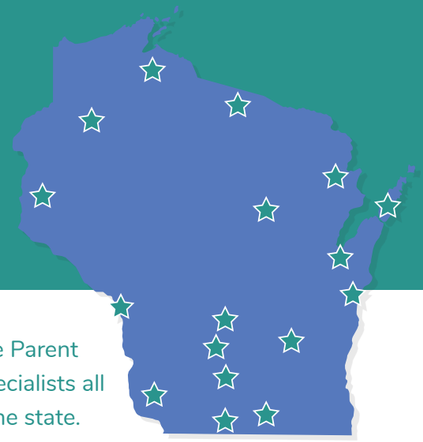
Wisconsin Family Ties

Improving Children's Mental Health

Wisconsin Family Ties Supports Families of Youth with Mental Health Needs

While we offer an array of services to improve children's mental health, the cornerstone of our work is the Parent Peer Specialist Program that links families to formally trained, veteran parents who themselves have a child with mental health challenges.



We have Parent Peer Specialists all across the state.

Today, one in five young people live with a mental health condition.[1] These youth are increasingly likely to drop out of high school,[2] enter the juvenile justice system,[3] die by suicide,[2] require hospitalization,[4] or reside in residential care.[5]

But evidence shows that family support from Wisconsin Family Ties improves their futures.

Wisconsin Family Ties is a statewide program that provides an effective and economical way to support the families of children with mental health needs.

Wisconsin Family Ties

Through shared lived experience, parent peer specialists and families unite to navigate the intricacies that often accompany the raising of a child with complex mental health needs.

The parent peer specialist promotes family-identified goals, open communication, and collaborative relationships with everyone who is working on behalf of the child.

The Parent Peer Specialist Program positively impacts families raising children with mental health needs, as the research shared in this booklet clearly demonstrates.

Wisconsin Family Ties Engages Diverse Families with Local Specialists

We understand that children, including those with mental health needs, belong at home with their families.

We recognize the importance of cultural and familial values to the healthy development of each child.

Our sensitivity to the situations of individual families confirms the high intrinsic worth of each person. Care is family-driven.

Family-driven Care Through the WI PLAN

We emphasize service delivery as much as programmatic content. What Wisconsin Family Ties does and the way we do it are equally important.

Family-driven care is supported using fundamentals of the proprietary WI PLAN Model of Family Engagement. Through a collaborative relationship fostered by the parent peer specialist's commitment to the WI PLAN, positive momentum builds in the home, school, and community.

Interactions with parents require a diverse skill set. Our parent peer specialists receive 168 hours of training their first year and 88 hours of training each year thereafter.

- **W**elcoming
- **I**nviting
- **P**erspective shifting
- **L**istening
- **A**ccepting
- **N**ever giving up

Additionally, parents are matched with a local parent peer specialist, one familiar with area resources and systems. These specialists are available outside of traditional business hours. To a family in need, that can make all the difference.

Wisconsin Family Ties Serves a Diverse Population

	2010 WI Census	Families Served by WFT
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.9%	3.3%
Asian	2.3%	3.3%
Black/African American	6.2%	16.7%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%
White	83.3%	55.6%
Other/multiple	7.4%	16.7%
Unknown	0.0%	4.4%

Wisconsin Family Ties Increases Parenting Skills and Confidence

Empowered parents are more likely to overcome challenges. High levels of confidence and informed decision-making by parents are linked with improved child behavior and enhanced child-parent relationships.

Through modeling of interactions with service systems, the parent peer specialist provides a living example of a skilled and confident parent.

Parents are provided with individualized informal educational and support sessions that address the specific needs of the family. Topics can include child development, stress management, and navigating systems.

96% of parents indicate that they are better advocates for their child since connecting with the parent peer specialist.

96% of parents indicate that the peer specialist effectively advocates for the child [models behavior].

83% of parents note that they are more capable of dealing with service systems since connecting with the parent peer specialist.

Mentoring and coaching by the parent peer specialist provides encouragement and ensures critical practice opportunities for the parent. As the parent becomes increasingly self-confident, the need for support from the parent peer specialist naturally fades. Although the family may no longer require services from Wisconsin Family Ties, the organization remains accessible should unforeseen circumstances develop.

Wisconsin Family Ties Prevents Child 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, including those raising children with mental health challenges.

Wisconsin Family Ties integrates the protective factors framework into its Parent Peer Specialist Program. Using this model, families are strengthened and children remain safe.

Effective learning is fostered at Wisconsin Family Ties. Not only do we help families see how results and actions are related, we help them understand and, if necessary, challenge underlying assumptions.

We attribute the strong learning component, in part, to the peer relationship forged through the shared experience of raising a child with mental health needs.

The University of Chicago notes that the protective factors evidence-informed approach to supporting families correlates with lower rates of child neglect and maltreatment.[6]

Five Protective Factors

1. **Resilience:** 96% of parents note that they feel better able to cope with their family situation since connecting with Wisconsin Family Ties.
2. **Social Connections:** 96% of parents say that Wisconsin Family Ties provides a place to turn for support.
3. **Knowledge Base:** 92% of parents now know the steps to take when they are concerned about the services their child is, or is not, receiving.
4. **Concrete Supports:** 83% of parents report feeling more capable of dealing with service systems.
5. **Emotional Competence:** 83% of parents say that Wisconsin Family Ties helped improve their family situation.

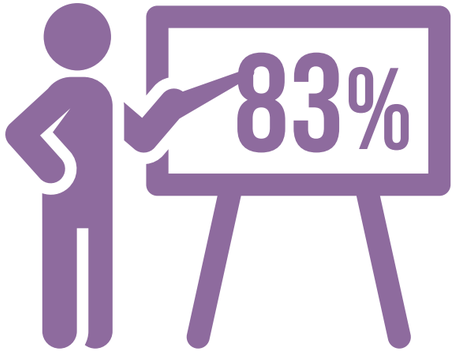
Wisconsin Family Ties Improves Family-School Relationships

One of the most common concerns among parents of children with mental health challenges is school performance.

Increasingly, professionals understand that students with mental health needs may require extra support to meet with success.

Although the specifics of assistance can vary, the need for parent-school collaboration remains constant.

Wisconsin Family Ties facilitates communication and positive interactions among all who care for the child. Collaborative behaviors are modeled by the parent peer specialist. When appropriate, additional supports provided by the specialist may include facilitated problem solving to address novel issues, the translation of specialized language in the Individualized Education Program (IEP), clarification of the parent perspective, and pre- and post-meeting support.



of parents surveyed indicate that Wisconsin Family Ties worked with them on school-related issues.

100%

of the parents above state that the parent peer specialist models behavior for respectfully interacting with the school.

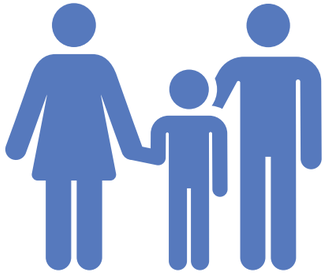
85%

of the parents above report at least one improvement in the school situation/relationship since connecting with the parent peer specialist.

We Keep Families Together

Through a collaborative relationship with parents, one built on trust and common experience, our parent peer specialists make a difference.

Simply put, we keep families together.



At Home

96%

of parents note that they feel better able to cope with their family situation since connecting with Wisconsin Family Ties.

87%

of parents indicate that Wisconsin Family Ties services helped to improve the family's situation.

In the School

65%

of parents indicate that the school understands their child better since connecting with a parent peer specialist.

71%

of parents note that they are more satisfied with the school plan since working with WFT.

Within the Community

83%

of parents indicate that WFT helped them to obtain information about their child's diagnosis, treatment options, or available community programs.

89%

of parents are more hopeful about the future since connecting with WFT.

Wisconsin Family Ties Saves Families and Saves Money

Annual Cost per Child for Youth Mental Health Services

By investing in families, Wisconsin Family Ties saves money and helps keep youth with mental health needs in their homes.

Twenty-eight percent of parents believe their child would no longer reside in the home without the assistance of Wisconsin Family Ties.

This data is especially powerful because it was not directly requested; instead, families volunteered that their child was on the cusp of placement in residential treatment, juvenile detention, foster care, or even death by suicide before they connected with Wisconsin Family Ties.

Research Technique

The statistical outcomes presented here were gathered using an assessment tool based on a validated, internationally well-known rating scale called the Family Empowerment Scale (FES).[11] The assessment is proctored annually by a Ph.D.-qualified researcher to a stratified, randomly-selected sample totaling approximately 10 percent of the population served.

Endnotes

[1] Prevalence (2019). Retrieved from youth.gov.

[2] Maynard, B., et al. (2015). *Community Mental Health Journal,* 51(3).

[3] Pullmann, M. (2010). *Journal of Child and Family Studies,* 19.

[4] Cordell, K., et al. (2015). *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 24.

[5] Harpin, S., et al. (2013). *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing,* 26(2).

[6] Protective Factors Framework (2019). Retrieved from cssp.org (Center for the Study of Social Policy).

[7] Zill (2011). Retrieved from adoptioncouncil.org. Rate adjusted for inflation.

[8] Division of Juvenile Corrections Memo 17-06 (2017). Retrieved from doc.wi.gov (Dept. of Corrections).

[9] Info Memo 2018-34i, 2019 Maximum Daily Rates (2018). Retrieved from dcf.wisconsin.gov (Dept. of Children and Families).

[10] Rate Schedule Mental Health Institutes (2018). Retrieved from dhs.wisconsin.gov (Dept. of Health Services).

[11] Koren, DeChillo, & Friesen (1992).

Changing lives by improving children's mental health.

Wisconsin Family Ties works with families of children experiencing social, emotional, or behavioral challenges.

Through our Parent Peer Specialist Program, we provide valuable family support that produces unique and significant benefits.

Wisconsin Family Ties

16 N. Carroll St., Suite 230 | Madison, WI 53703

(608) 267-6800 | info@wifamilyties.org

wifamilyties.org

Wisconsin Family Ties is a 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit.