



Wisconsin Family Ties

2018-19 Annual Report

Wisconsin Family Ties (WFT) works with families that include children or adolescents with social, emotional, behavioral, or mental health challenges. Founded more than 30 years ago by a small group of parents on a mission to change lives by improving children’s mental health, WFT offers an array of services to families across Wisconsin, such as education and training, public policy and advocacy, and support in navigating the various systems that families encounter. In addition, our Warm Heart Fund helps families with exceptional expenses or even basic needs that cannot be financed through another source.

WFT also educates other professionals about how best to engage and work with families to help improve the lives of the children they serve. Often, this includes helping schools and mental health providers increase their focus on the strength and resilience of children with challenging behavior and the value of their family relationships.

Central to WFT is a model of family engagement that emphasizes supporting the strengths and abilities of parents. We consistently heard from parents that traditional models of family engagement that assumed parents needed “training” on how to parent their children were offensive and demoralizing. So we tried something different. We created the WI PLAN model of family engagement, which focuses on empowering and supporting parents, flexibly working alongside them in areas of the parents’ choosing.

<u>WI PLAN Family Engagement Model</u>
Welcoming
Inviting
Perspective shifting
Listening
Accepting
Never giving up

Parent Peer Specialists

A dedicated team of parent peer specialists (PPSs) carries out WFT’s mission across the state. These paid staff members are parents of children who have used behavioral health services and know firsthand the struggles parents may encounter. PPSs approach parents with compassion and respect, and they emphasize open communication and empowerment of the families they serve.

PPSs customize their approach to each family’s needs, offering help that may include liaising with parents and schools, or

helping a family manage a crisis. A connection coordinator matches up families with a parent peer specialist in their geographic area, and then the PPS and family work together to identify goals and determine how WFT can help the family achieve these goals.

PPS services are delivered through a six-step process that includes regular status checks with parents and a willingness to adjust plans and priorities as needed. Ultimately, Wisconsin Family Ties’ goal is to help parents gain the skills and confidence to manage on their own.

There is strong evidence that WFT’s parent peer specialist services positively impact families raising children with mental health challenges. Evaluation of the PPS program is proctored annually by a PhD-level researcher using a stratified randomly-selected sample totaling roughly 10 percent of the population served. The evaluation model is based on a validated tool called the Family Empowerment Scale (FES), first developed in the United States in 1992 (Koren, DeChillo, & Friesen) and since updated. The following improvements were noted after parents received services from Wisconsin Family Ties.

<u>Parenting Skills & Confidence</u>	
93%	know the steps to take when concerned about their child’s services
86%	feel more capable of dealing with a variety of service systems
86%	feel better able to cope with their family situation

WFT uses a variety of techniques to help parents gain knowledge, skills and confidence. Parents are provided with individualized, informal educational sessions that address the specific needs of the family. Topics can include child development, stress management, and advocacy within systems. Through the modeling of actions that reflect the parent’s goals and needs, the parent peer specialist provides a living example

of a skilled and confident advocate. Empowered parents are more likely to overcome challenges, and high levels of confidence and informed decision-making by parents are linked with improved child behavior and enhanced child-parent relationships.

WFT Prevents Abuse and Neglect

Research indicates that strong families are built upon a foundation of five protective factors that optimize child development and prevent abuse. These factors can be developed over time and are particularly important to families experiencing stress, especially those raising children with mental health challenges.

WFT’s PPS services directly impact four of the five protective factors, and by focusing on the parent, influences the fifth factor. Relevant outcomes from WFT’s PPS services are listed in the table below.

Protective Factors <i>against abuse & neglect</i>	
1	Parental Resilience: 88% feel more hopeful about the future
2	Social Connections: 93% say WFT provides a place to turn for support and information
3	Knowledge of Parenting / Child Development: 93% say they are better advocates for their child
4	Concrete Support: 86% report feeling more capable of dealing with service systems
5	Social & Emotional Competence of Child: 86% say WFT helped improve their family situation

Management

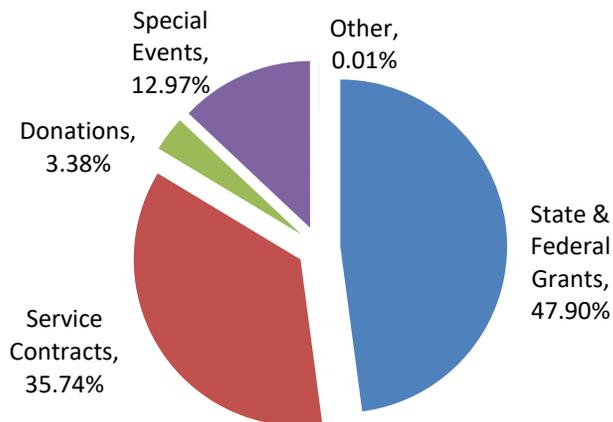
Wisconsin Family Ties’ chief administrative personnel are Executive Director Hugh Davis and Associate Director Deb Ramacher. Steve Hingle, CPA, is the accountant, and Operations Specialist Sharon Katovich provides both program and administrative support. Supervision of the parent peer specialists is performed by Amy Polsin and Vicky Shanley.

Source and Use of Funds

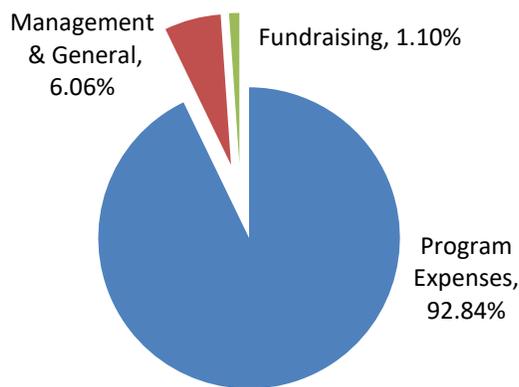
WFT is funded by government grants, service contracts, revenue from special events (e.g., annual conference), and donations.

Wisconsin Family Ties participates in workplace giving campaigns as a member of Community Shares of Wisconsin. Additionally, Wisconsin Family Ties sends an annual appeal to individuals who have a relationship with the organization and who do not donate through their annual workplace giving campaign. The following charts show the source and use of funds for the organization.

Revenue, Fiscal Year 2019



Expenses, Fiscal Year 2019



Additional copies of this annual report are available on the WFT website and upon request.