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February 20, 2019

Testimony

Sub-Committee Meeting

Appropriations: Health and Human Services, Rep. Mary Whiteford, Chair

**FULL MEMBERS**

ACTS II Ministry for Teens  
Adoption Option, Inc.  
Bethany Christian Services  
D.A. Blodgett–St. John's  
Catholic Charities of Jackson, Lenawee & Hillsdale Counties  
Catholic Charities of Shiawassee & Genesee Counties  
Catholic Charities West Michigan  
Catholic Social Services of the Upper Peninsula  
Child & Family Charities  
Child & Family Services of Northeast Michigan  
Child & Family Services of Northwestern Michigan  
Child & Family Services of the Upper Peninsula  
The Children's Center  
Christ Child House  
Community Social Services of Wayne County  
Covenant House Michigan  
Eagle Village  
Family & Children Services  
Family & Community Services, Inc.  
Family Outreach Center  
Family Service & Children's Aid  
Federation of Youth Services  
Forever Families  
Fostering Solutions  
Guiding Harbor  
Hands Across the Water  
Highfields, Inc.  
Holy Cross Services  
Homes for Black Children  
Hope Network Behavioral Health Services  
Judson Center  
Lakeside for Children  
Livingston County Catholic Charities  
Methodist Children's Home Society  
The New Foster Care  
New Light Child & Family Institute  
Ruth Ellis Center  
St. Louis Center  
St. Vincent Catholic Charities  
Samaritas  
Spaulding for Children  
Starr Commonwealth  
StarrVista  
Sunny Crest Youth Ranch  
Teaching Family Homes of Upper Michigan  
U.P. KIDS  
Upper Peninsula Family Solutions  
Vista Maria  
Wedgwood Christian Services  
Wellspring Lutheran Services  
West Michigan Partnership for Children  
Whaley Children's Center  
Youth Guidance Foster Care & Adoption

**AFFILIATE MEMBERS**

Fostering Forward Michigan  
Michigan CASA, Inc.  
Michigan Juvenile Detention Association  
Michigan State University School of Social Work

Good morning, Madam Chair and committee members, and thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning. I am Janet Reynolds Snyder, the Executive Director of the Michigan Federation for Children and Families.

The Michigan Federation for Children and Families (Federation) is a statewide nonprofit association whose 53 member agencies, all private nonprofit agencies, work through contract with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) to provide supportive services to children and their families throughout Michigan's 83 counties. Private nonprofit agencies are mission-driven, community-based organizations playing a vital role in providing services and positive outcomes for the overall health and well-being of children and their families in Michigan communities. Nearly 100% of adoption and residential treatment services and 46% of foster care services are provided by nonprofit private agencies in Michigan.

For 50 years, the Federation has provided a collective and expert voice on behalf of its members in working alongside state department and legislative leaders, with shared responsibility, to continuously help families in Michigan communities lead lives of greater health and opportunity.

The Federation has identified several key areas of focus for work within our current child welfare system:

**1. The Federal Court Lawsuit against Michigan's child welfare system, *Dwayne B. v. Snyder***

The lawsuit is based on a legal complaint of certain policies and practices, deemed unlawful, by the MDHHS, including the maltreatment or neglect of children while in state foster care custody, a lack of basic medical and mental health services for children in foster care, excessive lengths of stay in state custody and frequent moves among multiple placements.

While significant progress has been made in correcting many of the original deficiencies cited, much more remains to be accomplished to be allowed to exit the lawsuit so that Michigan may once again manage its own child welfare system. Progress on exiting the lawsuit has slowed considerably in part due to the flaws in our child welfare information technology system, MISACWIS, that have made analysis of child welfare data relevant to the lawsuit and child safety difficult to access or to depend on its accuracy.

## 2. MiSACWIS

MiSACWIS, the state automated child welfare information system, was originally designed to be a management tool for monitoring all child welfare cases by tracking progress and services offered to children and families, with the goal of ensuring better safety for children in care. As a requirement of providing child welfare services through contract with MDHHS, private nonprofit agencies began using MiSACWIS in 2014.

Already costing Michigan taxpayers over \$200 million since its development and implementation in 2014, the foundation of this system is flawed. SACWIS, once a federal mandate for each state's child welfare system, is no longer required. Other technologies are permissible, with federal approval, and allow states still to draw down federal funds for child welfare services.

During a status conference hearing in May 2018 regarding *Dwayne B. v. Snyder*, Federal Court Judge Nancy Edmunds ordered an independent, third-party evaluation of MiSACWIS and appointed Dr. Kurt Heisler to make this evaluation. The goal of the evaluation to identify barriers that impact the ability of MDHHS to collect and produce accurate data related to the commitments of the ISEP, quality issues relating to knowledge and understanding of critical information such as children's safety and maltreatment in care. This order was based on continued data quality and reporting challenges that prevented or delayed efforts by the federal court monitors to confirm the state's progress in achieving many commitments related to the lawsuit, including those outlined in an initial October 2008 Agreement, the Modified Settlement Agreement in July 2011 and most recently the current Implementation, Sustainability and Exit Plan (ISEP) approved in February 2016.

Private nonprofit child welfare agencies appreciate the lengths to which the MDHHS has worked to improve our state's SACWIS system by involving agencies in the piloting of the system development as well as providing technical support for users. However, in 2018, four years after its implementation, the technology system continues to be a barrier to efficiency within agencies, creating an unmanageable workload burden on caseworkers, directly increasing worker turnover and most concerning of all, impacting communities throughout the state by limiting the time caseworkers have to spend in the field with children and families.

We are aware that many of these same concerns are echoed by MDHHS local office staff, especially relating to the crisis of increasing worker turnover rates in both sectors. Skilled and experienced staff who are leaving the field of child welfare in large part due to frustrations over MiSACWIS. We look forward to the report from the independent evaluator, Dr. Kurt Heisler, as well as our work together with state leaders to improve the system to better outcomes for our communities.

When recommendations of the MiSACWIS third-party evaluator are released, a public/private multi-disciplinary reform and solutions-oriented team shall meet regularly and swiftly to remedy the usability, accuracy and functionality of the system.

### **3. New Federal Legislation, Family First Prevention Services Act**

Michigan's timely and effective implementation of new federal legislation, Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA), signed into law February 2018 (P.L. 115-123) is a tremendous opportunity. The landmark bipartisan FFPSA is designed to help children and families stay together, to keep children in their families and avoid the trauma of entering foster care by creating an expanded entitlement stream of federal funds, without regard to the family's income, to support children in their families with services in place to keep them there safely.

When children cannot be kept safe in their families and foster care is necessary, the law also emphasizes the importance of children growing up in the most family-like settings to meet their needs. This is achieved through the restriction of federal reimbursement to family-based settings and certain residential treatment programs. The FFPSA makes clear that in order to fully address the well-being of children, the well-being of their families and communities must be fully addressed as well. It is important that we are involved as early as possible to ensure the safety of children. FFPSA gives states and tribes the ability to focus their existing federal funds into an array of prevention and early intervention services to keep children safe, strengthen families and communities and reduce the need for out-of-home placements whenever it is safe to do so.

Michigan's ability to implement timely this new act will enhance our state's ability to draw down federal funding in order to better support our families and expand family preservation services. This comes at a time when Michigan has reduced its funding for family preservation programming steadily over the past few years, leaving some areas of the state without preservation support. Without question, the reduction in support for families often results in an increase in out-of-home placements for children.

In Michigan, three main categories of services are in place to preserve families—all assess the needs and strengths of children and their families, addressing concerns so that children remain in their homes whenever possible: Families First of Michigan, Families Together Building Solutions and the Family Reunification Program.

Overall, in preparation for the changes necessary for private nonprofit agencies to make in order to comply with FFPSA, the Federation conducted a readiness assessment of its members. When all responses to the readiness assessment were averaged, Federation Members achieved an overall Readiness Score of 76%.

The child welfare community—including public and private agencies, the courts, the legislature, and all stakeholders—should opt-in to full readiness in achieving the standards and requirements of the FFPSA as early as possible in order to enhance federal IV-E reimbursement draw down and maximize opportunities for vulnerable children and families in Michigan to engage with evidence-based services that improve outcomes for kids. The entire system must be involved in thoughtful and collaborative program redesign.

### **4. Relationships in Michigan's 21st Century Child Welfare System**

In Michigan's system of public-private shared responsibility for our communities, strong relationships are key. With strong relationships as a goal, many opportunities exist in order to further strengthen how Michigan supports its children, families and communities.

In order to achieve successful outcomes for children and their families, strong relationships between the private nonprofit agencies and the public agency are vitally important.

Communication within the community framework of the private nonprofit agencies, MDHHS central office and the local offices requires meaningful collaboration, where the private agency input is valued equally on issues such as contract development and practice, child welfare legislation, and review of oversight monitoring processes such as auditing by the Division of Child Welfare Licensing, as well as the continued development of a performance-based system of service delivery that prioritizes permanency for children along with an actuarial-based funding model.

So often, we all make or hear statements about private agencies as “contractors” or “vendors” when really the larger focus should be how we all, as a community, come together in strong collaboration to make the changes necessary that will lead to better outcomes for children and families in our Michigan communities. We can talk about technical issues and these are clearly very important. The larger issue should focus on the larger intent of all leaders and stakeholders as integral partners Michigan’s 21st century child welfare system.

With strong relationships as a base, many opportunities exist in order to further strengthen how Michigan supports its children, families and communities. Private agency representation should be included in all policy planning discussions and systemic reform matters.

The Federation looks forward to its work together with esteemed members of this committee, as well as others of your legislative colleagues, with MDHHS Director Robert Gordon and his team, and other stakeholders in building important outcomes for the health and well-being of our Michigan families.

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# LEGISLATIVE ENGAGEMENT, ADVOCACY & ACTION



TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE MORE!

**P**ivate nonprofit agencies conduct their business in an ever-changing environment with financial risks, regulatory constraints, and other factors influencing the ability to sustain service. These factors create the need for a strong presence and set of priorities articulated to stakeholders and partners, funders and the Michigan Legislature.

The Michigan Federation for Children and Families engages its membership of private nonprofit organizations to advance sound public policy and promote equitable funding and resources to achieve targeted outcomes for Michigan's vulnerable children, youth and families served by this network. In 2018, the Federation and its members established a thorough and comprehensive set of policy and budget priorities for all areas of service provided by the membership, including:

- Increased rates for the family preservation and the adoption program;
- Paying providers of foster care services a per diem daily administrative rate for every case on a caseworker's caseload;
- Maintaining the private agency foster care (PAFC) foster care training payments proposed to be removed from contract by MDHHS.

Michigan Governor Rick Snyder's FY 2018–19 Executive Budget recommendations prioritized tax relief and fixing Michigan's infrastructure and roads, and included no additional funding to support MDHHS contracts with private agencies. In a campaign year and a legislative environment where budget cuts were being made, it was a daunting task to create the necessary momentum to prioritize the nonprofit network and put children and families at the top of the appropriations process. In coordination with its lobbying firm Public Affairs Associates, the Michigan Federation launched an advocacy campaign to make it possible, and with our membership, **WE GOT TO WORK**.

Through powerful, focused and unrelenting education and advocacy with the Michigan Legislature and State Budget Office, the Michigan Federation for Children and Families was successful in securing the state budget's inclusion of over \$45 million in additional reimbursements for private sector contracted child welfare services during fiscal years 2018 and 2019 and laid the foundation for multiple policy changes that will positively impact service delivery!

## How we did it

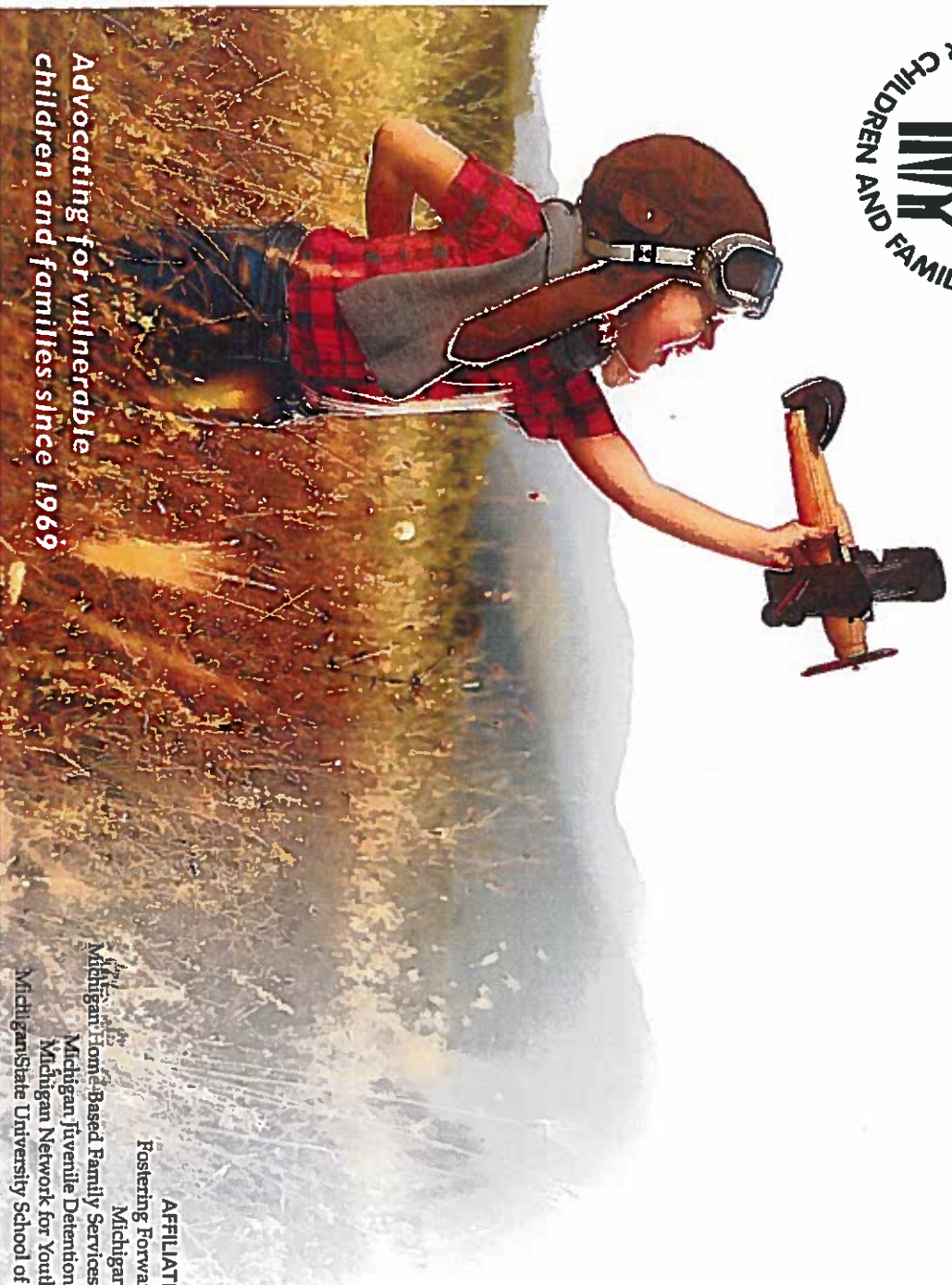
Federation members, you got to know your senators and representatives, local government officials and key players in the courts. You called upon them for support in sustaining and building a strong future for the continued excellence in service provided by your agency in their communities. They heard you and responded! Engaging these leaders through meetings in Lansing, invitations to visit the agency, and providing testimony at public hearings made all the difference through the budget process.

Michigan's vulnerable children and families are relying on all of us to provide them with a strong and steady voice at every level of government, and the Michigan Federation stands with you to ensure our collective voice is heard. Together, we assure access to quality and cost-effective services and influence public policy in support of children, families and individuals' reaching their full potential.



# Annual Report to the Membership

## September 2018



Advocating for vulnerable children and families since 1969

### FULL MEMBERS

- ACTS II Ministry for Teens
- Adoption Option, Inc.
- Bethany Christian Services
- D.A. Biodgett-St. John's
- Catholic Charities of Jackson, Lenawee & Hillsdale Counties
- Catholic Charities of Shiawassee & Genesee Counties
- Catholic Charities West Michigan
- Catholic Social Services of the Upper Peninsula
- Child & Family Services of Northeast Michigan
- Child & Family Services of Northwestern Michigan
- Child & Family Services of the Upper Peninsula
- The Children's Center
- Christ Child House
- Community Social Services of Wayne County
- Covenant House Michigan
- Eagle Village
- Family & Children Services
- Family & Community Services
- Family Outreach Center
- Family Service & Children's Aid
- Federation of Youth Services
- Forever Families
- Fostering Solutions
- Guiding Harbor
- Hands Across the Water
- Highfields, Inc.
- Holy Cross Services
- Homes for Black Children
- Hope Network Behavioral Health Services
- Judson Center
- Lakeside for Children
- Livingston County Catholic Charities
- Methodist Children's Home Society
- The New Foster Care
- New Light Child & Family Institute
- Ruth Ellis Center
- St. Louis Center
- St. Vincent Catholic Charities
- Samaritas
- Spaulding for Children
- Starr Commonwealth
- Starr Vista
- Sunny Crest Youth Ranch
- Teaching Family Homes of Upper Michigan
- U.P. KIDS

### AFFILIATE MEMBERS

- Fostering Forward Michigan
- Michigan CASA, Inc.
- Michigan Home-Based Family Services Association
- Michigan Juvenile Detention Association
- Michigan Network for Youth & Families
- Michigan State University School of Social Work

- Upper Peninsula Family Solutions
- Vista Maria
- Wedgwood Christian Services
- Wellspring Lutheran Services
- West Michigan Partnership for Children
- Whaley Children's Center
- Youth Guidance Foster Care & Adoption

# The Federation achieves results through engagement, advocacy & action

The Michigan Federation for Children and Families works tirelessly on behalf of children and families and the private, nonprofit agencies serving Michigan's most vulnerable citizens. The reasons why are clear in our mission, but the ways in which we influence policy, programs, funding and services through our action are diverse and powerful. Member involvement is vital to our progress and achievements.

The Federation is at the forefront of advocacy efforts and action as child welfare reform continues in Michigan. Our input and feedback to leadership of the Snyder Administration, members of the Michigan Legislature, and officials within the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has been sought out, respected and acted upon.

Highlights of the membership's past year's efforts include:

## Engagement

- Hosted meetings of and worked collaboratively with the Michigan Child Welfare Partnership Council to advocate for changes to the child welfare system that focus on outcomes for kids, promoting the performance-based funding pilot in Kent County that allows private agencies the flexibility to innovate in their service delivery, and ensuring that the views of Federation members were included in the process.
- Participated in the West Michigan Partnership for Children's meetings, including Director's Steering Committee meetings with the MDHHS executive leadership and advisory committee meetings.
- Participated in the "MDHHS Systems Transformation" discussions with a strong collaboration of MDHHS, private providers, behavioral/mental health clinicians and national experts to develop a system of care for children that is focused on high quality, trauma-informed, therapeutic intervention in the least restrictive environment, while maintaining strong family connections and progress toward permanency.
- Hosted representatives from ten Michigan universities across the state, creating an opportunity for schools of social work to meet, network, and learn strategies for connecting social work education and field placements to child welfare agencies, information, and current reform strategies.

- In partnership with MDHHS, convened a meeting of treatment foster care service providers to discuss expanding capacity and utilization of the treatment foster care program throughout the state, as well as identifying barriers to achieving this goal and exploring innovative ideas.

## Advocacy

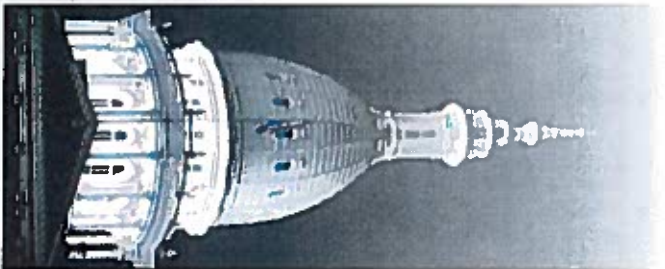
- Facilitated strong advocacy and a collective voice among member agencies in working with members of the Michigan Legislature and with MDHHS, resulting in retention of the PAFc training reimbursement at \$6,000 per caseworker completing state mandated new caseworker training for FY18, retroactive to 10/1/17.
- Successfully advocated with the Michigan Legislature to increase the adoption contract rates, which had been stagnant since 2011. Advocacy efforts yielded a 10% rate increase, infusing \$1.8 million into this area of service. At the request of Federation membership, the legislature also provided \$50,000 in funding to support an actuarial cost study of the rates paid to private child placing agencies for adoption incentive payments.
- Worked collaboratively with MDHHS to refine the residential foster care contracts in order to ensure agencies are equipped to deliver excellence in services to kids and families.



2018



- Drafted budget boilerplate language that was ultimately signed into law, supporting a change in the calculation of adoption worker caseloads for private child placing agencies, and advocating for a workgroup to examine unpaid cases to private agencies.
- New budget boilerplate language was ultimately signed into law, stating the MDHHS may pay providers of foster care services a per diem daily administrative rate for every case on a caseworker's caseload for the duration of a case from referral acceptance to the discharge of wardship.
- New budget boilerplate language directs the formation of a workgroup to compensate private agencies for all case management and services provided to children for which an administrative rate payment is currently not made. The Michigan Federation for Children and Families and representatives from several other private agencies are named in the required parties.
- Met with State Budget Office officials, leading to new funding streams being developed, adding \$5.5 million for administrative rate payments for foster care cases that were previously unpaid, and an additional \$19.9 million will support payments to relatives caring for children in our foster care system.
- Issued numerous "action alerts" to Federation membership using the advocacy tool "Mustar." This allowed membership to easily engage with local, state, and federal-level elected officials on specific issues impacting the nonprofit community serving children and families.
- While the Federation membership has been actively contributing solutions aimed at resolving the usability and functionality of the MISACWIS system, members advocated for a long-term strategy that would include a third-party assessment and/or evaluative process to determine the capacity of the MISACWIS



2018

- system to be fixed. This was achieved through federal court order by Judge Nancy Edmunds.
  - Hosted a legislative breakfast event with Senate Health & Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee Chair Senator Peter MacGregor to connect his constituents and the agencies serving families in his district for a discussion focused on member budget priorities in the areas of family preservation, foster care unpaid cases and adoption.
- ### Action
- Served as a conduit for daily troubleshooting for difficulties that agencies experience with navigating and implementing state policies, training requirements, data reporting and payment systems.
  - Hosted a capacity audience at the sixth annual residential treatment conference, "Transforming Lives Through Innovative Residential Treatment," attracting nationally acclaimed speakers focused on best practices in treatment.
  - Hosted successful Federation member agency and board representatives' legislative visits in Lansing and in-district to connect directly with elected state legislators regarding key child welfare policy priorities and state budget needs.
  - Hosted a special training program for Michigan residential treatment leaders and stakeholders, featuring the national Building Bridges Initiative. The August in-person training and three webinars (July-August-September) focused on "Successfully Engaging and Partnering with Families: Challenges and Strategies for Success."
  - Hosted a hugely successful 2018 Senior Management Conference themed "Innovation: The Pathway to Exceptional Performance," including a special national initiatives pre-conference institute hosted by Casey Family Programs.

## Our mission

- ◆ To unite private, nonprofit human service providers, advocates, customers, individuals and funders to...
- ◆ influence public policy in support of children, families and individuals reaching their full potential;
- ◆ identify, develop and implement efficient and effective services to Michigan's most vulnerable children and families; and
- ◆ support and enhance the ability of Michigan's private, nonprofit agencies to provide human services

Each year, Federation member agencies generate

# human and economic impact and community investment.

Collectively, member agencies:

- ◆ Serve the critical needs of over **100,000** children and **75,000** adults throughout the state
- ◆ Provide over a **half-billion dollars** worth of services to vulnerable children and families
- ◆ Generate over **\$45 million** in private donations to help offset operating costs
- ◆ Utilize over **\$350 million** in equipment, land and buildings to serve vulnerable children and families
- ◆ Employ nearly **10,000** individuals across the state and pay salaries totaling more than **\$325 million**
- ◆ Generate nearly **\$25 million** in payroll taxes and pay nearly **\$60 million** in fringe benefits
- ◆ Engage over **700** community and business leaders as members of agency boards of directors
- ◆ Activate more than **30,000** volunteers, who generously devote over **670,000** hours of donated service to children and families

## Corporate sponsors

The Michigan Federation for Children and Families is especially grateful for the financial support of its Corporate Sponsors:

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# 2018

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# 2019 ADVOCACY & POLICY PRIORITIES

MEMBERSHIP DRIVEN • RESEARCH INFORMED • SOLUTION FOCUSED

For 50 years, the Michigan Federation for Children and Families has provided a collective and expert voice on behalf of its members to influence federal, state, and local public policy decisions—both legislative and administrative. The Federation's **2019 Advocacy and Policy Priorities** are focused on **systemic changes** that will improve the child welfare system and lead to the **best outcomes** for vulnerable children and families receiving services delivered by the private, nonprofit human services provider network as follows:

1. Reform of Michigan's child welfare system as identified in the *Dwayne B. v. Snyder* federal court lawsuit.
2. Remedies for the inadequacies in Michigan's State-Automated Child Welfare Information System (MiSACWIS).
3. Thoughtful and collaborative implementation of the *Family First Prevention Services Act* (FFPSA).
4. Strong collaboration and partnership among all stakeholders, service providers and regulators involved in our public-private system of shared responsibility for Michigan's vulnerable children, families and communities.

*Celebrating 50 years of advocacy on behalf of vulnerable children and families*

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# 2019 ADVOCACY & POLICY PRIORITIES

## **DWAYNE B. v. SNYDER FEDERAL COURT LAWSUIT.**

The 2006 lawsuit is based on a legal complaint of certain unlawful policies and practices of the MDHHS, including the maltreatment or neglect of children while in state foster care custody, a lack of basic medical and mental health services for children in foster care, excessive lengths of stay in state custody, and frequent moves among multiple placements.

Progress on exiting the lawsuit has slowed considerably in part due to the flaws in MISACWIS that have made analysis of child welfare data relevant to the lawsuit and child safety nearly impossible to access or to depend on its accuracy. Until our state is able to meet all the performance requirements of the settlement agreement and maintain performance for 18 months, federal court jurisdiction will require our state's child welfare system to be monitored and performance data analyzed to hold Michigan accountable to its promise to improve the child welfare system.

**SOLUTION:** While significant progress has been made in correcting many of the original deficiencies cited, there remains much more to accomplish in order to be allowed to exit monitoring under the Implementation, Sustainability, and Exit Plan (ISEP) Agreement so that Michigan may once again manage its own child welfare system. Allocate the appropriate resources so that a laser-focused attention can be paid to achieving meaningful reform through a thoughtful change process that minimizes harm to all stakeholders.

## **2 MICHIGAN STATE AUTOMATED CHILD WELFARE INFORMATION SYSTEM (MISACWIS).**

MISACWIS was originally designed to be a management tool for monitoring all child welfare cases by tracking progress and services provided to children and families with the goal of ensuring better safety and timely permanency for children in care. As a requirement of providing child welfare services through contract with MDHHS, private nonprofit agencies began using MISACWIS in 2014. Already costing Michigan taxpayers over \$200 million since its development and implementation in 2014, the foundation of this system is flawed. SACWIS, once a federal mandate for each state's child welfare system, is no longer required. Other technologies are permissible, with federal approval, and allow states still to draw down federal funds for child welfare services.

Michigan's system, MISACWIS, is flawed to the extent that during a status conference hearing in May 2018 regarding *Dwayne B. v. Snyder*, Judge Nancy Edmunds ordered an independent, third-party evaluation of MISACWIS. Many of the federal court's concerns regarding MISACWIS originate from data quality issues relating to knowledge and understanding of critical issues such as children's safety and maltreatment in care, supervisory oversight, placement and permanency of children in custody. The goal of the evaluation is to identify barriers that impact the ability of MDHHS to collect and produce accurate data related to the commitments of the ISEP.

Members of the Michigan Federation for Children and Families, private nonprofit child welfare agencies under contract with the MDHHS, have formally brought critical concerns regarding MISACWIS to MDHHS leadership since its 2014 implementation and requested an independent evaluation of the system in 2017. In 2018, four years after its implementation, the technology system continues to be a barrier to efficiency within agencies, creating an unmanageable workload burden on caseworkers, directly increasing worker turnover and, most concerning of all, impacting communities throughout the state by limiting the time caseworkers have to spend in the field with children and families. We are aware that many of these same concerns are echoed by MDHHS local office staff, especially relating to the crisis of increasing worker turnover rates.

**SOLUTION:** When recommendations of the MISACWIS third-party evaluator are released, a public/private multi-disciplinary reform and solutions-oriented team shall meet regularly and swiftly to remedy the usability, accuracy and functionality of the system.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVEN • RESEARCH INFORMED • SOLUTION FOCUSED



# 2019 ADVOCACY & POLICY PRIORITIES

## 3 FAMILY FIRST PREVENTION SERVICES ACT (FFPSA).

Michigan's timely and effective implementation of new federal legislation, FFPSA, signed into law February 2018 (PL 115-123) is an outstanding opportunity to strengthen families. The landmark bipartisan legislation is designed to help children and families stay together, to keep children in their families and avoid the trauma of entering foster care by creating an expanded entitlement stream of federal funds without regard to the family's income, to support children in their families with services in place to keep them there safely.

When children cannot be kept safe in their families and foster care is necessary, the law also emphasizes the importance of children growing up in the most family-like settings to meet their needs. The FFPSA makes clear that in order to fully address the well-being of children, the well-being of their families and communities must be fully addressed as well. FFPSA gives states and tribes the ability to direct their existing federal funds into an array of prevention and early intervention services to keep children safe, strengthen families and communities and reduce the need for out-of-home placements whenever it is safe to do so.

At a time when out-of-home placement is on the rise nationally, delaying the implementation of FFPSA in Michigan will delay our state's ability to draw down federal funding in order to expand family preservation services. This comes at a time when Michigan has reduced its funding for family preservation programming, reducing support for families, which will most likely result in a further increase in out-of-home placements for children.

To understand what changes will be necessary for private nonprofit agencies to comply with FFPSA, the Federation conducted a readiness assessment of its residential treatment member agencies. When all responses to the readiness assessment were averaged, Federation members achieved an overall Readiness Score of 76%. While a lot of work and collaboration lies ahead to develop policy, statute, contracts and financing structures to achieve full readiness, the opportunity to continue strengthening an already well-designed therapeutic system of residential treatment services is full of potential.

**SOLUTION:** The child welfare community—including public and private agencies, the courts, the legislature, and all stakeholders—should opt-in to full readiness in achieving the standards and requirements of the FFPSA as early as possible in order to enhance federal IV-E reimbursement draw down and maximize opportunities for vulnerable children and families in Michigan to engage with evidence-based services that improve outcomes for kids. The entire system must be involved in thoughtful and collaborative program redesign.

## 4 COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP.

Nearly 100% of family preservation, adoption, and residential treatment services and 46% of foster care services are provided by private nonprofit agencies in Michigan. In order to achieve successful outcomes for children and their families, strong relationships between the private agencies and the public agency are vital.

Communication within the framework of the private agencies, MDHHS central office and the county MDHHS offices requires meaningful collaboration where contractor input is valued equally on issues such as contract development and practice, child welfare legislation, and review of oversight monitoring processes such as auditing by the Division of Child Welfare Licensing as well as the continued development of a performance-based system of service delivery that prioritizes permanency for children along with an actuarial-based funding model.

We strive to provide opportunities for Michigan's children and families to receive treatment and services in Michigan, where they can remain in their communities, with their families, and connected to their support systems.

**SOLUTION:** With strong relationships as a base, many opportunities exist in order to further strengthen how Michigan supports its children, families and communities. Private agency representation should be included in all policy planning discussions and systemic reform matters.



## **Michigan Federation for Children and Families**

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