



HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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Contact: Coral Kline, Children & Families Division Manager

Washington County and FRIENDS, Inc. signed agreement to improve services recognizing the overlap between domestic and sexual violence and child maltreatment

West Bend, WI – Washington County Children and Families and Friends, Inc. signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) this week to set ongoing expectations of both agencies to the community and to outline the most effective way to provide services and care for the families served.

“Child Protective Services and Friends, Inc. have had a positive, long standing relationship,” said Julie Driscoll Human Services Director. “This agreement represented a renewed focus on streamlining communication and ensuring that safety and therapeutic services for kids and families experiencing both child maltreatment and domestic abuse are coordinated to the highest degree possible.”

There is a well-established overlap between domestic abuse and the maltreatment of children. Nationally, the reported rate of overlap between violence against children and violence against women in the same family is 30-60 percent. Studies also show that children who witness domestic abuse have dramatic physiological changes to their brain and experience similar trauma to that of physical abuse.

“Yet, there are recognized barriers to providing the best care possible like confidentiality laws,” added Friends, Inc. Executive Director Kate Nickel. “We were happy to be one of three partnerships within the state that received an award from the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families and End Domestic Abuse WI for technical assistance to break down these barriers.”

“Partnering to ensure the community’s basic needs are met providing care and assistance to improve the circumstances of those at-risk is a high priority for us and through this effort, we believe that we will enhance the safety of our children in their homes,” added Driscoll.

The Washington County Human Services Committee will hear from Children and Families and Friends, Inc. at their standing meeting in October.

[Washington County Children and Families](#) - The services of the Children and Families division support and enhance safe, responsible family functioning and the protection of children and our community. We help families to identify unsafe/risky behaviors and overcome struggles that limit ability to properly care for their children, including those challenged by disabilities. Our juvenile supervision services hold young people



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accountable for their behavior and assist them in developing the skills and abilities necessary to lead a safe productive life.

[Friends, Inc.](#) - Serving Washington County since 1978, FRIENDS, Inc. is the sole provider of domestic and sexual violence programs. FRIENDS provides the following services confidentially and free of charge: emergency shelter, individual advocacy, case management, support groups, a transitional living program, legal services, children's individual and group art therapy, teen counseling and support groups, community education, and a 24-hour crisis line.



Kate Nickel and Julie Driscoll signed the MOU on Thursday, August 29th.