**Pre-Service Module: Child Abuse and Neglect**

**Section 4: Child Welfare Considerations for Children with Disabilities**

**Section Learning Objectives**

By the end of Section 4: Child Welfare Considerations for Children with Disabilities, child welfare professionals will be able to:

* Know about the likelihood of working with children who have disabilities
* Understand the importance of using “People First Language” in your child welfare work
* Identify the benefits to early identification of disabilities
* Describe the risk factors for parents and children in families where there are disabilities
* Understand the importance of collaboration with partners
* Become familiar with the resources available to assist you in working with children with disabilities

**Section Themes and Key Points**

Below is a summary of the themes and key points covered in this section. This summary is intended to remind learners of the key learning points addressed and assist supervisors / coaches in understanding what was covered in order for them to guide and support the application of learning for new child welfare professionals related to this section.

1. This section indicates that disability is defined in various ways in the State of Wisconsin.

A definition found in Wisconsin State Statutes Chapter 103 and 115, states that disability is “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a record of having such an impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment. This includes but is not limited to cognitive disabilities, hearing impairments, speech or language impairments, visual impairment, emotional behavioral disabilities, orthopedic impairments, Autism, traumatic brain injuries, other health impairments, and learning disabilities.”

1. This section identifies that children with disabilities are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system and are at least three times more likely to be abused or neglected, seriously injured or harmed by maltreatment and have repeated involvements in the child welfare system than children without disabilities.
2. This section outlines risk factors faced by children with disabilities, which may not be experienced by other families:

* Vulnerability of the child, due to an inability to self-protect, understand what is happening them to them or communicate what is occurring
* Increased risk of social isolation
* Dependency on others for their care
* The child may not be viewed as credible to law enforcement or other professionals

1. This section outlines resources and supports for children experiencing disabilities, along with their parents:

* Birth to 3 Program – is an early intervention program for infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities. It is a comprehensive, community-based, statewide program that promotes a family-centered approach to early intervention.

Per the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), a referral to the Birth-to-3 program MUST be made for all children less than three years of age who are victims of substantiated maltreatment.

* Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) – provide medical evaluation and forensic interviews conducted by professionals with specialized training and experience in child interview techniques throughout Wisconsin.
* Regional Child Advocacy Centers – separate from CAC’s, these centers are dedicated to supporting families with children and youth with special health care needs and the providers who serve them. The services are free and private and include assistance with finding services and connection to community resources through the State of Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS).

**On-the-Job Application Activities**

Listed in this section are optional transfer of training activities to support the learner in applying the knowledge acquired during the Child Abuse and Neglect: Children with Disabilities Pre-Service Module to their CPS roles and responsibilities.

These three activities are optional and are provided only to aid the child welfare professional and supervisor/coach in supporting transfer of learning from pre-service to the agency. The child welfare professional, with input from their supervisor/coach, may choose to complete all, some, or none of these activities or substitute in other activities.

**Option 1: Interview with a Parent Activity**

* Ask your supervisor or coach to arrange for you to interview a parent of a child with a disability (if this is not a possibility, consider someone in your personal life).
* Spend time developing some questions for your interview using person-first language, developing questions related to the challenges encountered and what has been helpful

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| **Write your questions here** |

* Conduct the interview with a parent of a child with a disability
* Review and discuss the interview and your thoughts with your supervisor or coach, including what you discovered that may assist in your work with families who have children with disabilities

**Option 2: Video “Visible: MSU Students’ Stories of Hidden Disabilities” Activity**

Not all disabilities are visible, which is explored in the “Visible: MSU Students' Stories of Hidden Disabilities” video which features personal stories from students with “invisible disabilities”.

* Watch the video “Visible: MSU Students' Stories of Hidden Disabilities” (5:46): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jMnnYaIeu3c>. [Michigan State University Resource Center for People with Disabilities.]
* Consider the following and discuss with your supervisor or coach:

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| **Reflecting on the video, what strategies could you implement to better understand and advocate for children with visible and invisible disabilities?** |

**Option 3: Services for Children with Delays or Disabilities Activity**

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) has multiple programs available for children with delays or disabilities to assist families in caring for their child at home and in the community. Families may be eligible for one or more programs based on their assessed need.

* Review the Services for Children with Delays or Disabilities on the following link:

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/children/index.htm>

* Discuss these resources and the protocol in your agency to make referrals for the families you serve with your supervisor or coach