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## Budget Advances Key Initiatives for Family Services and Student Mental Health

Upon signing of the 2017-19 State Biennial Budget today, WAFCA Executive Director Linda Hall thanked the Governor and legislative champions for advancing key initiatives to improve access to quality child and family services across Wisconsin:

**Expansion of School-Based Mental Health.** The budget includes \$3.25 million in new grants along with Medicaid-funded consultation services, which will enable schools to expand access to mental health services for Wisconsin students. These new resources build on the success of programs across the state and will provide more sustainable funding into the future.

“This is a significant investment in the mental well-being of our students, their families and the teachers who are committed to their success. Wisconsin’s efforts to infuse mental health services in schools show that treatment works. Students who access these services in school feel better, improve their grades and are more likely to stay in school and graduate,” stated Hall. “We are grateful to the Governor and our sponsors, Representative Mike Rohrkaste and Senator Alberta Darling, who guided these initiatives through the legislature.”

**Fair Contracting for Nonprofit Child & Family Agencies.** Many child and family services in the state are provided through a partnership between county human services and private agencies with a mission to serve their local communities. The budget acknowledges the value of nonprofit agencies by creating more uniform contracting expectations that will improve the future financial stability this sector. “Our members are grateful to Representative Dale Kooyenga and Senator Howard Marklein for championing reasonable financing standards that will empower agencies to prudently manage taxpayer resources and engage in planful growth and innovation for a better system of care for our children and families.”

**Growing Home Visiting & Prevention Services.** The budget provides an infusion of more than \$10 million in federal dollars to expand important prevention and safety services across the state. “Prevention programs, like home visiting, have shown that investing in family supports can help keep children safe and advance the well-being of the family as a whole, generating hopeful futures.”

In addition WAFCA celebrated budget provisions to increase basic foster care rates and to eliminate the waiting lists for the Children’s Long-Term Support Waiver Program, among others. “The state budget is always a tough balance of priorities. Recognizing there is more work ahead to advance the overall economic, physical and mental well-being of our families, this budget includes some key tools to keep us moving forward,” concluded Hall.

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*WAFCA is a member association that works to improve the lives of families and children in Wisconsin. Our member agencies provide a wide array of prevention and supportive services such as foster care, in-home support, counseling, and mental health treatment. WAFCA represents over 50 child and family serving agencies and leaders in the field and advocates for the more than 250,000 individuals and families that they serve each year.*