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CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT  
**Prevention Board**

# Newsletter

ISSUE MARCH 2026

## WI Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board Updates

Providing you with the latest news and updates from the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board

### FAMILY STRENGTHENING MONTH



When families have trusted friends, neighbors, and community spaces, they feel supported, less stressed, and more able to grow together.

2026 is off and running and Family Strengthening Month is right around the corner. This quarterly newsletter is filled with resources and information to help strengthen families across Wisconsin.

## From the Field: Strengthening Families Committee creates a toolkit

The Strengthening Families State Committee is convened by the Prevention Board in collaboration with partner agency, Thriving Wisconsin. The 33 members of the committee represent different divisions within state agencies that serve children and families, family resource centers, childcare resource and referral agencies, early childhood and family-centered coalitions, university, and non-profit partners. The purpose of the committee is to convene various sectors of Wisconsin professionals to collectively support Wisconsin families

The committee was initiated in 2015 to build awareness of the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework and to encourage family serving organizations to support families in building the Five Protective Factors identified in the framework. In the intervening years, this framework and the Five Protective Factors have become widely understood and utilized throughout Wisconsin by organizations, family-serving professionals, community partners, and families themselves.

In 2024, the committee went through a recruitment and revisioning process to identify new needs and strategies for collaboratively fostering family strength throughout the state. The committee prioritized the need to make different state systems more collaborative in working for families and more accessible to families. Initial projects included advocating to include family support professionals and families themselves as audiences for the revised Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards, currently under development, and the development of a "Play While You Wait" Toolkit containing resources to encourage parent-child interactions that promote healthy development in spaces where families often wait, including agencies providing services.

#### *Play While You Wait Toolkit for Public Spaces*

The Strengthening Families Committee has recently released an exciting new resource. The "Play While You Wait" Toolkit is designed to support and encourage positive caregiver and child interactions in public spaces. It provides easy-to-use materials for clinics, offices, and locations where families wait to help parents and caregivers engage with their children while waiting for appointments, rather than turning to technology and media.

The toolkit contains:

- Engaging, child-friendly posters/flyers with activity ideas
- Printable materials for use in lobbies, reception areas, and public settings
- A slideshow to display in spaces where children often wait
- Age-appropriate videos with education messaging and entertainment

The materials in this toolkit are free to use and to share with others. The toolkit can be accessed at <https://www.livebinders.com/b/3687733>.

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I SPY WITH MY LITTLE EYE

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Waiting can be hard for little ones! The Favorites Game is a fun way to get to know your child a little better by asking questions about their favorite things (colors, places, books, TV shows, foods... the list goes on!) See where the conversation takes you!

**TIPS:** Feel free to get creative! Take turns with the child, have them guess your answers or guess theirs, rank your favorites, ask follow-up questions about why they like something.

Waiting can be hard, but "I Spy" turns the time into fun! This game helps your child notice details, build language, and stay engaged- without leaving their seat!

#### Quick Tips

- Look around the room and secretly pick an object
- Give your child a clue: "I spy with my little eye something that is [color/shape/size]"
- Let your child guess, give extra hints if needed
- Take turns- kids love to "spy" too!



## Celebrate Children Foundation

Partnering for Impact: Strengthening Early Childhood Outcomes in Wisconsin

Celebrate Children Foundation and Thriving Wisconsin co-hosted a convening with The Johnson Foundation at Wingspread, bringing together early childhood leaders from across the state to deepen understanding of Wisconsin's policy landscape and identify shared priorities to better support children and their families/caregivers. The convening was grounded in the [Prenatal-to-3 Policy Roadmap](#) and the [Build Initiative Early Childhood System](#). With space limited, we intentionally convened a small, diverse cross-section of partners and had thoughtful conversations about who else should be engaged as this work continues to grow.

The event was a tremendous success — thank you to everyone who joined us! We heard overwhelmingly positive feedback. Attendees were grateful for the chance to connect in person, and it was powerful to see a collaborative spirit across the sectors and agencies represented.

Together, the group reached consensus around a few shared priorities that can strengthen families statewide. This cross-sector collaboration will be helpful to move early childhood systems forward. We will be gathering more feedback from the participants to move forward. We look forward to continuing this work together!

Thank you again to The Johnson Foundation at Wingspread, Payne Consulting LLC, Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center, and all who participated for your leadership, insights, and commitment.



## From the Field: Family Strengthening Month

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The Wisconsin Family Strengthening Month Committee is a collective group of state agencies, community-based organizations, and other partners that are united in their efforts to promote family strengthening, ensuring every child has the opportunity to thrive.

Family Strengthening Month provides communities, organizations, and individuals with resources and activities to show their commitment to children and families in April and throughout the year. This year's toolkit offers a wealth of ideas to inspire action and raise awareness.

Join the Wisconsin Family Strengthening Month Committee and other organizations across the state in supporting families. Visit our website in April to access the Five for Families social media posts and other resources:

- Prevention Board and Five for Families toolkits: <https://preventionboard.wi.gov/Pages/OurWork/April.aspx>
- Random Acts of Connection Outreach toolkit: <https://www.celebrate-children.org/family-strengthening-month>

## Upcoming Professional Development Training:

- Parent Leadership: The Key to a Successful FRC, March 3-5
- Bodies and Boundaries Parent Café Series Orientation, March 12
- Bringing the Protective Factors to Life in Your Work, Introduction, April 7
- Stewards of Children, April 9
- Bringing the Protective Factors to Life in Your Work, Parental Resilience, April 14
- Bringing the Protective Factors to Life in Your Work, Social Connections, April 20

Click [here](#) to register and learn more about each offering and information for how to register.

- [Supporting Fathers and Their Families Surrounding Separation](#), March 11 (12–1 pm)

## Upcoming conferences:

- [Fulfilling the Promise Conference](#), March 16-18, Wilderness Resort, Wisconsin Dells
- [Cultivating Connections: Wisconsin Maternal & Child Health Conference](#), April 13-14, Glacier Canyon Conference Center, Wisconsin Dells
- [Together for Children conference](#), April 22–24, The Wilderness Resort (Glacier Canyon Conference Center), Wisconsin Dells
- The Quiet Crisis: [A Multidisciplinary Response to Human Trafficking](#), May 14–15, The Abbey Resort, Fontana

There are three Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board directors rolling off the Board at the end of April. We want to recognize and thank these three individuals for their service on the Board and commitment to strengthening families.

- Vicki Tylka has served on the Board since January 2017. She was the Chair for two terms (Feb. 2020 – Feb. 2024) and served on the Celebrate Children Foundation Board.
- Paula Breese has served on the Board since June 2017. She also served on the Celebrate Children Foundation Board, including being the Treasurer and the current Chair.
- William Olivier has served on the Board since June 2020. William has served as the Secretary since February 2024 and has been on the Performance Improvement Committee since 2022.

If you are interested in serving on the Board, the online application can be found [here](#) and must be completed and submitted online. Appointments are administered by the Office of the Governor.

## Resources:

**Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health** released three new micro-learning videos. In their recognition of the importance of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health awareness and understanding, WIAIMH is excited to share three new animated micro-learning videos highlighting and defining fundamental principles and practices of the field. These videos are intended to be informative for parents, caregivers, and professionals alike, with multiple applications for enhancing training, consultation, technical assistance, and coaching.

- [Power of Predictability](#)
- [Positive Connection is Prevention](#)
- [Connection Before Redirection](#)

### **Healthy and Ready to Learn: National and State Data on 3-Year-Old Development**

This new data set uses the Healthy and Ready to Learn (HRTL) measure to assess 3-year-olds' developmental well-being in five domains: early learning skills, social-emotional development, self-regulation skills, physical health, and motor skills. Together, these five domains measure whether young children are developmentally “on track” prior to kindergarten. The dashboard shows the percentage of 3-year-olds developmentally “on track” within each domain and an overall, summary measure of HRTL for each state and across the nation.

Link: <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/healthy-ready-learn-national-state-data-3-year-old-development>

[PDF with table of indicators and types of data](#)

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### WMELS Revision Update

The Department of Children and Families and its state partner agencies are revising the [Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards \(WMELS\)](#). Wisconsin partnered with Marzano Research to lead a public review of our state's early learning and development guidelines (ELDGs) from October through December 2025. The results are available in the [Wisconsin ELDGs Revision Project Phase 1 Findings Brief](#). A [Spanish version](#) of this document is also available. In 2026, Marzano Research will lead the development of the next version of our state's ELDGs. Later in the year, DCF and its partners will invite the public to share feedback on a draft before it is published. Learn more about the project at [dcf.wisconsin.gov/eldg](https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/eldg).



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