



# Levels of Care: Foster Care Licensing

## What is Levels of Care?

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) Implemented the Level of Care (LOC) initiative on January 1, 2010. Changes to federal and state laws, along with additional factors related to placement of children in out-of-home care, contributed to the implementation of Levels of Care.

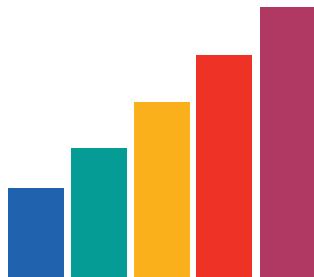
Levels of care aims to create consistency in foster home licensing statewide.

## How is my Level of Care Certification Determined?

There are five Levels of Care (LOC). All foster parents are given a Level of Care certification during the foster care licensing process based on the following:

- Qualifications
- Training
- Foster parent references
- Foster parent experience

Applicants and foster parents should be involved with their licensing agency in deciding which Level of Care certification to pursue. For more information, be sure to talk to your licensing worker.



A foster parent's Level of Care certification does not need to match the child's Level of Need. When the child's Level of Need is higher than the providers Level of Care, agencies provide additional services and resources to support the placement.

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## Levels of Care

**Level One:** Child-specific licenses only. To be child specific the foster parent must be relative of the child OR have a prior relationship with the child or the child's family. Foster parents may have a child-specific license at any level.

**Level Two:** Basic foster care.

**Level Three:** Moderate treatment foster care. Foster care that can provide additional supervision and care to children with higher needs than those in basic foster care.

**Level Four:** Specialized treatment foster care. Structured to meet the higher needs of children and often addresses specific population needs.

**Level 5:** Exceptional treatment foster care. These foster homes have staff members who work on rotating shifts to care for children. Level 5 foster homes are generally created to meet the needs of specific children who need care into adulthood and the home becomes the adult resource.

Family Based Environment

Relative Caregivers

Like-Kin Caregivers

Non-Relative Foster Care

## Levels of Care Facts: Building Family Based Environments

- For any child that is separated from their home, the preference is for them to be placed in a family setting.
- Preferred placement is with relatives and like-kin. This has resulted in a steady increase in the number of children placed with relative and like-kin caregivers.
- Relative and like-kin caregivers can become licensed as a child specific foster homes at any level and receive increased support by their agency.
- When relative or like-kin placements are not possible, the next preference is with foster families within the child's community.

## Foster Parent Training Requirements

Being a successful foster parent means continuing to learn through:

- Classes and other training methods.
- Books or periodicals.
- Web-based presentations.
- Attendance at support groups with other foster parents.
- Consultation with professionals with expertise in specific identified areas.

Each foster parent must complete training requirements specific to their Level of Care certification. Training requirements fall into three categories: pre-placement, initial licensing, and ongoing.

## Additional Resources:

Levels of Care: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/loc>

Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Tool: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cans>

Foster Parent Training: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/fostercare/training>

Wisconsin Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center: <http://wifostercareandadoption.org/>

Wisconsin Department of Children and Families: [www.dcf.wisconsin.gov](http://www.dcf.wisconsin.gov)

DCF Foster Care Memos: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy>

## Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Tool

All children placed in care are assessed using the Child and Adolescent Needs & Strengths (CANS) tools. The CANS tool assesses the child's needs and strengths on permanence, well-being, level of functioning, and quality of life. The child's CANS score identifies the child's Level of Need that is used when making placement decisions.

The CANS tool will also help determine the type of services and resources needed to support the placement at a lower assessed level for a child.