

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: December 31, 2025

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Shakita LaGrant-McClain, Executive Director, DHHS

Subject: A report from the Executive Director, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), requesting the creation of 1.0 FTE Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Program Supervisor and 2.0 FTE Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Facilitator positions in Children, Youth and Family Services (CYFS)

File Type: Action

REQUEST

A report from the Executive Director, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), requesting approval to create 1.0 FTE Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Program Supervisor in paygrade NR25 and 2.0 FTE Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Facilitator positions in Children, Youth and Family Services (CYFS) in paygrade NR21.

POLICY

The maximum number of positions and/or the maximum number of employee hours in each classification are approved as part of the annual adopted budget. Changes to the authorized number of positions outside of the budget process require approval by the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors.

Milwaukee County Ordinances:		17.28
------------------------------	--	-------

BACKGROUND

In March 2018, the Wisconsin State Legislature adopted Act 185 which allows for the development of local alternatives to placements at Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake, facilities operated by the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC), Division of Juvenile Corrections. Act 185 directs the closure of Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake for use as youth correctional facilities and authorizes County-operated Secure Residential Care Centers for Children and Youth (SRCCCYs). Under Act 185, the DOC maintains supervision over youth with adult court sentences and youth in the Serious Juvenile Offender Program (SJOP) within Type 1 facilities, but the supervision of youth under other correctional placements would be transferred to the counties. Milwaukee County submitted and was approved for a state grant of \$28,338,351 to

support the design and construction of a SRCCCY, to be located at the current youth detention center at Vel R. Phillips Youth and Family Justice Center. This project reflects a 32-bed program, which includes up to four beds for girls. The SRCCCY has a current project timeline that reflects construction and remodeling that was started in June 2024 and owner occupancy is expected to occur by the end of 2025. The SRCCCY is anticipated to be operational by the first quarter of 2026.

The treatment program being implemented within the SRCCCY is the Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) program, which includes providing DBT Skills Groups to kids in secure care and in the community. The treatment model focuses on addressing ineffective behaviors and thinking displayed by the youth. The skills group is a critical component of the treatment model, as it sets the foundation of teaching effective skills across four modules: Emotion Regulation, Distress Tolerance, Core Mindfulness, and Interpersonal Effectiveness.

The skills group facilitators are a vital part of the model, working collaboratively with youth, therapists, and milieu staff to reinforce skill use. Adding these three positions will strengthen the model's effectiveness and enable CYFS to expand beyond the secure phase into the community phase—a crucial step in a youth's progress. This expansion will help youth apply skills learned at the SRCCCY to everyday life and community interactions. Establishing this continuum of care will boost commitment and motivation, prolong engagement in groups, and allow CYFS to offer a parent/guardian skills group so families can learn alongside the youth, improving outcomes for completing court-ordered requirements and succeeding in the community.

The three positions are 100% funded through the State of Wisconsin Department of Justice Youth Diversion Gang and Youth Substance Use Disorder Prevention Programs with no fiscal impact on CYFS through 6/30/2026 with the option to apply for the same non-competitive funds on an annual basis.

Positions requested:

FTE	Title	Pay Grade	Pay Range	Annual Salary Range
1.0	DBT Skills Program Supervisor	NR25	\$32.01-\$48.01	\$66,574-\$99,851
2.0	DBT Skills Facilitators	NR21	\$25.36-\$38.03	\$52,751-\$79,095

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

The request to create the new positions aligns with the county's strategic plan to ensure that we can continue determining what, where, and how we deliver services to advance health equity. To that end, securing staffing for the SRCCCY implementation is vital to be initiated to support the transition of operations and ensure the safety and security of the kids in secure care and the staff working with the youth.

FISCAL EFFECT

A fiscal note form is attached.

TERMS

N/A

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Shakita LaGrant-McClain, DHHS Director
Kelly Pethke, CYFS Administrator

PREPARED BY:

Kelly Pethke, CYFS Administrator

APPROVED BY:

Shakita LaGrant-McClain
Shakita LaGrant-McClain, DHHS Director

ATTACHMENTS:

None

cc: County Executive David Crowley
Hon. Karl Ashley, Chief Judge
Sup. Patti Logsdon, Chair, Personnel Committee
Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive's Office
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County
Steve Cady, Research Director, Comptroller's Office
Maddy Fruehe, Sr. Budget and Management Analyst, DAS