



La Crosse Area Family Policy Board

"Systems and providers aligned for better outcomes"



Biennial Legislative Advocacy Meeting

April 3rd, 2023



Purpose of the La Crosse Area Family Policy Board

Aligning the human services system and provider agencies for better outcomes

Purpose: **Agencies** servicing children, youth and families advising the Human Services Department and advancing “**4 Cs**” for a more aligned and effective community human services system.

Communication -

Sharing of information with agencies on current programming, new initiatives, concerns and issues involving families and children in the county.

Coordination -

*Finding ways to best compliment and **work in tandem** with other human services agencies in assisting individuals .*

Collaboration -

*Fostering **partnerships** to impact outcomes, advance service integration, and influence public policy*

Connectedness -

*Fostering **relationships** and understanding how agencies and initiatives fit into the broader community human services system and its challenges*

AREAS OF FOCUS

Juvenile Justice & “At-Risk” Youth

*Big Brothers Big Sisters
Boys & Girls Club
La Crosse County Human Services
La Crosse County Health Department
The Good Fight Community Center
School District of La Crosse
YWCA*

*Great Rivers United Way
La Crosse Community Foundation*

Child Protection & Safe Environment

*Bikers Against Child Abuse
Gundersen Health System
Head Start
La Crosse County Human Services
La Crosse County Health Department
New Horizons
The Parenting Place
YWCA*

*Great Rivers United Way
La Crosse Community Foundation*



Mental Health & Substance Abuse

*AMS of Wisconsin
Coulee Council on Addictions
Garrison Counseling
Great Rivers 2-1-1
Gundersen Health System
La Crosse County Human Services
La Crosse County Health Department
La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium
Mayo Clinic Health System
YWCA*

*Great Rivers United Way
La Crosse Community Foundation*

Income Supports & Basic Needs

*Catholic Charities
Couleecap
Goodwill Industries
Great Rivers 2-1-1
La Crosse County Human Services
La Crosse County Health Department
Neighborhood City Church
New Horizons
Workforce Connections
Workforce Development
YWCA*

*Great Rivers United Way
La Crosse Community Foundation*

Introduction of State Legislators

Senator Brad Pfaff

Representative Jill Billings

Representative Steve Doyle





Priorities Areas for Advocacy & Presenters

- I. Prevention *Marilyn Huckenpoehler, Assistant Director, The Parenting Place
Neil Wintersteen, Health Services Manager, Head Start*
- II. Mental Health *Tita Yutuc, President / CEO, Family & Children's Center
Alicia Place, Community Services Coordinator, School District of La Crosse
Aimee Zabrowski, Director of Student Services, School District of La Crosse
Catherine Kolkmeier, Executive Director, Medical Health Science Consortium*
- III. Housing *Hetti Brown, Director, Couleecap, Inc.*
- IV. Youth Justice *Darrell Ferguson, Employment Navigator, Goodwill Industries
Bridget Todd-Robbins, Administrator, Youth System of Care*
- V. State / Local Funding Balance *Jason Witt, Director, La Crosse County Human Services*

Review of 2023-25 State Budget Priorities

(By Issue Area)



Prevention Priorities





What We're Seeing

Fragile Child Care Sector

- Closures of centers and home-based childcare businesses
- Difficulty attracting and retaining qualified child care professionals
- Cost is expensive for parents but inadequate for child care business sustainability
- Lack of available child care slots for regional workforce

All Families Need Information and Resources

- Increased fighting and aggression among children (Pre-K through high school)
- Pandemic-accelerated crises related to coping skills, social skills, mental health for children and adults
- Hunger for social connections
- Increased risk for children to have long-term physical and mental health problems and system involvement



Policy Priorities

A. Included in Governor's Budget Request

#1 Child Care Counts

- **\$340 million** to continue Child Care Counts
- Has supported 3,300 child care businesses and retained 22,000 early education and care professionals in WI

#2 Partner Up

- **\$22 million** to incentivize employers to provide a child care benefit
- Partner Up pays 75%, employer pays 25% of the *true cost* of care
- Provider can cover cost of doing business (ex: \$900 infant rate, \$1800 true cost)

#3 Family Resource Centers

- **\$4.15 million** to fund Family Resource Centers (FRC) in all regions in WI
- Supports highly trained staff, infrastructure, and evidence-based programs to build Protective Factors for families.



Policy Priorities

B. Additional Priorities

#4 Birth to Three Program (B-3)

- Provide **\$4 million** increase to the Birth to Three state GPR allocation to bring the state share of the total program funding to approximately 20 percent
- The B-3 program must be operated as an entitlement program under federal law and, due to flat and even decreased funding from the state in recent years, counties have to bear the costs associated with inflation and caseload growth
- This item is supported by WCA & WCHSA



Impact

- Child Care Counts results in wage supplements for child care professionals – key to attracting and retaining staff, keeping child care businesses open, and maintaining supply of childcare slots
- Child care benefit provided by Partner Up attracts young professionals, boosts workforce participation for all employers, and provides revenue to support the true cost of care
- Research links increased economic supports for families to decreased child welfare system referrals
- Family Resource Center programming builds Five Protective Factors to reduce child abuse and neglect while increasing positive childhood outcomes

Mental Health Priorities





What We're Seeing

Mental Health

- Mental Health needs of children and adults are at an all time high
- Locally, in 2022 there were 15,000 calls to 211 of individuals seeking assistance with MH & addictions
- In 2020, the rate of alcohol attributed deaths was 49.6 per 100K residents in La Crosse Co. The county ranks 42 in the state
- In 2021 1,427 statewide deaths related to opioids

School Mental Health

- Chronic absenteeism has more than doubled since the pandemic.
- Record school discipline referrals.
- Elevated AODA issues.
- Elevated aggressive or destructive student behaviors.
- District screening indicates students are struggling most with emotional and peer problems.
- Average time from onset of symptoms to mental health care is 11 years.



Policy Priorities

Included in Governor's Budget Request

Community Mental Health

- **Medicaid Community Support Program Funding**
 - Provide **\$19M** GPR in FY '24 & **\$21.5 M** in FY'25 to fund the nonfederal share of the Medicaid Community Support Program
- **Residential Substance Use Disorder & Board Funding**
 - Provide **\$8.3 million** annually for Medical Assistance to support the room and board costs of MA enrollees receiving residential SUD treatment. Specify room and board costs are a reimbursable service.

School Mental Health

- **School Supports (\$270M)**
 - “Get Kids Ahead” funding for comprehensive mental health services
 - Expand reimbursement for school-based mental health professionals (SWs, counselors, psychologists, RNs)
 - Resources for staff training in therapeutic supports
 - Expand aid and reimbursement programs to include telehealth therapy
- **Expand Out-of-School Time Grants (\$20M)**
 - Sustain quality out of school time programming to provide healthy environments to youth



Impact

Mental Health

- Improving youth MH can also improve student learning outcomes & school attendance, while reducing bullying, risky behaviors, violence, involvement in the juvenile justice system & substance misuse.
- Improving MH & addressing SUD... Improves physical health, saves communities \$ & communities are more safe
- Support of the Community Support Program, helps our most fractured individuals live within the community, staying out of hospitals and congregate care settings.

School Mental Health

- Increase school attendance
- Improve learner readiness
- Promote positive student behavior
- Reduce delays in accessing mental health care
- Connect youth to the right care at the right time.
- Provide youth healthy and supportive out of school time programming with caring adults and youth serving agencies

Housing Priorities



What we're seeing

- Critical lack of decent, affordable housing
- Emergency funding scaled back while costs-of-living continues to increase
- Indicators: rate of homelessness; rise in evictions

Governor's Initiatives:

- \$100M – housing rehabilitation
- \$150M – housing development; workforce housing

- Civil legal assistance

Additional Needs:

- Permanent 'emergency rental assistance' program

- State match to Community Services Block Grant

- Investments: New affordable housing development; gap financing

Policy Priorities

Governor's Budget Proposals and other opportunities

Impact

- Stabilize housing until new development can be completed; costs of living begin to level off
- Improve safety and quality of housing
- Prevent evictions and homelessness, which are detrimental to a family's long-term housing and financial stability

Youth Priorities





Current State

Currently in Wisconsin, 17 year-olds are under adult court jurisdiction

- Wisconsin is 1 of only 3 states left in the US where the adult system has jurisdiction over 17 year-olds
- Doesn't align with best practices
- 2017-2021 Wisconsin Department of Justice: average of 8,233 17-year-olds arrested each year
- 2022 La Crosse County: 56 17 year-olds arrested, 38 who were charged



Policy Priorities

Governor's Initiatives:

- **Raise the age** of juvenile court jurisdiction from 17 to 18 years old. This means that offenders who are 17 years old that commit crimes would be subject to the Juvenile Justice Code rather than the Common Criminal Code.
- **\$5 million GPR** in each fiscal year to reimburse counties for increased costs associated with raising the age that a circuit court or municipal court exercises adult jurisdiction on individuals from 17 to 18 years of age



Impact

Increase in Community Safety

- Research confirms that youth are less likely to reoffend if they go through the juvenile justice system than adult court.

Cost Savings

- Based on Wisconsin data and research in reduced reoffending, for every 1,000 youth returned to the juvenile system there will be \$5.8 million in direct savings each year.

Best Practices

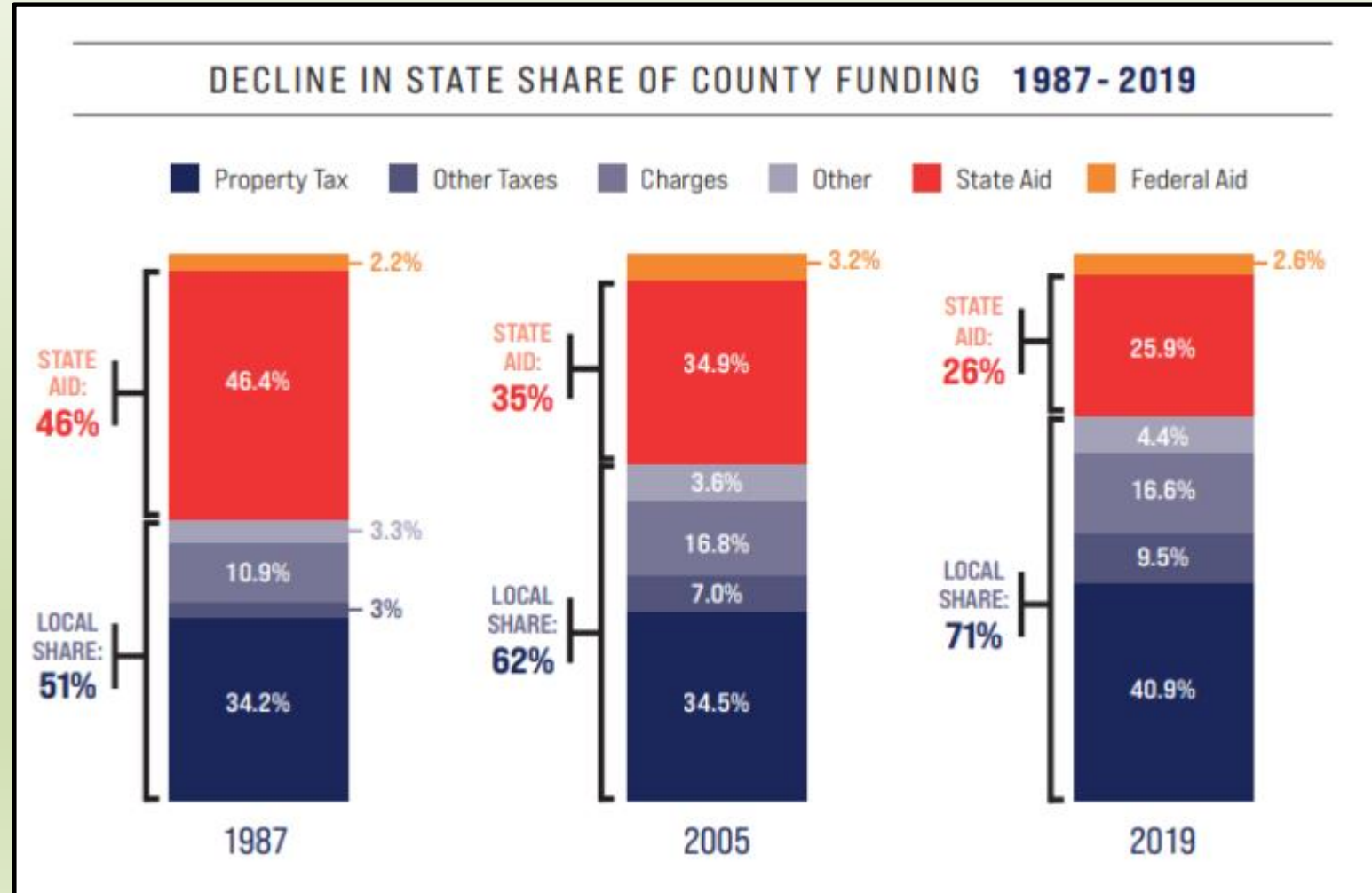
- There are more services and more opportunities for families to get involved when a 17-year-old under juvenile code

State & Local Funding Balance



State & Local Funding Balance

Not sustainable





Policy Priorities

Included in Governor's Budget Request

Support funding reform efforts so that counties can catch and keep up with the cost of doing business and administering state-mandated programs.

- a. Provide 1 penny of the state's 5 penny sales tax to local governments
- b. Allow counties to approve an additional .5% sales tax via referendum



La Crosse Area

Family Policy Board

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Thank You!