PROJECT WORTH / CHILD PROTECTION

Understanding Unsubstantiated Reports

What the finding means, and how institutions should respond.

WHAT THE FINDING MEANS

01 UNSUBSTANTIATED DOES NOT MEAN FALSE

Wisconsin CPS standards distinguish unsubstantiated reports from clearly wrong reports. An unsubstantiated finding does not, by itself, establish fabrication. [1]

PROJECT WORTH SAFEGUARDING RECOMMENDATIONS

02 CHILD SAFETY COMES BEFORE PERSONAL LOYALTY

Apply the same safeguards to trusted leaders. Address conflicts of interest and assess concerns fairly. [3]

03 CARE DOES NOT REQUIRE CONTINUED ACCESS

Compassion can continue while access to children is restricted when needed to manage identified risks. [2]

04 INDEPENDENT REVIEW SUPPORTS REQUIRED REPORTING

Use qualified reviewers without conflicts of interest. Internal review must not replace required reporting or interfere with official investigations. [2, 3]

05 PRESERVE REPORTS AND DOCUMENT THE RESPONSE

Preserve reports, decisions, and protective actions. Explain the process to families while protecting confidential information. [2, 3]

> **An allegation is not proof of guilt. An unsubstantiated finding is not a guarantee of safety. [1, 2]**

Request a Project Worth training or speaker for your organization.

SOURCES

[1] Wisconsin DCF (June 2026). CPS Access & Initial Assessment Standards, pp. 72, 76, 97.

[2] CDC (2007). Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth-serving Organizations, pp. 17 to 21.

[3] Australian Royal Commission (2017). Final Report, Volume 7: Improving institutional responding and reporting.

Together, we light up the darkness.