



## Our Purpose: Putting Families First

Wisconsin child welfare services help children thrive in safe environments and empower families to provide safe, permanent, and nurturing homes for their children. Local communities and their child welfare agencies and families, with the support and guidance from federal and state partners, do this by supporting children and youth in their own homes, families, tribes, and communities whenever possible.

With a focus on family and community, we will engage with children, youth, and families to expand healthy connections in their communities and tribes and to bolster resiliency in families to help them thrive.

## VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

Partners in child welfare uphold the following values and principles:

**Family-Centered:** We engage with families using a strengths-based perspective, support a team approach, and advocate for appropriate services and supports to meet the needs of families, youth, and caregivers. Families and youth are the drivers of change and are empowered to make decisions with the recognition that they are experts on their needs.

**Trust:** We approach complex family situations with honesty and integrity to effectively support positive change. Those who experience our state's child welfare system will have transparent, trusting relationships with competent and compassionate child welfare professionals.

**Respect:** As an ongoing commitment to integrity, we strive to lift the tenets of inclusion. We acknowledge and champion the worth, ideas, and experience of every person and family system, treating each with dignity, positive regard, and consideration.

**Engagement:** Through collaboration, active listening, empathy, and partnership, we effectively establish relationships with children, youth, birth families, foster families, service providers, courts, and others, to nurture and support meaningful connections and achieve positive outcomes. The voices of families, including children and youth, are included and welcomed in policy and program development for the system.

**Accountability:** We are accountable to children, youth, families, and the community, to provide effective and accessible services that are strengths-based, trauma-informed, culturally responsive, evidence-informed, and focused on family preservation. We model our values and principles, measure performance, learn, self-correct, innovate, and enhance our ability to achieve positive outcomes through data-driven continuous quality improvement efforts: this includes actively reducing the disproportional negative impact child welfare system involvement has for children, youth, and families who identify as sexual and gender minorities and/or as Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC).

**Trauma-Informed:** We understand the impact of child and family trauma and recognize that our practice is most effective when trauma is understood and addressed. Families, especially their children and youth, child welfare professionals, and service providers are supported socially, emotionally, and physically to encourage healing, build resilience, and prevent re-traumatization.

**Culturally Responsible:** Through a deep commitment to personal responsibility, a genuine respect of oneself and others and our similarities and differences, and other forms of cultural humility, we seek to reduce all biases and disparities at the individual, agency, and system level. We treat children, youth, and their families with fairness and equity and provide service to them within the context of their identities, communities, tribes, histories, cultures, and traditions.

**Workforce Support:** We invest in child welfare professionals through training, technology, practices and processes to gain the competencies needed, while maximizing time with families. Additionally, we promote teamwork, support professional development, seek to ensure the physical and emotional safety of all staff, and provide support to address secondary trauma.