preventing Child Sexual Abuse in Organizations: Policy and Procedure Workshop." These programs were in 18 counties across the state. Notably, participants from Alaska, Idaho and Alabama participated in the workshop to learn how they may bring a similar prevention program to their state.

Workshop participants shared:

- “Very applicable training that is essential for organizations working with families and children. Thank you!!”
- “While we don't work directly with children in our program, we are about child abuse prevention and learning any additional new tools or resources available to provide stakeholders and community members. Laura did an awesome job!”
- “Kind of gives me some Wisconsin pride. This is a good program and I appreciate the emphasis on creating and following procedures to create safe environments for children.”

PCAW partnered with Awareness to Action and the Wisconsin Department of Corrections Sex Offender Registry to distribute materials during National Night Out in August 2025. Our group attended **16 unique events** across the State of Wisconsin and provided resources to caregivers and community members. The resources included information on understanding and preventing abuse and family strengthening resources such as PCAW's Family Fun Activity Books and bookmarks.



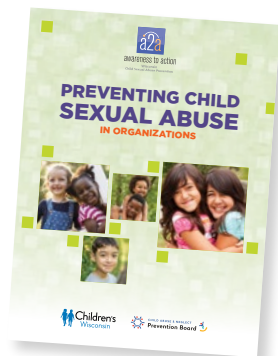
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Beyond the workshops, three Community of Practice sessions were hosted by Awareness to Action, with **62 participants** across the sessions. In

collaboration with the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault, December's Community of Practice meeting featured the 2024 updated version of the Child Sexual

Abuse Prevention Curriculum Review, a comparison of 11 child sexual abuse prevention curricula.

Although A2A focuses on the responsibility of adults to keep kids safe, many states require schools to teach kids about child sexual abuse prevention. School personnel may need help choosing how they teach students about child sexual abuse. This guide compares the content of child sexual abuse prevention curricula to give schools and other prevention educators helpful information as they pick an effective curriculum on this sensitive topic. An educational session in December 2025 explored the content and background of the Curriculum Review and provided guidance for implementing child sexual abuse prevention programming in the classroom and broader community.



Awareness to Action also continued to engage in impactful state partnerships, collaborating on presentations, publications and community engagement with multiple agencies across the state.



At the 2025 Together for Children conference, Awareness to Action's Laura Staats presented with Aviva Herman, Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin - Program Coordinator, and Heather Dederling, Wisconsin Department of Corrections - Program Specialist. In their session, "Layering Prevention: How to Build Non-Traditional Partnership Across Organizations," they shared successes and learnings from forming a Collective Impact group across their three respective programs. A panel of Collective Impact group members shared their learnings and perspectives from being part of this group focused on collaborating to prevent child sexual abuse. The session also gave conference attendees the opportunity to talk in small groups to discover what they had in common with the purpose and mission of others at the conference.

For the second year in a row, PCAW and A2A joined the Department of Corrections - Sex Offender Registry Specialists in creating a prevention messaging strategy for several National Night Out events across the state. A2A and PCAW provided print materials to engage the community in conversation about family strengthening and stopping sexual abuse before it happens for 15 events across the state. Two staff members also engaged with communities at National Night Out events alongside Department of Corrections colleagues.

Additionally, PCAW and A2A were invited by Living Faith Lutheran Church to attend National Night Out in Racine. They engaged with approximately **200 families** to provide important information about keeping kids safe from sexual abuse and distributed Family Fun Activity Books, Kids' Coupons and Warm Fuzzies that promote positive family interactions.

As we look toward 2026 and beyond, Awareness to Action remains committed to getting ahead of child sexual abuse before it impacts our kids and families. We look forward to continuing partnerships, educating organizations and leading the state toward safer communities.

Resilience and Perseverance

In the fall of 2025, Project Ujima was called upon to support a young woman and her family following a life-altering nonfatal firearm injury sustained when violence erupted outside their home. What began as a traumatic event quickly evolved into a complex journey of recovery, requiring the family to navigate significant physical, emotional and social challenges.

In the months that followed, the youth faced extensive medical treatment and rehabilitation while her family worked to address pressing safety concerns, secure stable housing and maintain employment. At the same time, she remained determined to achieve a goal that had become increasingly uncertain – to graduate from high school as scheduled in the spring of 2026.

Project Ujima

Project Ujima aims to stop the cycle of community violence by supporting youth and families on their journey of healing and recovery. When patients are admitted to Children's Wisconsin Emergency Department for an injury due to violence, program staff members are swiftly engaged to support the youth and their families through this traumatic experience. This voluntary, family-centered program offers a wide variety of services and resources, including crisis intervention and case management, mentoring, and mental health and medical services over approximately 12-15 months. This transformative program has been shown to increase participants' resilience and reduce their risk of reengaging in violence.



Project Ujima mobilized alongside Children's Wisconsin multidisciplinary clinical teams to provide coordinated, family-centered support. Through close collaboration with the Pediatric Trauma Quality of Life (TQoL) Clinic, follow-up medical appointments were streamlined and consolidated, reducing barriers to care and helping the family manage an overwhelming number of health care needs. The youth and her family also received ongoing support from a Project Ujima Crime Victim Advocate (CVA) and were connected to behavioral health services to address the emotional impact of the trauma.

Recognizing that recovery extends beyond physical healing, Project Ujima partnered with Community Health programs to address social drivers of health affecting the family. Through these efforts, the family was connected to a Community Health Advocate who worked in collaboration with the CVA to navigate housing instability and secure resources necessary to build a sense of safety and stability following the incident.

Today, the family has successfully relocated to a safer environment, remains engaged in both physical and behavioral health services as well as Project Ujima, and continues to make meaningful progress in their healing journey. Most importantly, this resilient young woman is on track to graduate and has already set her sights on the future, with plans to attend dental hygienist school in the fall.

Her story reflects the power of coordinated, trauma-informed intervention and demonstrates how comprehensive support can help youth and families not only to heal, but to reclaim their future and thrive beyond it.

Wear Orange Day:
National Firearm
Violence Awareness
Day 2026 – Project
Ujima Team





MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Children's Wisconsin Mental and Behavioral Health (MBH) vision is that every child and teenager in Wisconsin will receive the right support for their developmental, mental and behavioral health at the right time in order to grow up healthy and thriving. We are focusing our work on four major strategies to advance this vision: early detection and prevention, reducing stigma, increasing and creating equitable access, and advancing research and education. Children's Wisconsin 2027 strategy commits us to advancing every aspect of child and adolescent health, including mental health. Our investment in child and adolescent mental and behavioral health demonstrates our commitment to transform whole-child and adolescent health by wrapping mental health resources around all of the work that we do across Children's Wisconsin. This allows us to identify and detect mental health concerns, regardless of where a child is treated and oftentimes sooner, providing families with appropriate intervention and treatment options.

Counseling

In 2025, the **Counseling team** provided **109,773 visits**, both in person and via telehealth, to kids and families across the state!

Children's Wisconsin implemented an innovative approach to **integrating mental and behavioral health (IMBH)** within most settings where we provide care. Integrating MBH resources is a critical component to expanding access and reducing stigma. Kids received care at Child Advocacy Center (CAC) visits in 2025, where we have integrated MBH therapists across the state as part of the multidisciplinary teams caring for kids who may have been abused. CACs help minimize trauma, break the cycle of abuse, and help kids and their families find a path to safety and healing.

Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH)

The **Early Childhood Mental Health Program (ECMH)** promotes social and emotional well-being and healthy development in children under 6 years old by providing culturally responsive care that emphasizes nurturing caregiver relationships. In 2025, ECMH was in five clinics across the state with 10 providers supporting care. They provided early childhood mental health visits to more than **900 kids**. ECMH continues to expand programming, providing infant and early childhood mental health consultation through a \$2.5 million SAMHSA grant and fee-for-service contracts with the Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health (WIAIMH), the Milwaukee Health Department, United Community Center, Jefferson County Head-Start, Easter Seals and WECA, as well as some funding through our community services departments, to develop best-practice standards and training materials. ECMH is also building the future workforce by expanding our partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Madison by supporting multiple therapists and/or consultants in completing the Infant, Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Capstone Program, and over 20 therapists/consultants in completing the Trauma Informed Child-Parent Psychotherapy (TI-CPP) training. We are in the process of applying to the CAMP Model of CPP, which allows three Children's Wisconsin providers to become trainers of CPP and enables us to train any Children's Wisconsin therapist in this evidence-based modality.

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Therapist in Training

The **Therapist-in-Training Program** develops the next generation of pediatric psychotherapists by providing hands-on experience and the on-the-job education needed to achieve licensure, ideally within two years. Launched in 2019, the program set a goal of supporting at least 30 psychotherapists by 2024. By the end of 2024, we exceeded this goal by 50%, successfully training **45 psychotherapists**. By the end of 2025, the MBH program had trained a total of **61 therapists**, demonstrating our continued commitment to growing the mental health workforce. The majority of trainees have been retained by Children's Wisconsin as fully licensed therapists and are now serving in outpatient clinics, school-based mental health programs, walk-in services and primary care clinics.



Research

Children's Wisconsin continues to lead in advancing research for pediatric and adolescent mental and behavioral health under the leadership of Michael S. Gaffrey, PhD, the Craig Yabuki Research Chair and Director of Mental and Behavioral Health Research at Children's Wisconsin. Over the past year, Dr. Gaffrey and his team have expanded this work through a growing suicide prevention research portfolio focused on earlier identification, risk stratification and learning from routine clinical care. This includes analyses examining suicide risk patterns in primary care, including how pubertal development, as reflected in Tanner stage, relates to suicidal thoughts and behaviors among early adolescents, as well as emerging work characterizing suicide risk among autistic youth seen in routine well-child care. The team is also conducting ongoing spatiotemporal analyses to better understand how suicide risk varies across time, geography, clinic setting and patient context, with the goal of identifying when and where prevention efforts may have the greatest impact.

Together, these efforts build on Children's Wisconsin broader mental and behavioral health strategy focused on screening, early intervention, health promotion and prevention. Dr. Gaffrey and his team are working to turn everyday clinical practice into actionable data by establishing standardized screening and measurement approaches, strengthening analytic infrastructure and developing innovative digital tools to support early identification of mental health risks and emerging challenges. These innovations are designed to enhance clinical decision-making, improve adherence to evidence-based care practices and support providers across the health system in delivering timely, effective and safe mental health care. This work directly supports Children's Wisconsin mission to provide the best and safest care by integrating cutting-edge research, data science and best clinical practices to ensure that every child receiving care, regardless of the reason for their visit, is appropriately screened and supported to achieve optimal mental and behavioral health outcomes.

School-Based Mental Health

Our School-Based Mental Health Program (SBMH) partnered with **83 schools** across Wisconsin in 2025, which is more than double the sites from 2019.

SBMH provides individual, group and family therapy to students, as well as education and consultation to teachers, staff and caregivers. In 2025, SBMH provided more than **30,000 visits**. We are discovering that over time, schools with school-based mental health services experienced decreased disciplinary incidents and improved detection of more subtle problems in children, namely depression and anxiety.



Transforming Trauma into Triumph

When she first entered School-Based Mental Health services, the student carried a profound and complex history of trauma. Her experiences included exposure to severe violence, instability at home and personal physical abuse. Understandably, these hardships shaped how she interacted with the world—she was guarded, withdrawn and often expressed her pain through anger and isolation. Repeated school changes and behavioral challenges further reinforced a narrative that labeled her as a “difficult” student.

Through consistent, compassionate support and therapeutic intervention, a turning point began to emerge. Together with her care team, she embarked on the difficult but transformative process of addressing her trauma and rebuilding her sense of self-worth. A central part of this work involved challenging and rewriting the story she had come to believe about herself. Instead of accepting the label of a “bad kid,” she began to explore who she truly was—and who she wanted to become.

This shift in perspective became the foundation for remarkable growth. As she entered her freshman year of high school, her resilience and determination were evident in every aspect of her life. She actively engaged in extracurricular activities, joining both sports teams and school clubs, and enrolled in rigorous, college-level coursework. Her commitment to her education and personal development has been exceptional.

Today, she stands as a model student, achieving a 4.0 grade point average and earning the distinction of being first in her class. Beyond academics, she has set clear and inspiring goals for her future. She aspires to attend a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) and pursue a career in nursing—a path driven by her desire to help others and make a meaningful impact. Demonstrating further responsibility and independence, she has also secured summer employment.

Her journey is a powerful example of the impact of early intervention, sustained support and the strength of the human spirit. We are incredibly proud of the investment she has made in herself and the bright future she continues to build.

FAMILY PRESERVATION AND SUPPORT

Our statewide family preservation and support programs promote safe and stable families in a variety of ways. Our **Home Visiting programs** work individually with pregnant and parenting families by providing information, resources, support and education. We follow the evidence-based model Healthy Families America and use the Parents as Teachers curriculum.



Building a Future With Hope

Linda was referred to the Healthy Families Milwaukee County program in 2023 by the Milwaukee Public School District. At just 16 years old and pregnant, Linda entered the program facing significant barriers, including housing instability, lack of prenatal care and no family support. After being asked to leave her biological mother's home, Linda was living with a friend and did not have access to her health insurance card, which prevented her from receiving prenatal care.

From the beginning, the Home Visitor worked closely with Linda to ensure her safety and well-being. Recognizing Linda's vulnerability, the Home Visitor provided consistent, hands-on support, including transportation from school, to and from work, and to and from the stores and ensuring she had a safe place to stay. Also, as a first-time teen mother, the Home Visitor provided Linda with education on prenatal development, labor and delivery, parent-child bonding and infant safety.

One of the first major challenges was helping Linda obtain her health insurance card. With persistence and support, Linda was eventually able to obtain her insurance card and begin receiving prenatal care. In addition to health care barriers, Linda also experienced

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Healthy Start

Healthy Start is a federal grant-funded program aimed at eliminating health inequities for women and children with the goals of reducing infant mortality, increasing access to early prenatal care and removing barriers to health care access. Partnering with the Black Child Development Institute of Milwaukee, we established a Community Consortium that includes Healthy Start grant partners, community stakeholders and Healthy Start program participants working to create community-level change on health disparities. The program uses family health navigators to support mothers, fathers and babies by promoting and enhancing physical and behavioral health, helping address basic needs and providing community resources for concerns like family violence. In 2025, with year 2 of the 5-year grant cycle, we now service **12 city of Milwaukee zip codes and all of Racine County.**



food insecurity. The Home Visitor supported Linda in accessing the program's flex funds, accompanying her to purchase groceries and connecting her to concrete support services within the community. Also, Linda faced another major obstacle when her parents withheld her birth certificate, preventing her from obtaining a state ID. The Home Visitor provided advocacy, resources, connection to legal authorities and support to ultimately help Linda secure her birth certificate. This achievement opened the door for employment and further independence. The Home Visitor also connected Linda with legal aid and mental health resources to ensure ongoing support.

When developmental concerns arose for her child through ASQ-3 screenings, the Home Visitor guided Linda in connecting with Birth-to-Three services to ensure her child received early intervention support. Linda remained actively engaged and responsive to her child's developmental needs.

Throughout her time in the program, Linda demonstrated incredible determination and commitment to her goals. With encouragement and guidance from the Home Visitor, she graduated from high school, secured employment, obtained her driver's permit and license, purchased a vehicle and moved into her own apartment. Each milestone reflected Linda's resilience and willingness to grow despite adversity.

Family Resource Centers

Our **Family Resource Centers** provide parents and caregivers with empowering information and support programs — all free of charge to families — to promote the healthy growth and development of children and strengthen family relationships. All Family Resource Centers facilitate parent education classes that follow evidence-based models such as ACT Raising Safe Kids or Triple P. Our Play and Learn classes follow the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards. Most centers also offer parenting phone support, delivering tailored and confidential parenting information and resources to callers over the phone.



CHILD WELFARE

Children's Service Society of Wisconsin is committed to ensuring that every child has a safe and stable home. To advance that goal, we provide an array of child welfare services in Milwaukee County under a state contract administered by the Division of Milwaukee Child Welfare. Since 1998, CSSW has partnered with the state to administer public child welfare services in Southeastern Wisconsin.



We have provided Ongoing Case Management, In-Home Services, Foster and Adoption Services, Foster Care Recruitment and Licensing, Permanency Services and Placement Matching since the inception of the public/private partnership in Milwaukee County. Our primary charge is to ensure child safety, permanency and well-being. Our child welfare services are guided by our family-centered practice: Our priority is to keep families intact and maintain family connections. Our trauma-informed, evidence-based services focus on safety measures, parenting education, mobility mentoring and strengthening family interactions. In 2025, our child welfare program facilitated **270 permanencies**, including **137 reunifications**, **54 transfers of guardianship** and **79 adoptions**.

Foster Care and Treatment Foster Care

Our statewide **Treatment Foster Care (TFC) program** is designed to address the comprehensive well-being of children. Offered throughout Wisconsin's **72 counties**, our TFC program is a community-based, child-centered, family-focused approach that provides out-of-home care placement and services for those children and youth who have significant special needs that require specialized treatment services beyond the scope of basic foster care.

The TFC program utilizes the evidence-informed Attachment, Regulation and Competency (ARC) framework as its program model. The ARC model is a framework for working with youth and foster parents/caregivers of youth who have been affected by trauma.

Beginning in late 2023, the TFC program enhanced its service delivery by creating specialized clinically-based staff positions to provide concentrated services to teens and their foster families. Assigning small caseloads allow staff to more intensely work with teens and their foster parents to address needs and goals, and work toward stability and permanency. This targeted work is increasing the average number of teens we are placing and serving in the program.

As an enhancement to our foster care services, the TFC program licenses respite care foster parents under Wisconsin Administrative Code, DCF 56 Foster Home Care For Children.

Respite Care is temporary child care so foster parents can have a needed break from the stress of caring for a child or adolescent, or for other reasons that help sustain the family structure. It is a preventive strategy that strengthens families, protects their health and well-being, and allows them to continue providing care to others. Respite is an important component of a continuum of comprehensive family support and long-term services that are available to caregivers not only on a planned basis, but also in the event of a crisis or emergency situation.

Children's Wisconsin **Out-of-Home Care services** include numerous county contracts to provide intensive services to families in an effort to improve permanency for children and shorten their length of stay in out-of-home care. Program staff help families meet all conditions required for return of their children and provide supervised visitation services to keep youth connected to their families and allow parents the opportunity to learn new parenting skills under the guidance of experienced staff.

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Public Adoption

Through our contract with the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, Children's Service Society of Wisconsin has offered **public adoption** programming to **18 Wisconsin counties** for the past 25 years. Our staff have developed expertise in the many components of adoption work: adoptive home licensing, matching/placement, education and community supports linkage, case management and adoption finalization court work. The primary goal of our adoption program is to provide all foster children who are in need of a permanent home with an adoptive family that will offer them:

- The rights and protections that are derived from a legal parent-child relationship
- The opportunity to experience the emotional security, growth and development resulting from sound family relationships
- The social status and identity derived from being part of a family entity
- The protection, nurturing and care necessary for physical growth, development and well-being

The Impact of Support and Education

Angie became involved with the child welfare system resulting in removal of her daughter, Mabel, twice due to concerns of substance use – both times resulted in referrals to Children's Wisconsin Family Support Intervention Program in Black River Falls, with her most recent referral to agency programs occurring in August 2025.

Children's Wisconsin Family Support Intervention Program supports parents who have lost custody of their child(ren) by providing advocacy, case management support, supervised visitation, goal-setting and parent education aimed at enhancing parenting abilities so parents can be reunified with their child(ren). The program also matches parents with a support worker/mentor who has lived experience of navigating the child welfare system as a parent and in recovery themselves. Angie has previous child welfare involvement for her older children that resulted in termination of her parental rights and she was determined to not experience that same outcome with Mabel.

Angie identifies several key ways that she was impacted by Children's Wisconsin services. Parenting support and education really helped her adjust her focus when it came to how she parented her child. Angie grew in how she connected with other parents who experienced similar struggles and grew in her appreciation for the importance of community. Angie has embraced this growth and has been asked to lead a local recovery meeting. Angie put a tremendous amount of work into her parenting and recovery goals and achieved many of them well ahead of anticipated. Angie invested time and energy into maintaining sobriety and treating her mental health. She got her driver's license, obtained a car, and is very proud of her determination and hard work at gaining and maintaining employment.

Angie has been successfully reunified with Mabel since December 2025. Angie is able to feel secure and support the needs of her family and take care of Mabel. Angie is a great role model for her daughter of how to persevere when challenges arise, the importance of asking for help, and ways to advocate for herself and others.

In-Home Services (IHS) and Ongoing Services (OGS)

Our **In-Home Services (IHS) program** partners with families to ensure child safety in the home while simultaneously providing services to enhance parents' protective capacities. Families in our **Ongoing Services (OGS) program** are served under the jurisdiction of the Milwaukee County Children's Court, with the goal of reunifying families as quickly and safely as possible. When children need to be placed in out-of-home care, we prioritize placement with biological family members; however, when that is unable to occur, our foster care licensing and placement program matches children to caregivers equipped to meet their needs. Our Family Support program works closely with our IHS and OGS programs to support in-home safety plans and timely reunification of parents and children when separated.

CHILD ADVOCACY AND PROTECTION SERVICES

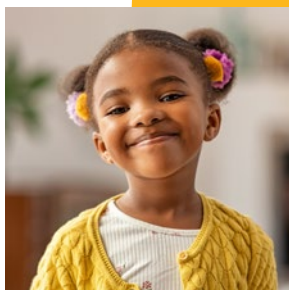
The **Child Advocacy and Protection Services (CAPS)**

program at Children's Wisconsin is a national leader in child abuse pediatrics and child advocacy. Our CAPS program is the nation's largest hospital-based network of **Child Advocacy Centers (CAC)**.

All seven centers are accredited by the National Children's Alliance. The program also includes three medical satellite offices and a hospital-based advocacy team that is available 24/7.

Our CAPS program is a team of medical professionals, forensic interviewers, advocate case managers, therapists and our support staff members, who work together to ensure that the evaluation of an abuse allegation minimizes the re-traumatization of a child. We collaborate closely with law enforcement and Child Protective Services to ensure, as often as possible, that a child only has to be seen and tell their truth once. Our work helps to start the healing process for children and their caregivers.

In 2025, our statewide Forensic Interviewer team continued to share their expertise through conference presentations and training events, strengthening multidisciplinary approaches to child maltreatment investigations and advancing safety, justice and healing for children and families. Sessions highlighted evidence-informed interviewing practices, collaboration across systems and strategies for gathering information from children of all ages—even when victims are unable to speak for themselves. A CAPS team medical provider board certified in child abuse pediatrics co-presented on this topic, bringing a critical medical perspective to these approaches.



Observing Barriers to Providing Support

A 10-year-old boy was at the CAC to talk about physical abuse by his father and mother. The boy seemed very shy and timid. During the forensic interview, he completely shut down and was very emotional. The interviewer took a calming approach and did an amazing job figuring out the underlying reason he was having such a hard time talking to her.

When the interviewer went into the observation room to talk to the multi-disciplinary team, she shared that the child was very worried about the safety of his dog, which was still at his parents' home. The team recognized this as a barrier to completing the forensic interview and providing needed support and services. They discussed ideas for getting the dog to a safe place with the boy's grandparents and agreed the boy's older sister would transport the dog to the grandparents' home. Once the dog was in a new setting, the boy was comfortable enough to come back to the CAC and talk about the abuse occurring inside his parents' home.

Child Advocacy Centers (CAC)

A CAC's mission is to promote and foster safety, healing and justice for children and families. Without effective forensic and therapeutic intervention, many children who have experienced trauma may suffer ongoing or long-term adverse social, emotional, developmental and health outcomes.

The Institute for Child and Family Well-Being (ICFW)



The **Institute for Child and Family Well-Being (ICFW)** is a partnership between Children's Wisconsin and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Its mission is to improve the lives of children and families with complex challenges through effective programs, research, community engagement and systems change. Children's Wisconsin ICFW team leads the Strong Families, Thriving Children, Connected Communities (SFTCCC), a statewide initiative to prevent child neglect by changing the conditions that produce it.

Strong Families, Thriving Children, Connected Communities (SFTCCC)

Neglect is the most common reason children are reported to Child Protective Services and separated from their families into foster care. More than **one in three children will face a CPS investigation** before age 18, and **one in four for neglect** specifically (Kim et al., 2017). For perspective, about 1 in 15 children has asthma. Roughly 87% of these investigations close without a finding of neglect, while intruding on a family already overloaded by poverty, unstable housing or isolation. The goal is not to investigate less, but to reach families earlier, before stress becomes harm.

The Institute for Child and Family Well-Being (ICFW) team accelerates that prevention by building the evidence, strategy and partnerships that carry prevention into systems and policy in Wisconsin and nationally. This work positions Children's Wisconsin as a regional leader in child maltreatment prevention. The progress is fragile, as the conditions that overload families have not eased, and federal budget cut pressure expected in 2027 threatens the limited investments in prevention.

2025 Progress

SFTCCC grew from 32 people in 2023 to **more than 200 changemakers** by the end of 2025, representing over 30 counties across all five regions of Wisconsin and every sector that touches a family. In 2025, the network launched a Steering Committee to guide its direction and moved from learning together to acting together.

That network produced its sharpest evidence yet. SFTCCC asked what it costs to investigate neglect when there is no neglect. Working with four counties, ICFW found an unsubstantiated investigation costs an estimated **\$585 per case**, and that Wisconsin spent an estimated \$10.2 million in 2023 on reports that found no maltreatment. Three in four families in the sample were already receiving public assistance. Counties are using the findings to rethink how they spend their time.

All four pathways advanced:

1. **Economic Stability** launched a housing network spanning HUD, private developers and child welfare partners.
2. **Community Collaboration** grew its mandated reporting work to 125 members and hosted an Overloaded podcast event reaching more than 40 counties.
3. **Social Connectedness** put its field-tested Toolkit into active use.
4. **Workforce Inclusion and Innovation** partnered with the Children's Home Society of America and Chapin Hall on staffing models and the national workforce agenda.

Nationally, the "Overloaded: Understanding Neglect" podcast passed 13,000 downloads with Season 3, while Luke Waldo co-hosted Prevent Child Abuse America's (PCAA's) conference podcast 'The Spark.' Also, more than **250 people** joined ICFW's sessions about neglect and SFTCCC at the PCAA national conference. ICFW also launched new technical assistance services for communities inside and outside Wisconsin, while keeping SFTCCC free to join. The broad capacity of the SFTCCC network and its ability to support overloaded families attracted a large number of new change makers in 2025.



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