

Gov. Walker: Budget proposal bolsters funding for children and families in need

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Milwaukee - Governor Scott Walker highlighted efforts included in his 2017-2019 Biennial Budget proposal to support Wisconsin children and families in need today at the Together for Children Conference in Milwaukee. The Together for Children Conference is held in conjunction with the International Family Justice Center Conference, thus allowing participants to attend workshop sessions at both.

"I am committed to protecting and advocating for our state's most vulnerable," Governor Walker said. "This includes our children, those affected by domestic violence, and their families. Our biennial budget reinforces our commitment to ending domestic violence and preventing child abuse by providing additional support for Wisconsin children and families in need. My thanks to important advocates like the Sojourner Family Peace Center and shelters like it throughout the state, as well as organizations like Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin, for their efforts to raise awareness and get to the root of these issues so we can end them in Wisconsin." Governor Walker's 2017-2019 Biennial Budget proposal includes the following recommendations and provisions to support Wisconsin children and families in need:

- **Additional Funding to Protect Child Victims of Sex Trafficking.** Governor Walker recommends in his budget proposal providing additional funding for services to child victims of sex trafficking, consistent with provisions of 2015 Wisconsin Act 367, which adds child sex trafficking to the definition of the Children's Code, directs law enforcement to report suspected cases of child sex trafficking to child protective services, and instructs child protective services to investigate all cases of suspected child sex trafficking.
- **Expand Exclusive Original Jurisdiction of Juvenile Courts.** In his budget proposal, Governor Walker also recommends modifying current law to expand exclusive original jurisdiction of juvenile courts to include any child who is a victim of or at substantial risk of becoming a sex trafficking victim.
- **Eliminate Waiting List for Long-Term Support.** Governor Walker's budget proposal provides \$14,067,300 in fiscal year 2017-18 and \$25,205,500 in fiscal year 2018-19 to eliminate the waiting list for long-term supports for around 2,200 Wisconsin children with developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, or severe emotional disturbances. Also implement reforms to increase efficiency of service delivery and develop an equitable funding methodology to ensure county funding remains within the program.
- **Increase Children and Family Aids Allocation.** The budget proposal increases children and family aids allocation by \$1,250,000 PR-F in fiscal year 2017-18 and by \$5,000,000 PR-F in fiscal year 2018-19 to address increasing child welfare costs. The increases would raise total children and family aids funding to \$70,630,800 in fiscal year 2017-18 and \$74,712,400 in fiscal year 2018-19, totaling \$145,343,200 over the biennium. These aids provide county child welfare services to assure the safety and well-being of Wisconsin children.
- **Increase Foster Care and Kinship Care Rates.** The budget proposal also increases foster care and kinship care rates by 2.5 percent annually in each calendar year to strengthen foster and kinship care parent recruitment and retention efforts. The basic foster care and kinship care rate would increase from \$232 to \$238 in calendar year 2018 and from \$238 to \$244 in calendar year 2019. Additional funding to foster and kinship care under the budget proposal would be \$861,300 in fiscal year 2017-18 and \$2,162,100 in fiscal year 2018-19, totaling \$3,023,400.

Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin is a program created by the Children's Hospital of Wisconsin that works closely with the Child Abuse Prevention Fund to unify child abuse prevention efforts in Wisconsin. Their work focuses on primary prevention with the goal of stopping child abuse and neglect before it occurs by building community resources, providing training and public awareness, and organizing advocacy activities. It is a state chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America, a national leader in preventing child abuse and neglect.

At the conference, Governor Walker also highlighted the Say Something, Do Something for Kids campaign, an initiative of the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board, Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin, and Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF). The goal of this initiative is to get the citizens of Wisconsin actively involved in stopping child abuse and neglect before it happens. It encourages Wisconsinites to "Say Something" if they suspect a child is being threatened, harmed, or neglected; about the need for prevention programs and the importance of strong families; and to spread the word that we can save lives and money by preventing child abuse and neglect instead of treating the lifelong harm caused by childhood adversity and trauma after the fact. Further, the initiative encourages the citizens of Wisconsin to "Do Something" by allocating funds to organizations and other resources designed to stop child abuse; promoting and supporting legislation that grows healthy children and families; and making child abuse prevention a priority every day, not just one month every year.

In an effort to raise awareness about crucial state efforts to combat the long-term effects of child abuse and neglect, as well as the importance of preventing this abuse and neglect in the first place, Governor Walker proclaimed April as Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention and Awareness Month. A copy of the proclamation is attached.