PROJECT WORTH / CHILD PROTECTION POLICY BRIEF

We require people to report child abuse. What happens after they do?

Six state models Wisconsin can learn from to preserve reports, identify risks, investigate institutional abuse, and strengthen accountability.

A report can fall outside one agency's jurisdiction without losing its value for protecting children. Other states have adopted concrete safeguards for historical disclosures, institutional misconduct, statewide coordination, and civil accountability.

EXISTING LEGAL MODELS

WASHINGTON	Requires reporting historical abuse disclosed in adulthood when other children may be at risk; maintains a log of screened-out nonabusive cases. RCW 26.44.030(2), (18)
COLORADO	Extends mandated reporting of adult disclosures when the alleged abuser currently holds a position of trust with a child or other children may be at risk. C.R.S. § 19-3-304(1)(b)
MINNESOTA	Assigns school maltreatment investigations to its Department of Education, including eligible students ages 18–21; designates other agencies for facilities. Minn. Stat. § 260E.14
DELAWARE	Records every report, retains unsubstantiated reports, checks prior allegations, and has dedicated procedures for institutional abuse. 16 Del. C. §§ 902, 905–906
FLORIDA	Uses statewide intake for noncaregiver abuse, requires protective investigations of qualifying school sexual abuse, and permits certified nonattorney guardians ad litem. Fla. Stat. § 39.201 · § 61.402
TEXAS	Reports adult disclosures when needed to protect others; uses school misconduct reporting and a Do Not Hire Registry; provides specified civil school claims and a 30-year period for certain abuse suits. Fam. Code § 261.101 · Educ. Code ch. 22A · Civ. Code ch. 118 · § 16.0045

A PRACTICAL WISCONSIN POLICY AGENDA

- **One statewide reporting pathway.** Accept and route historical and noncaregiver disclosures, including a trauma-informed pathway for adult survivors.
- **Preserve the record and connect patterns.** Retain reports and dispositions, identify repeat concerns across jurisdictions, and control access to sensitive information.
- **Investigate institutions independently.** Clarify authority for school, faith, and other youth-serving settings; improve appropriate cross-agency referral and hiring safeguards.
- **Make accountability meaningful.** Evaluate civil remedies, limitation periods, notification rules, and fair safeguards for both children and persons accused.

NEXT STEP Convene DCF, DOJ, DPI, local agencies, child advocacy centers, and survivors to design an interoperable intake and record-preservation framework.

The system should carry the record. Survivors should not have to carry it alone.

Policy examples are jurisdiction-specific. They do not guarantee investigations, public release of unsubstantiated allegations, or automatic civil liability. Wisconsin actions above are proposals for consideration.