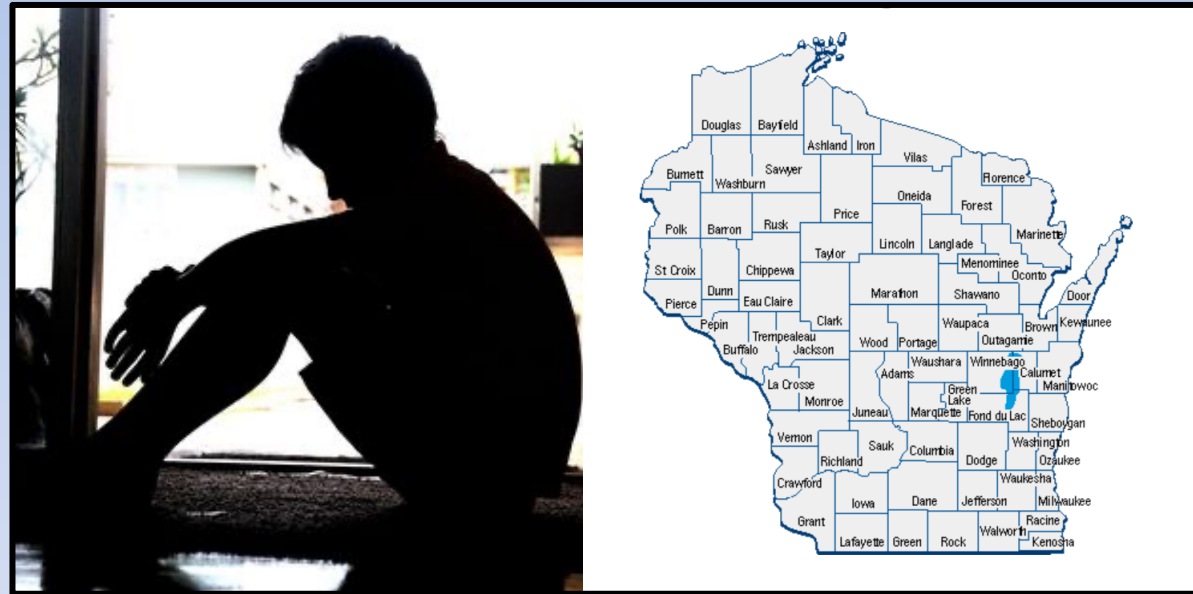


Youth in Care with Complex Needs

Families First Prevention Services Act



Challenges, Innovative Practices, Collaboration

Wisconsin Counties Association Annual Conference

September 20th, 2022



Presentation Outline



Jason Witt, Director
La Crosse County Human Services

Emily Coddington, Associate Director
Wisconsin Association of Children & Families (WAFCA)

- I. ***Wisconsin's struggle*** to serve youth with complex needs:
County Impacts & Statewide Prevalence
- II. The effort to find short and long-term ***solutions***
- III. ***Opportunities for innovation*** in the current
environment: *The Families First Prevention Services Act*

I. Wisconsin's struggle to
serve youth with complex
needs:
County Impacts & Statewide Prevalence



LA CROSSE COUNTY EXAMPLE

Impact on Wisconsin Counties

“We’re sorry, no place in Wisconsin will serve you”

Common Case Characteristics



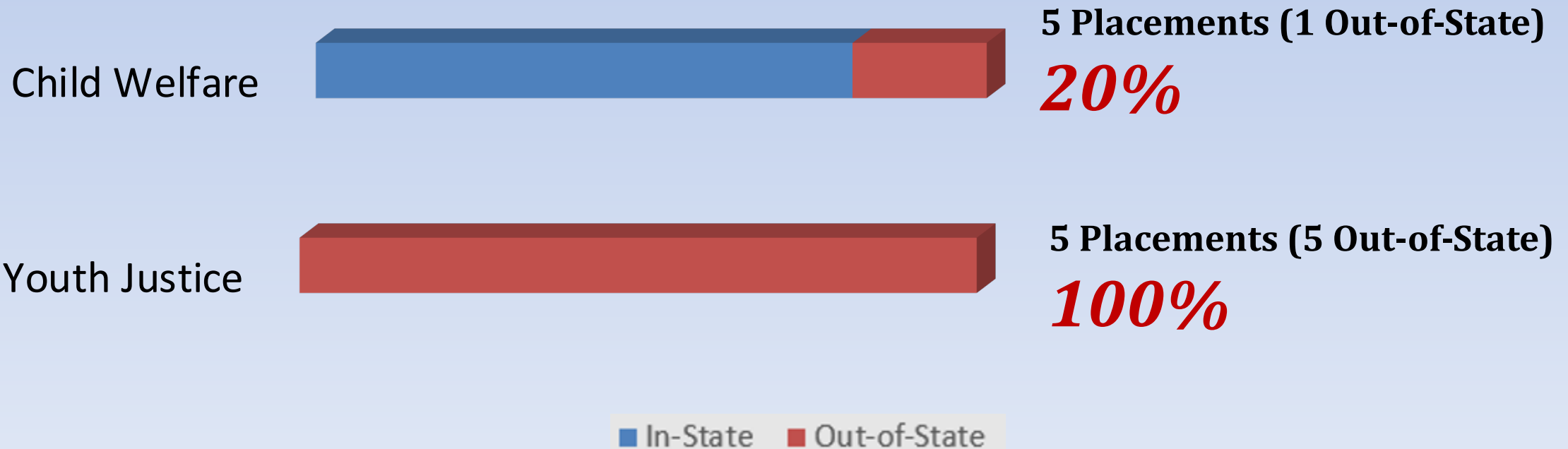
- Victims of abuse or neglect with ***extensive child welfare history***
 - Have experienced ***multiple out-of-home placements***
-
- ***Acute mental health issues*** (i.e., oppositional defiant, ADHD)
 - ***Previous hospitalization and crisis intervention contacts*** due to mental health issues.
 - In youth justice system due to aggressively acting out with ***battery and / or disorderly conduct charges***
-
- ***Amazing potential*** with hopes, dreams and unique talents
 - See themselves ***staying in community*** as adults



LA CROSSE COUNTY EXAMPLE

Impact on Wisconsin Counties

La Crosse County Residential-Level Placements Percentage Out-of-State (2021)

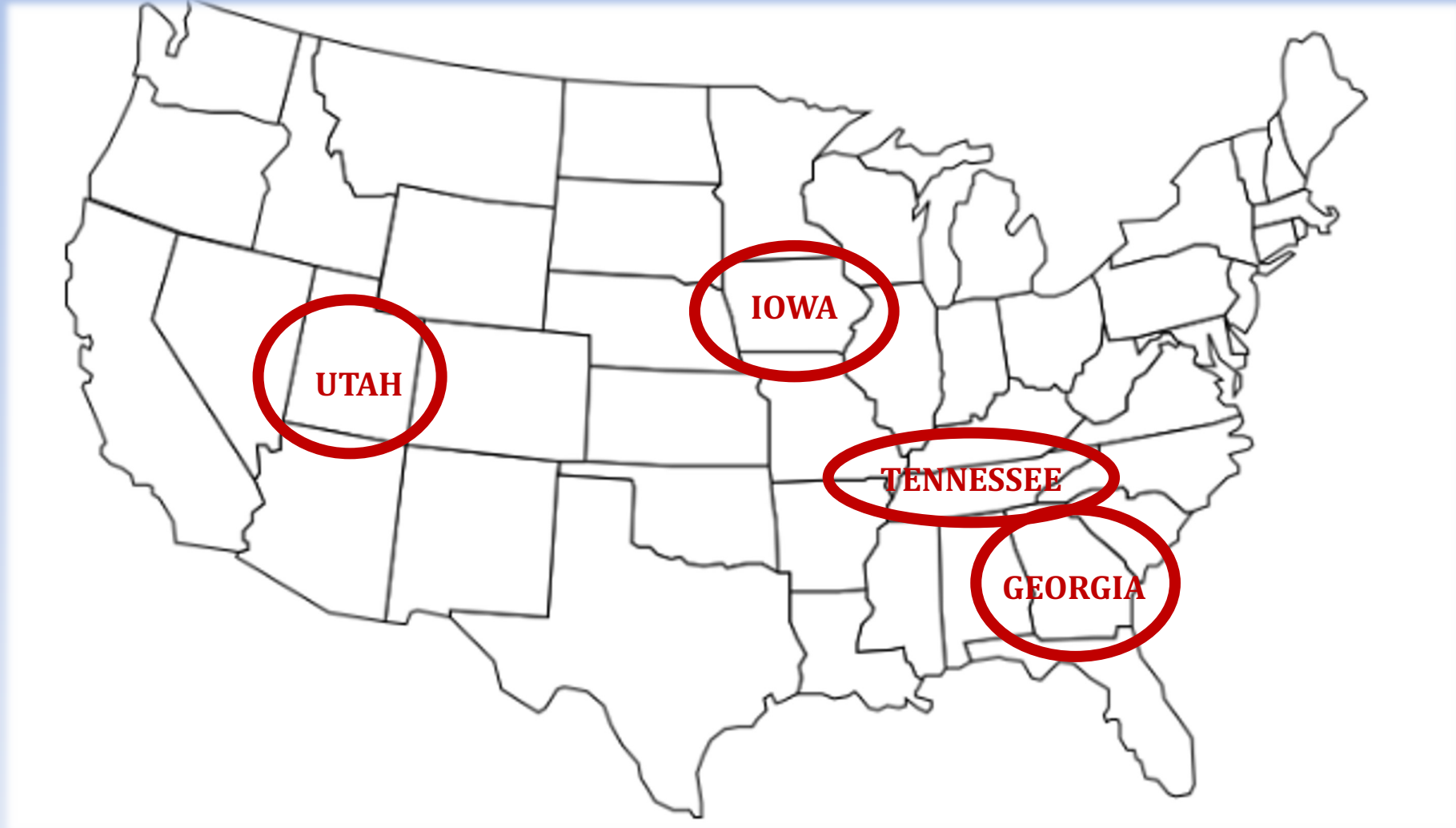




LA CROSSE COUNTY EXAMPLE

Impact on Wisconsin Counties

La Crosse County Out-of-State Placements (2021)





LA CROSSE COUNTY EXAMPLE

Impact on Wisconsin Counties

Impacts for Children

- More difficult to stay connected to formal and informal community support systems
- Complicates community re-integration
- Less successful long-term outcomes

Impacts for Counties

- Dilutes limited staffing resources
- Increased service costs
- Long-term community effects
(i.e., crime, jail, human-services costs, etc.)

II. The Effort to Find Short & Long-Term Solutions



WCHSA

Wisconsin County Human Service Association



Wisconsin Association of Family & Children's Agencies (WAFCA)

A statewide network of non-profit and for-profit providers of human services supporting member agencies in their missions to improve the lives of individuals, families and children in Wisconsin.

We represent nearly 50 agencies employing more than 5,000 people and touching the lives of more than 200,000 families annually.



Partnerships to Serve Children with Complex Needs

In the fall of 2016, the Wisconsin County Human Services Association (WCHSA) and WAFCA collaborated to form a workgroup comprised of state, county, provider, and other stakeholders. The purpose of this group was to identify the root causes of the increasing number of youth being placed in residential facilities outside of Wisconsin and to propose program and/or system solutions to better serve youth with complex care needs. One of the solutions identified by the workgroup addressed the potential value of a centralized referral process.



BACKGROUND

From 2016-2020, 250 children experienced an out of state placement.

44 children left the state for care in 2016; in 2020 a total of 119 placements out of state occurred.

Children from 46 counties have received services out of state.

As of January 2022, there were 54 children out of state.

WCHSA OE Initiative

Towards the end of 2021, WCHSA launched an Organizational Effectiveness project, to pursue some of the recommendations from the 2016 workgroup, including:

- Flexibility in foster home licensing
- A demonstration project in residential care
- Centralized Referral

WAFCFA's Solution

Create a process...

FOR youth with complex needs at-risk of out-of-state placement,
THAT provides a universal format for sharing child information
AND engages system consultant expertise and representation from the
continuum of care in Wisconsin
TO locate in-state treatment and services.

A centralized process should narrow the placing agency's search to those who have capacity to serve the child and/or family. It should also produce as many viable options as possible, so that if one option does not work, others can be tried, or so that a combination of services can be tried if residential services are unavailable.

OUR APPROACH

- 1) Build a village
- 2) Keep it simple
- 3) Gather feedback
- 4) Course correct
- 5) Stay focused on the child & family



THE STRUCTURE

Aligned

- With our state's child welfare transformation
- With FFPSA implementation
- With the reality of our current continuum of care

Streamlined

- A single point of contact for requesting a resource connection session
- A growing list of providers
- A virtual platform for statewide participation

Replicable

- Easy enough to tweak or reproduce at the local level to serve other kids and families

So, how's it going...

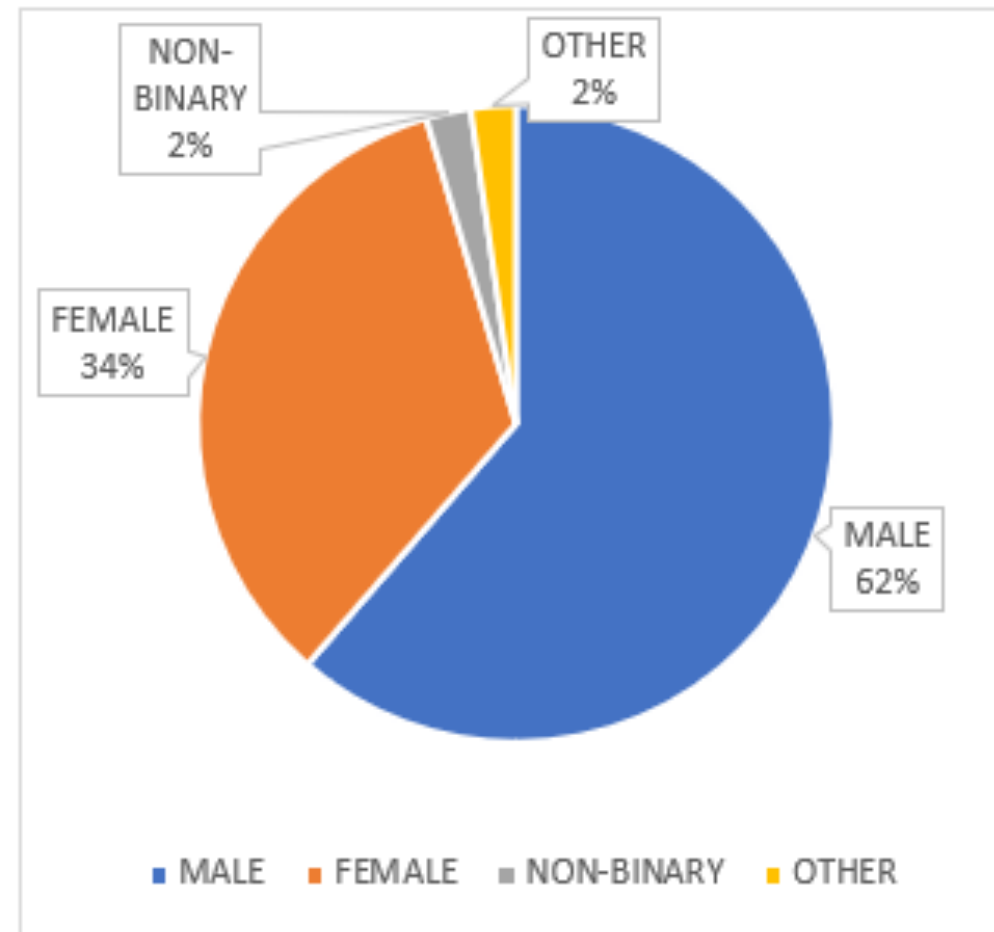
TOTAL PROVIDER COUNT SINCE PILOT LAUNCH: 78 individuals from 35 different agencies (NOTE: Providers were sought from across the state and continuum of care, yet the primary participants ended up representing out-of-home care.)

TOTAL PLACING AGENCY COUNT SINCE PILOT LAUNCH: 231 individuals from 32 Counties (Placing agency participants are both those who have/will participate in a session and those who have signed up to participate as a potential provider.)

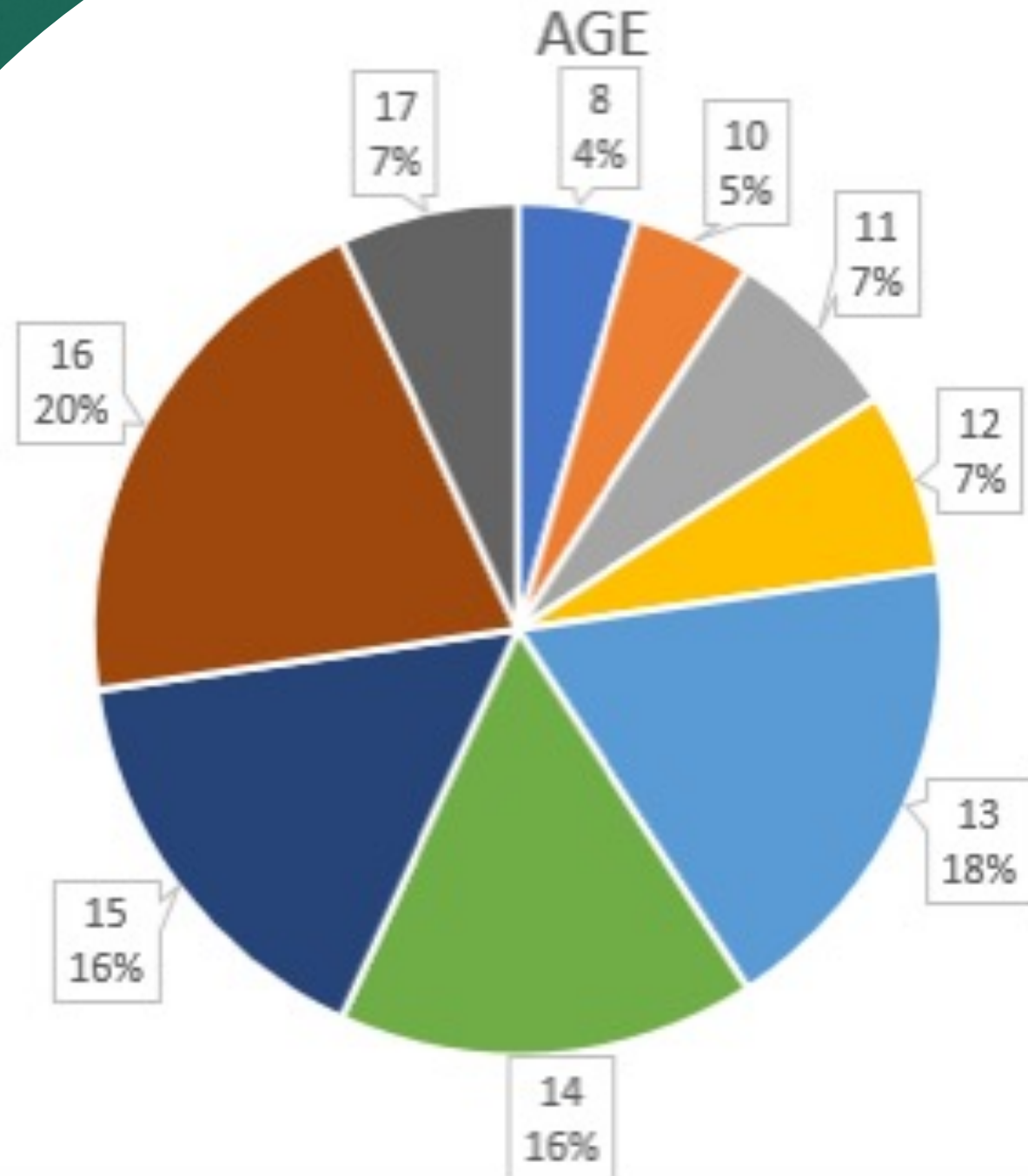
TOTAL SESSIONS REQUESTED SINCE PILOT LAUNCH: 46 (through Aug.)

We're Gathering Good Data

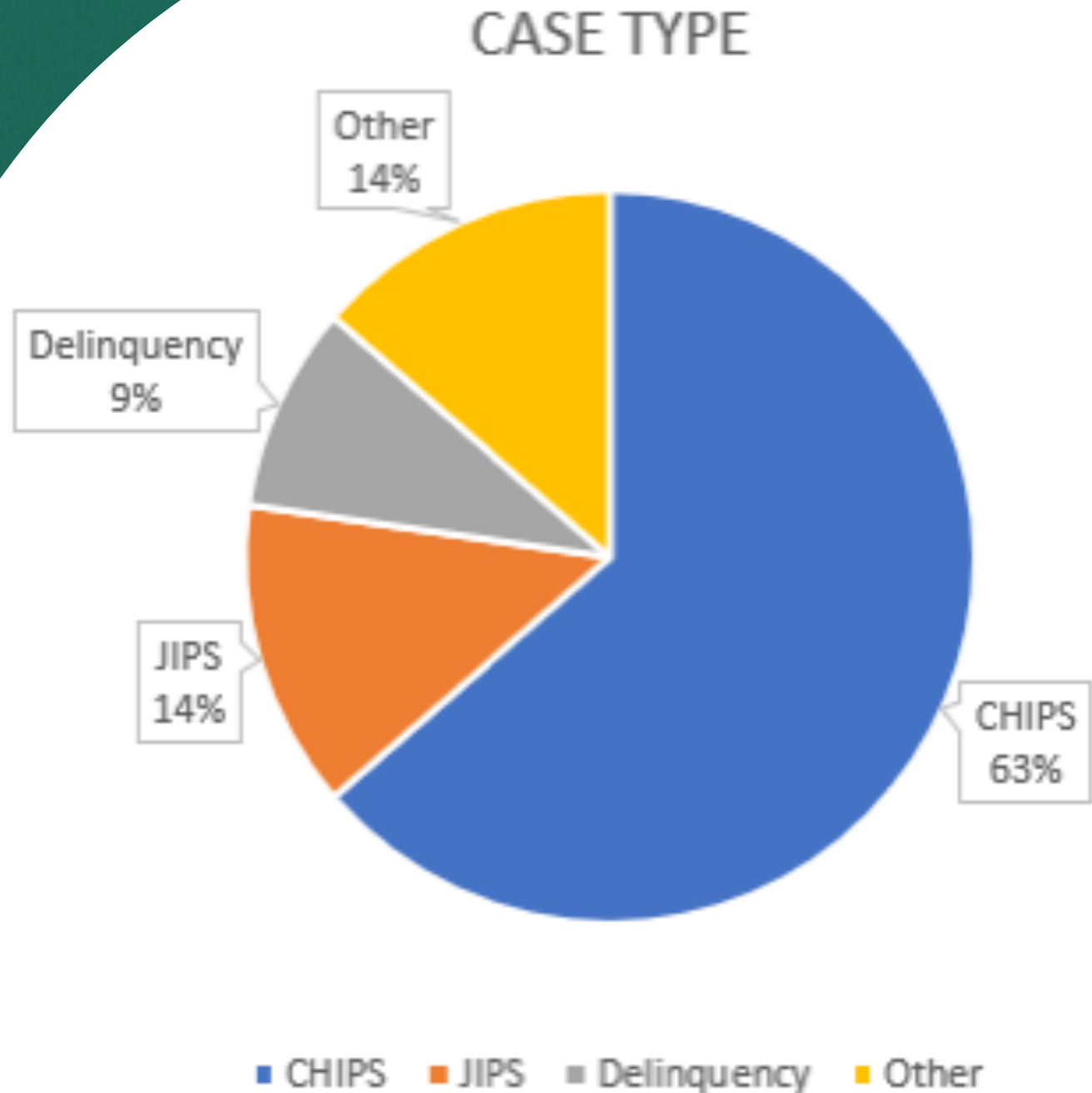
GENDER OF CHILD (as he/she/they identify):



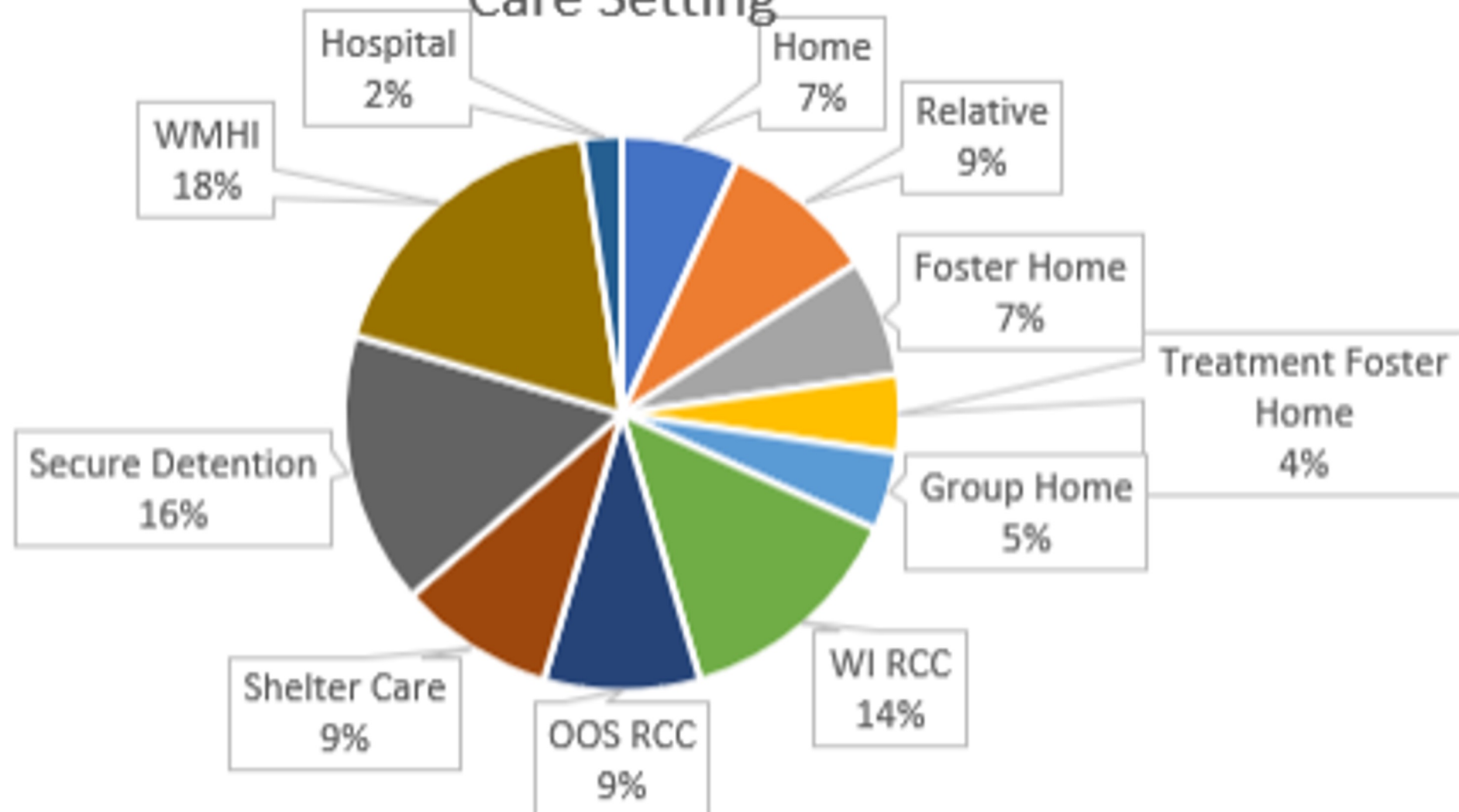
We're Gathering Good Data



We're Gathering Good Data



Care Setting



■ Home

■ Relative

■ Foster Home

■ Treatment Foster Home

■ Group Home

■ WI RCC

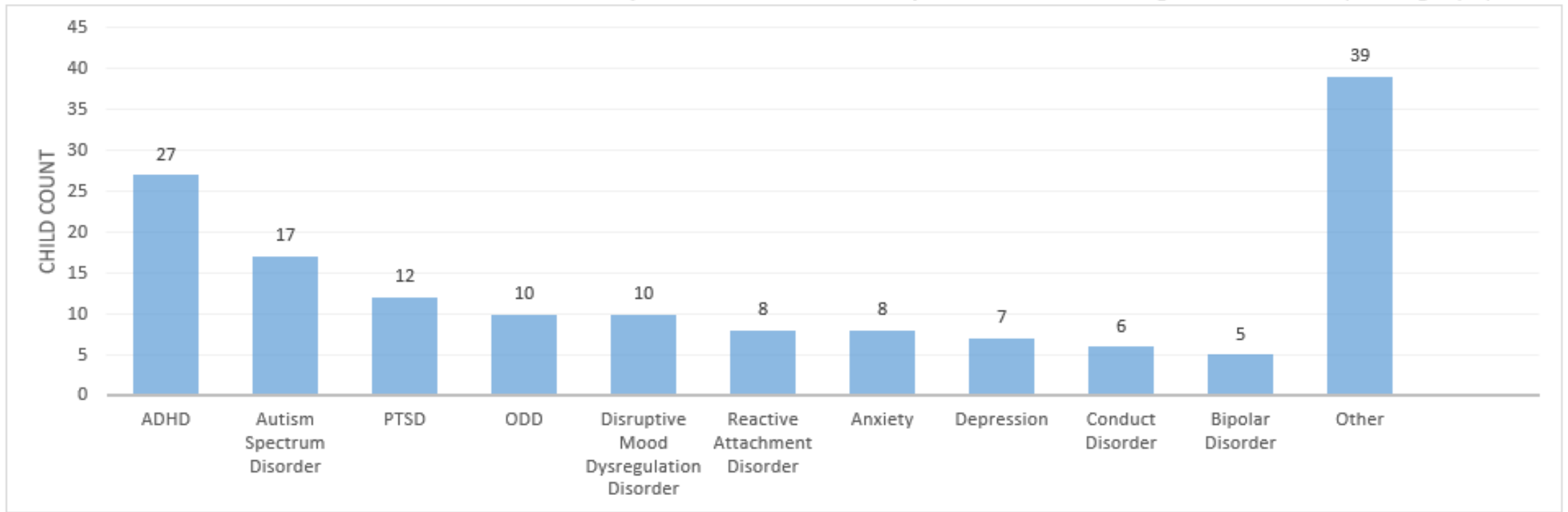
■ OOS RCC

■ Shelter Care

■ Secure Detention

We Have Diagnostic Information

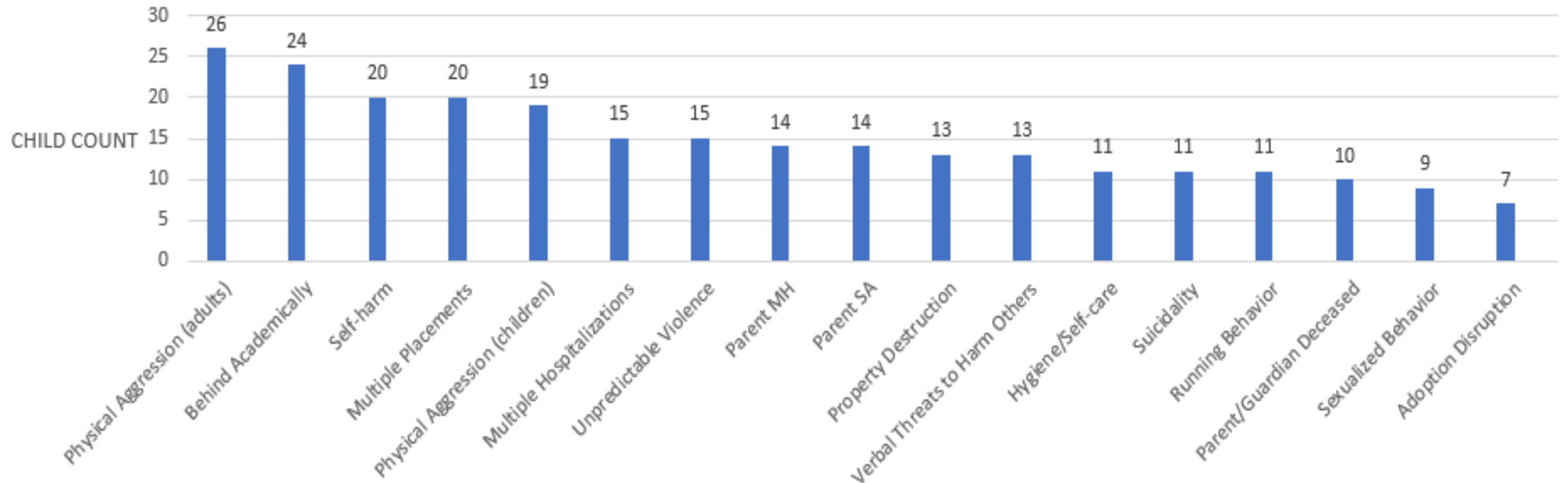
MENTAL HEALTH DIAGNOSTIC INFORMATION PROVIDED (ALL 44 CHILDREN SERVED) *All children were taking medication to help manage symptoms.



There are 39 other diagnoses that have been assigned to 4 or fewer children, including history of abuse and neglect.

We Better Understand The Common Challenges

COMMON CHALLENGES (ALL 44 CHILDREN SERVED)



OUTCOMES OF SESSIONS

Most agencies are leaving with options to pursue

Overall, people appreciate the process

It has provided a good forum for placing agencies and providers to engage with one another – we are all in this together

It has provided immediate information regarding what is getting in the way of agencies being able to serve children

OUTCOMES OF SESSIONS

It has more clearly identified the gaps in our continuum, and where services need to be strengthened

And yet...it is not achieving its intended purpose – children are still being sent out of state

The pilot will end on September 30th as originally planned and other options for centralized referrals will be pursued

All data is being used to inform...

- Continuum Growth & Advocacy
 - Across Departments (DCF, DHS, and DPI)
 - With the Governor's Office
- Budget Asks
- WCHSA OE Residential Pilot Population(s)



Areas for Investment

- No Wrong Door
- Residential Treatment and Professional Foster Parents
- Cost of Living Increases for Foster Parents and Kinship Caregivers
- Psychiatric Residential Treatment, Youth Crisis Stabilization and Capacity at State Centers
- Intensive Medicaid Mental Health Treatment Benefit
- Targeted Safety Services
- Early Childhood and Home Visiting
- Youth Care, Mental Health, and Social Work Workforce
- Grow DSPS Capacity to Support Licensed Professionals



Post-Pilot

- All materials will remain on the WAFCA website in the event a county wishes to lift their own version of the Connection Sessions
- WAFCA will continue to partner with WCHSA, state agencies, and others until all children with complex needs can be served in WI



III. Opportunities for innovation in the current environment:

The Families First Prevention Services Act

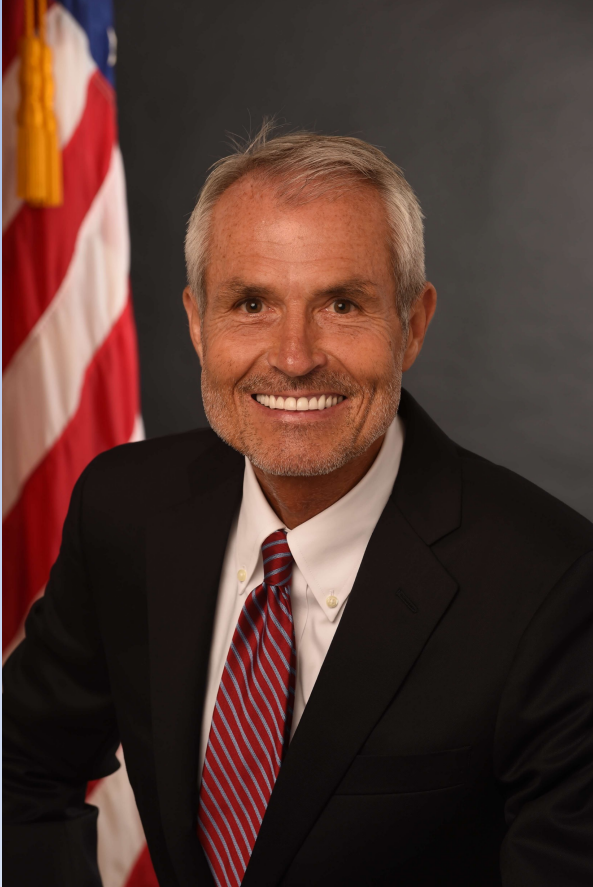




Family First Prevention Services Act

What is Families First?

- ***Bi-partisan legislation*** passed by Congress and signed into law by President Trump in 2018
- ***Includes historic reforms*** to child welfare aimed at refocusing the system to support keeping children safely with their families
- ***Reshapes funding*** to promote prevention services for children at imminent risk of out-of-home placement



Jerry Milner, Head of the
Administration for Children and
Families under President Trump

*“We must re-envision child welfare in the United States as a system that **strengthens families and breaks harmful cycles of trauma and family disruption** rather than waiting until children are hurt to respond”*



Family First Prevention Services Act

Why Families First?

- ***A broad consensus*** that there are *better outcomes when children can be kept safely with their families* and jointly assisted
- ***Supported by research*** showing:
 - The potential *lifelong traumatic impact* of even short-term involuntary family separations
 - Out-of-home placement tied to increased risk of juvenile and adult *criminal behavior*, the *inability to form close relationships* and *early mortality*
- ***Reinforced by longstanding practicalities:***
 - More than half of children in out-of-home care either are *reunified with their parents* or another relative
 - Many foster children are negatively impacted by *disruptions in their foster care placements*
 - Far more children enter child welfare each year due to *neglect versus physical abuse*



Family First Prevention Services Act

Impact on Counties

1. **Expected conformance** reinforced from the State-level:
 - *Transforming the child welfare system (to be more **in-home, family-focused and collaborative**) is a priority of the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF)*
 - *A specific aim is to **dramatically reduce the proportion CPS and Youth Justice children and youth who are served outside of their family home.***
 - *Training, technical assistance and funding **opportunities are focused towards this end***
2. **Change Management** Challenges:
 - ***Communication and coordination** with other stakeholders*
 - ***Restructuring of resources** to support in home services*
 - *Retraining & re-orientating **workforce***
3. **Opportunities:**
 - *Opportunities to **improve, access new funding and innovate** in ways that fit your communities*



LA CROSSE COUNTY EXAMPLE

A Catalyst for *Innovation*



AREA	INITIATIVE	DESCRIPTION
Devoting Resources to <i>Prevention</i>	La Crosse Area Family Collaborative (Neighborhood Social Workers)	<p>Neighborhood embedded social workers provide direct assistance and service connections to families at-risk of entering the child welfare system, while working to build healthy and connected neighborhoods.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>CPS referrals dropped 80 percent and Police calls dropped 35 percent in a troubled neighborhood where a neighborhood social worker was embedded.</i>- <i>CPS referrals in the county dropped 65 percent in the years following rollout of the initiative</i>
Viewing Child Welfare Through the Lens of <i>Community</i>	Collaboration with Safe Families for Children	<p>Actively reaching out and inviting the community to become part of a comprehensive family welfare and well-being system. This includes collaborating with Safe Families for Children, a faith-led initiative that seeks to prevent children from experiencing abuse or neglect by providing safe, stable and temporary “host homes.” Safe Families also provides “family coaches” that assist in in-home stabilization and re-unification. They seek to fill the need for connection, love and belonging.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Safe Families has over 70 volunteers and has served over 46 families in La Crosse County</i>



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La Crosse Area
Family Collaborative
Empowered Families. Thriving Neighborhoods.

Our Neighborhood Offices



Washburn Corner

- *Mayo Clinic*
- *Neighborhood Resource Officers*



Trinity Lutheran Church

- *Children's Clothes Closet*
- *Community Meal*
- *Food Pantry*

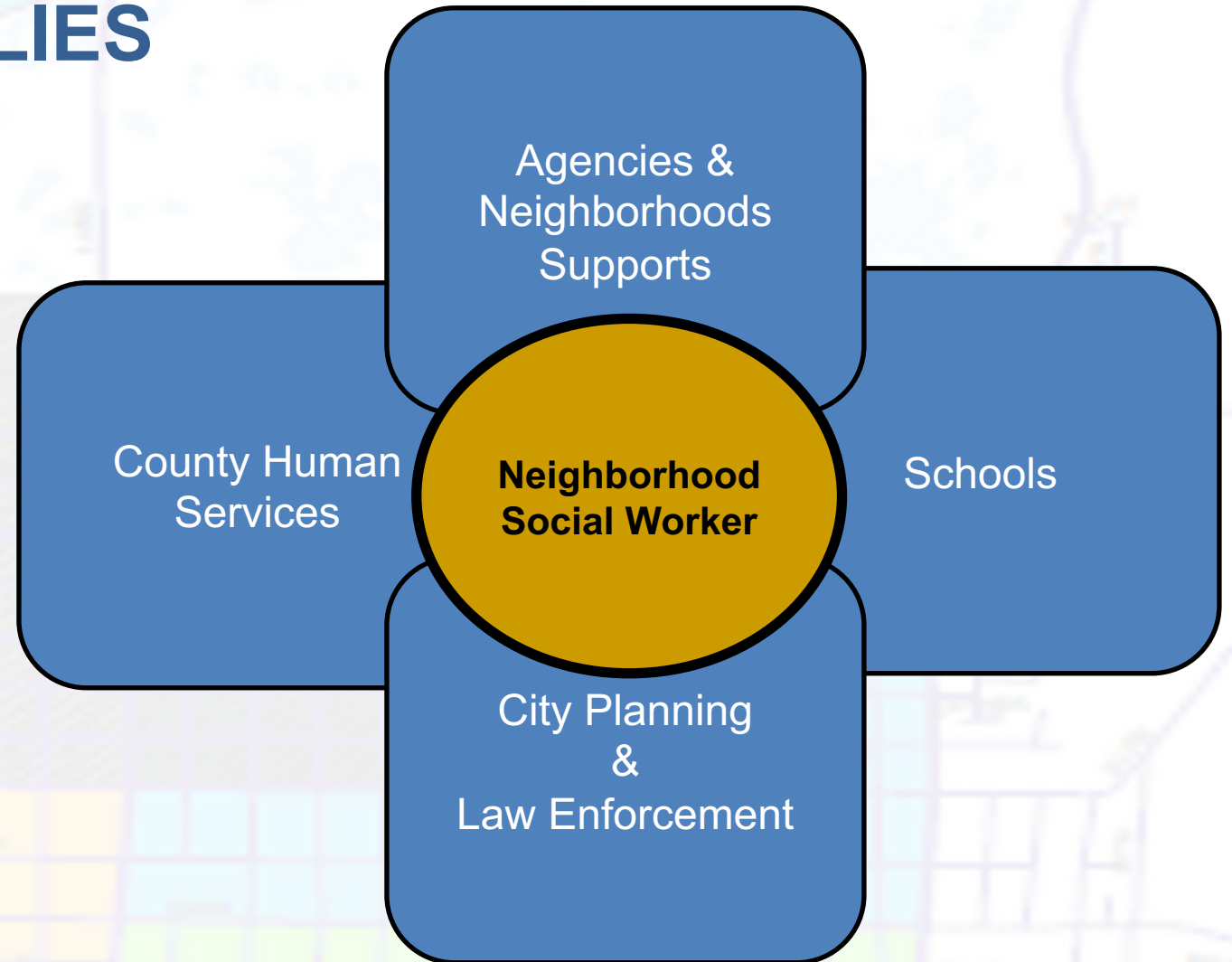
- ***Target neighborhoods are “hot spots” in the community***
- ***Locations are donated by active and engaged stakeholders***
- ***Close proximity to Elementary Schools of focus***



The Model

GOAL: STABILIZE FAMILIES

- *Embedded* in neighborhoods & schools of focus
- Focused on *building trust* & relationships
- Working in a way that's *flexible* and unencumbered by bureaucracy
- Highly *integrated* with agencies and grassroots partners





LA CROSSE COUNTY EXAMPLE

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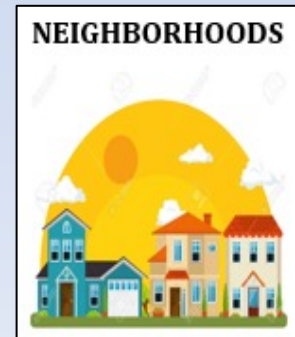
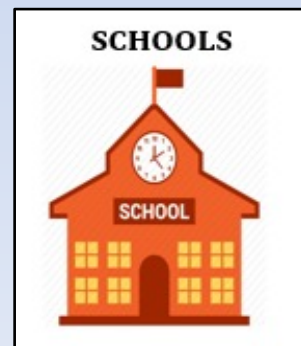
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The ~~Child~~ Welfare System is the Community



Always *Strengthening*
Family & Family-Like
Connections



LA CROSSE COUNTY EXAMPLE

A Catalyst for *Innovation*



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Using <i>Resources in New Ways</i>	Family Keys	<p>A partnership with Wisconsin DCF and local agencies and stakeholders aimed at ensuring no child is separated from their parents in the child welfare system or prevented from re-unifying due to not having safe and stable housing. It is estimated that 10 percent of CPS children enter out-of-home care due to unsafe and inadequate housing.</p> <p>- New initiative. In the process of developing short-term housing options for CPS families.</p>
Transforming <i>in Partnership with Key Stakeholders</i>	1Team	<p>Partnership between La Crosse County Human Services and the School District of La Crosse. Together, we are creating a new "future state" where school district and human service employees will operate as 1Team in addressing the needs of children, youth and their families. The focus is on building trusted and transparent relationships with shared values and beliefs throughout our organizations</p> <p>- New initiative. Anticipated to close out "current state" work by end of 2022.</p>



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Questions?

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