REVIEW OF POLICIES RELATED TO THE REPORTING OF CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN

Office of Operations Review and Audit
University of Wisconsin System Administration

June 7, 2012
Objectives

- Assessment of policies and efforts employed throughout the UW System and its colleges, universities, and extension related to protecting children

- Areas of consideration:
  - Sufficiency of policies and procedures
  - Availability and effectiveness of crime reporting mechanisms
  - Protocols used to investigate allegations of crime
  - Assessment of whether risks exist due to inadequate policies or procedures
Background

- UW System’s program offerings are generally targeted towards adult learners, and existing policies reflect this focus
- Children are involved in a variety of UW-sponsored programs
- Children visit UW premises for a variety of reasons
- Challenges associated with serving and hosting youth:
  - Diversity of program offerings
  - Variety of physical environments
  - Multiple classifications of educators, staff, and other stakeholders
Overview of Procedures

- Reviewed existing state statutes and Regent Policy Documents
- Identified programs and activities directed towards youth occurring on UW premises or sponsored by UW institutions
- Obtained feedback from staff and faculty involved with law enforcement, risk management, human resources, athletics, recreation, camps, student affairs, housing, and pre-college and academic programs
- Performed site visits at a representative sample of institutions (UW-Green Bay, Madison, Milwaukee, Oshkosh, Parkside, Whitewater, UW Colleges, and Extension)
- Surveyed a sample of individuals at all UW institutions, including those where no site visit was performed
- Obtained and evaluated institution-specific policies
- Reviewed UW System and institution employee workplace rules and trainings related to children and their welfare
- Compared existing UW System policies to other public and higher education institutions, as well as youth-serving organizations
- Researched child safety and welfare resources published by reputable industry leaders
Results

- Rapidly evolving landscape
  - Focus within higher education and by UW System administrators and program personnel amidst allegations of crimes against minors at other higher education institutions
  - Issuance of Executive Order #54 Relating to Supplemental Mandatory Reporting Requirements of Child Abuse and Neglect

- Acknowledgement of responsibility to ensure the welfare of youth

- Significant diversity exists in institution and program-specific policies and practices

- Consistency in policies would further mitigate risk

- Review identified eight comments falling into three categories:
  - Risk identification (4 comments)
  - Education/awareness (2 comments)
  - Clarification of policies and procedures (2 comments)
Risk Identification Comments

- **Comment 1:** Revise criminal background check policy for individuals in a position of trust with respect to children (higher risk).

**Existing Policy**
- Required for all new employees
  - Existing employees grandfathered at implementation (some mitigating factors)
  - Certain employee and non-employee groups excluded, unless required by institution-specific policy
- Term “position of trust” not defined
- No checks required after initial check is performed
- Includes implementation guidance

**Recommended Policy**
- Require for all new employees
  - Perform check on grandfathered employees in a position of trust with respect to children
  - Expand to include employee and non-employee groups previously excluded (with some flexibility)
- Define “position of trust”
- Require checks for individuals in a position of trust with respect to children every four years
- Require self-disclosure of certain criminal offenses
- Expand guidance in certain areas
- Eliminate implementation guidance
• **Comment 2:** Expand criminal background check requirements for select contractors and third parties (higher risk).

• **Comment 3:** Enhance screening processes for UW volunteers in a position of trust with respect to children (higher risk).

• **Comment 4:** Explore cost saving opportunities related to the criminal background check process (lower risk).
Education/Awareness Comments

• **Comment 5:** Expand ongoing education/awareness efforts related to Executive Order #54 (higher risk).

• **Comment 6:** Communicate a reporting mechanism to report child abuse and neglect to UW volunteers in a position of trust with respect to children and youth participants in UW programs (higher risk).
Clarification of Policies and Procedures

Comments

• **Comment 7:** Establish a child safety and welfare policy (lower risk).

• **Comment 8:** Establish a children in the workplace policy (lower risk).
Requested Action and Planned Follow-Up

- Requesting approval of Resolution I.2.a.1.
  - Endorses recommendations
  - Encourages adoption of recommendations as soon as practicable
- Planned follow-up regarding status of implementation at future Business, Finance, and Audit Committee meeting
Questions?