
Tailored Dispositional Orders Project

Children's Court Improvement Program
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Where did the Tailored Dispositional Orders Project come from?

CFSR

The 2018 Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) involved a full review of the state child welfare system by the Children's Bureau looking at 65 cases in Barron, Brown, and Milwaukee counties.

CFSR Report

The Children's Bureau sent Wisconsin a final report in September 2018 detailing areas that need improvement.

PIP

The Program Improvement Plan (PIP) is a two-year plan in response to the CFSR findings.

Tailored Dispositional Orders Project

DCF and CCIP jointly decided to include the Tailored Dispositional Orders Project as a strategy within the PIP by piloting the project in three counties (innovation zones).

CCIP and DCF reviewed
Conditions for Return from over
25 counties to understand Wisconsin's
current landscape and found:

1

Most counties have a
standardized list of
conditions that are boilerplate.

2

Most conditions are
service-orientated and
not behaviorally focused.

3

Conditions are written in a
checklist format.

4

Conditions were either a
lengthy paragraph or split up
into many bullet points under
each condition.

Youth Justice Research

- Conditions should be specific, enforceable, and clearly understood to be the most effective
- When there are a large number of conditions, they become meaningless, unsuitable, overwhelming, and less likely to be enforced
- Success requires buy-in; drafting conditions should be a collaborative process
- Stay focused on the essentials and priorities!

(<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/yj/pdf/yj-effective-co.pdf>)

GOALS OF THE PROJECT

1

Tailor the Conditions for Return to meet the needs of the individual parents

3

Improve the percentage of cases resulting in reunification

2

Improve the timeliness of achieving permanency, namely reunification

4

Increase parent/family participation and engagement

Considerations for Selecting 3 Counties



Number of CHIPS cases opened in 2018 & 2019



Number of WICWA cases in 2018 & 2019



Legal, Judicial, and County Agency leadership/interest



Other initiatives or pilots in place



Whether the county received the Child Safety Decision-Making training



Permanency outcomes



Percentage of cases resulting in reunification compared to the statewide average



Percentage of reunifications within 12 months of removal compared to the statewide average

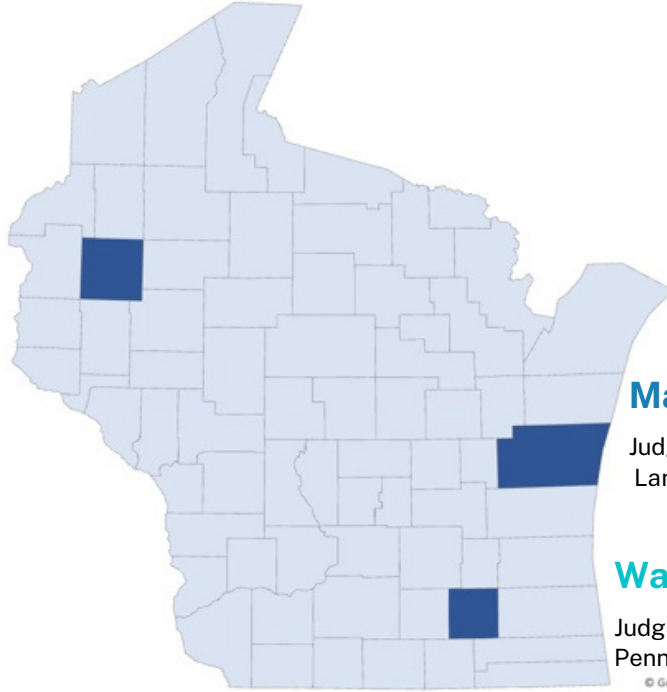


Number of days to reunification compared to statewide average

Pilot Counties / Innovation Zones

Barron

Judge James Babler
Karla Broten - Youth and Families
Program Manager



Manitowoc

Judge Jerilyn Dietz
Lane Kinzel - CFS Unit Supervisor

Waukesha

Judge Maria S. Lazar
Penny Nevicosi - Child & Family Division Manager

Tailored Dispositional Orders Pilot Project Timeline

CHILD SAFETY
DECISION-
MAKING AND
TAILORED
DISPOSITIONAL
ORDERS
TRAINING

FACILITATED
DISCUSSION
WITH LEAD
TEAM

ENGAGING
FAMILIES
TRAINING

WEBINAR:
PARENT WITH
LIVED
EXPERIENCE

What are Tailored Dispositional Orders?



Not a standardized list / boilerplate language



Related to behavioral changes



Address impending danger threats



Do not contain legal or CPS language



Parents know what to do to have their child(ren) returned to the home



Address specific needs of the family



Conditions are prioritized so parents know where to begin / what is the most important safety concern



Have productive permanency plan and review hearing discussions regarding parent's progress



If necessary, can be proven at TPR

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What are SMART Goals?

SMART goals are strategically designed to give any project structure, support, and to set out more clearly what you want to achieve and by when. With SMART goals, you get to track your progress and stay motivated.



Be SMART!

SPECIFIC

The condition is specifically related to an identified Impending Danger Threat.

MEASURABLE

The condition is clear about what behavior needs to change.

ACHIEVABLE

It is clear how progress will be made and how it is evaluated and success is determined.

REALISTIC

The condition is understood by the parent/caregiver, it is least intrusive and culturally competent.

TIMELY

The condition is workable, there are no barriers, and the parent/caregiver can begin to work on the condition promptly.

DCF Desk Guide

Tailored Dispositional Conditions for Return Desk Guide



A tailored dispositional condition for return is intended to address identified safety threats and should identify parental/caregiver behaviors that must change in order for safety to be managed. The condition should be measurable, easily understood by the parent/caregiver and focus on protective capacities to ensure sustainable change.

Key Elements of Conditions

Culturally Competent: Does the condition take into consideration the culture, race and/or ethnicity of the family?

Least Intrusive: Is the level of disruption to the family necessary to control for safety of the child(ren)?

SMART Goal Writing Model for Conditions

Specific: What impending danger threat is the condition addressing?

Measurable: Does the condition make it clear what behavior needs to change?

Achievable: Is it possible for the parent/caregiver to successfully meet the condition? How will it be known when progress is made?

Realistic: Is the condition written in a way that the parent/caregiver understands?

Timely: Is the condition related to a behavior change that can begin or occur promptly?

Preparation Questions for Drafting Conditions

- 1) What are the identified Impending Danger Threat(s)?
- 2) What protective capacities does the parent/caregiver need to enhance?
- 3) What needs to change so the child(ren) is safe?
- 4) What behavioral changes does the parent/caregiver need to make?

Resource

The WI DCF Child Protective Services **Safety Intervention Standards** provides guidance to help determine if a condition is related to a safety threat.

See *Safety Appendix on Impending Danger* and *Safety Appendix on Parent/Caregiver Protective Capacities*

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DCF-P-5458 (N. 06/2021)

Critical Thinking

Below are examples of some common categories of dispositional conditions, along with a series of questions to think critically about how to determine if the condition is necessary. Please note this list is not exhaustive.

Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

Is the condition necessary because the parent's/caregiver's SUD is the reason for the removal and/or CHIPS order?

Is the SUD resulting in an unsafe condition in the home based on the safety assessment?

Does the parent/caregiver have a demonstrated history of safety managing their use to ensure the safety of the child(ren)?

Parenting

What unsafe parenting behaviors, related to the identified safety threats, need to be managed or changed in order for the child(ren) to be safe in the home?

When reading the conditions, is it clear to the parent/caregiver what they need to change about their parenting behaviors?

AND
Are the conditions addressing an underlying behavior related to the safety threats?

Mental Health

What unsafe behavior(s) is the parent/caregiver exhibiting related to their mental health that is resulting in an unsafe condition in the home?

How will you know when the parent/caregiver has made sufficient progress towards managing their mental health?

What does the parent/caregiver need to address in mental health treatment related to the safety of their child(ren)?

Questions to Consider when Finalizing Recommendations for the Dispositional Report

- Are the conditions written in a way that support reunification with an in-home safety plan as soon as safety threats can be controlled in the home?
- Is it clear what the parent/caregiver is expected to do in order to have their child returned and are those expectations related to the safety threats identified?
- Is the intent of each condition to change a behavior as opposed to expecting compliance with a service?
- Are the conditions written so that it is clear what each parent/caregiver is expected to change?

* If the answer to these four questions is "no," it is important to consider if/why the condition is needed.

DCF-P-5458 (N. 06/2021)

According to research, what grade level should conditions be written at?

What grade level are Wisconsin's current conditions written at?

Current conditions do not include the behavior change that we need to see occur for the child to be safely returned to the home.

We've provided behavioral examples to consider incorporating into your county's conditions.

Visitation

Most commonly used visitation condition:

Parent will attend all scheduled visitations with their child. Parent will follow visitation guidelines.

Keep in contact with your child.

Have a commitment to your child.

Have quality contact with your child through age appropriate letters, calls, and/or visits.

Engage with your child.

Follow the family interaction plan to increase visitation and/or decrease supervision.

Parenting

Most commonly used parenting condition:

Parent shall participate in and successfully complete parent education/training as recommended by the Department.
Parent will stay in program until successfully discharged.

Provide a safe environment for your child without unsafe items within the child's reach [list safety concerns - knives, guns, drugs, etc.].

Show that you can meet your child's needs [specifically list needs].

Use skills learned from providers to safely parent your child.

Use positive and safe discipline to parent your child.

AODA

Most counties AODA conditions are written as:

Parent shall complete an AODA assessment with a qualified provider/agency approved by the assigned social worker and follow through with all recommendations until they are successfully discharged from the program.

Parent shall maintain absolute sobriety.

Identify situations and people who trigger you to use drugs or alcohol. Create a recovery/relapse plan with the support of professionals, community supports, friends and family.

Work with professionals to review recommendations from AODA assessment and make a plan about what needs to be done for sobriety.

Show that you are using treatment providers, community drug or alcohol support groups, and friends and family to stay sober (reach recovery/sobriety).

Mental Health

Most commonly used mental health condition:

Parent will complete a mental health assessment and follow through with recommendations.

Show that you are using treatment providers, community support groups, and friends and family to manage impulsivity/emotions/anxiety/mental health symptoms.

Show that you can manage your mental health and emotions so that you can safely parent your child.

*If possible, define mental health.

Work with professionals to review recommendations from mental health assessment/psychological evaluation and make a plan about what needs to be done to manage your mental health/emotions.

Incarcerated Parent

Most incarcerated parent conditions were about what the social worker will do and not focused on the parent's behavior.

The Worker shall inform the parent what services are available at the institution that will be approved by the Department.

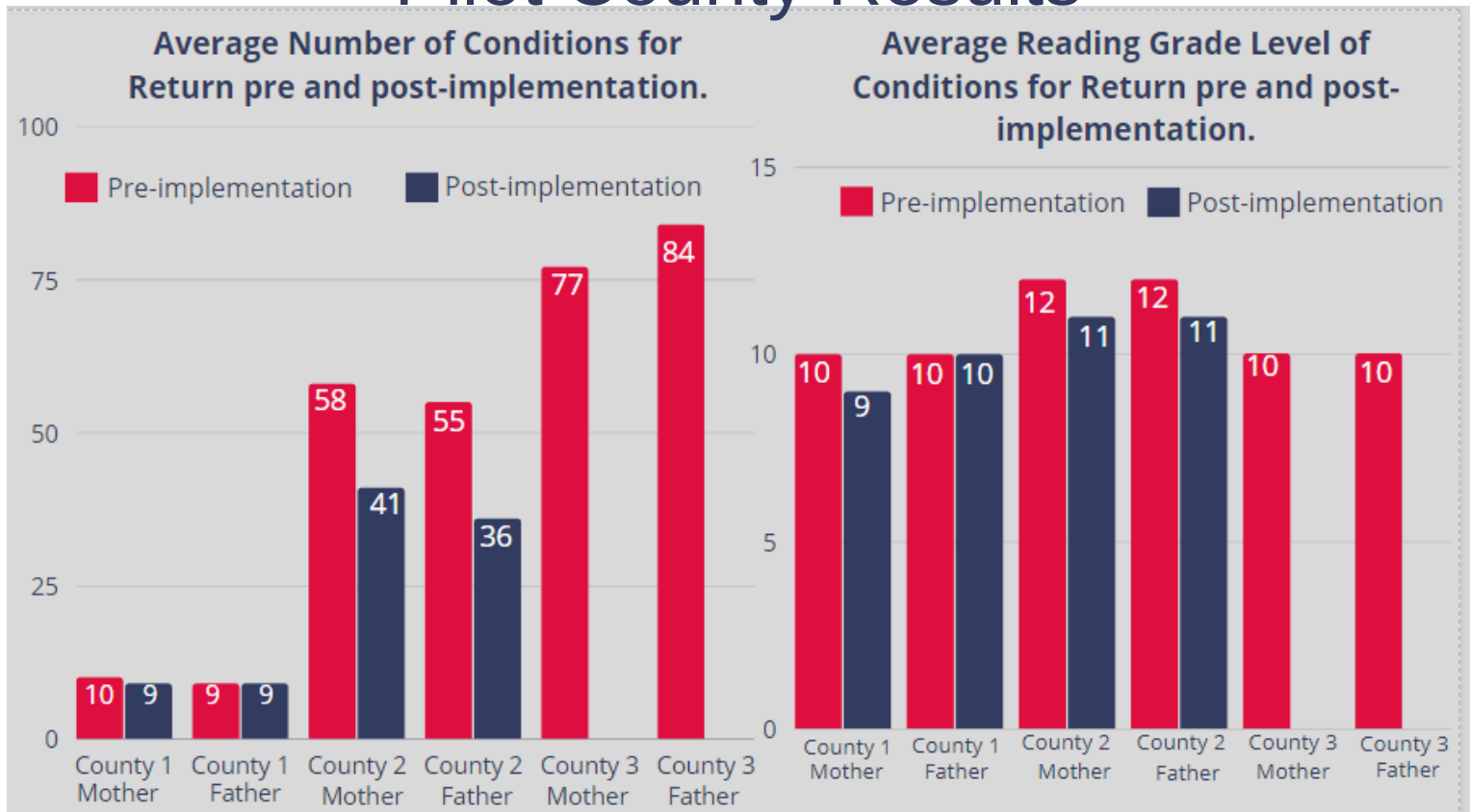
Maintain at least monthly written contact with your child by sending letters to the caseworker to send to your child.

Manage your behaviors so you are available to participate in services within the institution.

Sign up and participate in programming that would support your ability to be a safe parent.

Show attempts to get involved in programming, if waitlists exist.

Pilot County Results



County Agency Case Transfer

The pilot counties have made changes within the county agency's case transfer process from Initial Assessment (IA) to Ongoing.

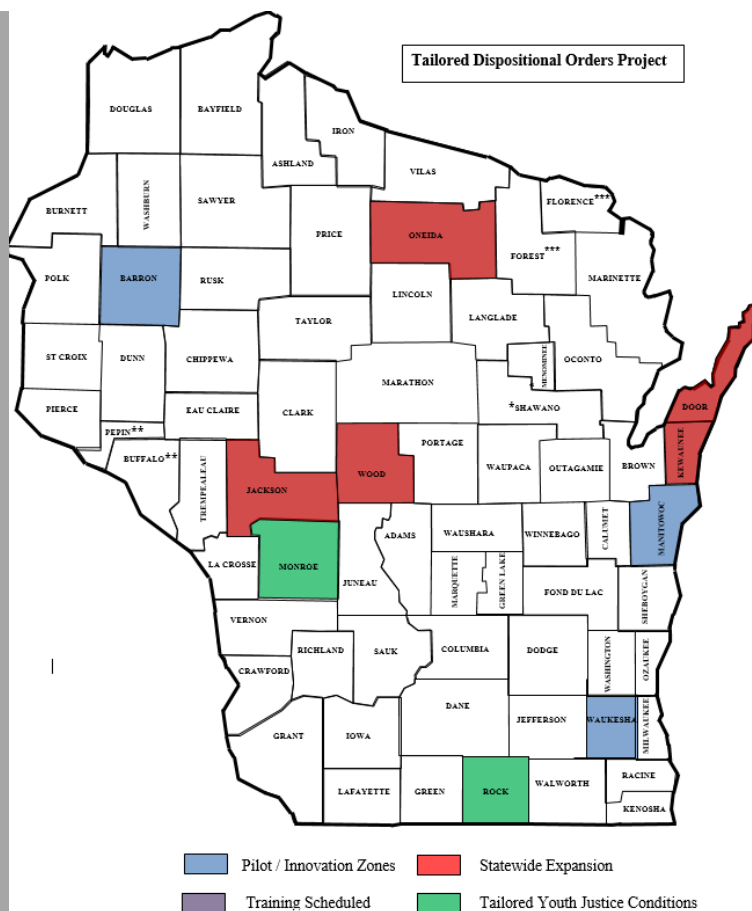
- Case transfers are now a team approach to draft the Conditions for Return.
- Assigning an ongoing worker earlier once IA identifies that a case is likely to need ongoing services.
- Discussing the safety assessment and including the ongoing worker in safety staffings.

Tailoring Conditions

- Changing child/parent language in Conditions for Return to personal names.
- Recognizing that not all Conditions for Return are “SMART”. They are working on how to measure Conditions for Return since the timing is typically different for every case.
- Attempting to lower the reading level for the Conditions for Return so parents can understand what they need to do to have their child safely returned to the home.
- Additional discussions about Conditions for Return are occurring at pre-trial conferences and hearings and amongst stakeholders – judges, attorneys, and child welfare professionals.
 - It is really important to speak to parents in plain English and not use acronyms, legalese, or CPS language.

Lessons Learned from Pilot Counties

- Parent’s perspective:
 - It is important to consider which condition is listed first and why.
 - Acknowledge the progress that the parent has made.
 - Explain the specific behavior that needs to be addressed for child to return home.
- Pilot counties found that an existing collaborative relationship amongst judges, attorneys, and child welfare professionals was beneficial in implementing the project.
- It is helpful to manage the expectations of all case participants (e.g., parents expecting to automatically get their kids back after completing the class/program ordered by the court).
- Tailored Conditions for Return take time!



Statewide Expansion

- One county reduced their template of conditions from 6 to 2.5 pages.
- They integrated the examples into their own conditions.
- The behavior change is the condition and the services and steps to accomplish the behavior change are the bullet points.

General Conditions For Every Parent / Conditions of Supervision



Sign releases so social worker can determine if safety can be managed in the home.



Keep in contact with social worker and tell the social worker the truth so safety can be assessed.



Update your address and phone number with social worker so s/he can communicate with you.



Take advantage of all opportunities to be a part of child's daily activities (visits, appointments, etc.).

Services

DCF Standards require services and activities that are acceptable, accessible and appropriately matched with what must change.

Services are intended to promote change. Once the change process has started, there should be an enhancement in the identified diminished protective capacities, thus working to eliminate the impending danger threat.

Consider listing services separately

§ 48.355(2)(b)1. & JC-1611 mention “specific services to be provided to child and family”

The county agency will provide the following services to the mother to help her meet conditions for return:

- Case Management
- Visitation
- Family therapy
- Psychiatric Assessment
- Basic Home Management
- Parenting classes
- AODA Assessment
- Mental Health Assessment

Next Steps

CCIP and DCF are excited to share the Tailored Dispositional Orders Project with additional counties and tribes throughout Wisconsin!

We can provide a free multi-disciplinary training to judicial officers, attorneys, and child welfare professionals on Child Safety Decision-Making and Tailored Dispositional Orders.

Please contact Kristen.Wetzel@wicourts.gov if your county is interested in this project.

Additional resources regarding the project can be found on www.wiccuptraining.com