

# SAFE AT HOME: A DESK GUIDE FOR CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES

**Division of Safety and Permanence**

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Children and Families

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## Purpose

This desk guide is intended to provide information to local child welfare professionals and Youth Justice professionals regarding work with a child, family, or out-of-home care provider who is enrolled in the Wisconsin Safe at Home Address Confidentiality Program (“Safe at Home”). This guide does not provide legal guidance, and CPS and YJ professionals should consult with their legal representatives with respect to compliance with the Safe at Home statute. This Guide contains:

- 1) An overview of Safe at Home;
- 2) How to know when a family is enrolled in Safe at Home;
- 3) When to document that a child or family is enrolled in Safe at Home;
- 4) When to document that an out-of-home care provider is enrolled in Safe at Home;
- 5) What to do when a child is enrolled in Safe at Home, but the out-of-home care provider is not;
- 6) What to do when an out-of-home care provider is enrolled in Safe at Home, but the child placed there is not;
- 7) What to do when a child is enrolled in Safe at Home and is placed in a congregate care setting;
- 8) Best practice guidance.

## Overview

Safe at Home is a statewide cost-free address confidentiality program for victims of acts or threats of abuse and those who fear for their safety or the safety of their child. The program, which is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ), provides participants with an assigned legal substitute address (Assigned Address), which is a forwarding mailing address that they may use for all purposes instead of their Actual Address (defined as the residential street address, school address, or work address, or any portion thereof, of a program participant). Participants’ mail will get routed to a centralized P.O. Box and subsequently forwarded to the actual physical address. The program went into effect on April 1, 2017. The state statute that created Safe at Home, which includes details regarding program eligibility and administration, is Wis. Stat. § 165.68 and is available at <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/165/68>. More information about Safe at Home is available at [www.safeathomewi.gov](http://www.safeathomewi.gov).

The most recent issuance of the CPS Access & Initial Assessment Standards (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/access-ia-standards.pdf>) contains the specific requirements for documenting address information for participants in the Safe at Home program in eWiSACWIS. To assist with this documentation associated with this requirement, an eWiSACWIS Safe At Home User Guide (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/access-ia/pdf/sah-ewisacwis-documentation.pdf>) is available to child welfare professionals.

## Documentation

### When to Document

Caseworkers may learn a child, family, or out-of-home care provider is a Safe at Home participant at any point during the case process. This includes but is not limited to:

- 1) At the point of CPS Access or a YJ intake;
- 2) Upon initial contact with a family;
- 3) At the point of placement with an out-of-home care provider;
- 4) During the ongoing phase of the CPS or YJ process;
- 5) During foster home licensure with a provider;
- 6) At any point during an out-of-home care provider's involvement with a CPS or YJ agency.

### eWiSACWIS Documentation

A CPS or YJ professional shall document a child, family, or out-of-home provider as a Safe at Home participant in eWiSACWIS as soon as possible after learning of enrollment in the program. If there are multiple agency staff members working on the case, it is especially important to document Safe at Home status as soon as possible to ensure that all staff members are aware of the child, family, or out-of-home provider's participation in Safe at Home and responsibility to keep any known Actual Address information confidential.

Documentation of a Safe at Home address must include the child, family, or out-of-home care provider's household identification number, which can be observed on the participant's authorization card (see below). If an agency receives information that indicates the child, family, or out-of-home care provider is enrolled in Safe at Home but the household identification number is unknown, documentation of the participant's enrollment still must occur by entering in "0000" in the "Household ID" field. The CPS or YJ professional must make efforts to obtain the actual household identification number and document it as soon as possible.

### Authorization Card

When a child, family, or out-of-home care provider is enrolled in Safe at Home, they will be issued an authorization card that includes the participant's Safe at Home household identification number. When a CPS or YJ professional enters the child, family or out-of-home care provider as a Safe at Home participant, eWiSACWIS will require the caseworker to document the family's household identification number. More

information about the identification card is available at <https://www.doj.state.wi.us/ocvs/state-and-local-government-agencies>. Contact Safe at Home directly to verify participant enrollment or ask general questions about Safe at Home. The Safe at Home Coordinator may be reached at (608) 266-6613 or [safeathome@doj.state.wi.us](mailto:safeathome@doj.state.wi.us).

## Visual Indicators in eWiSACWIS

Once a child, family, or out-of-home care provider is documented as a Safe at Home participant in eWiSACWIS, the CPS or YJ professional will see highlighted visual indicators in multiple parts of eWiSACWIS. Two examples of where a professional will see this visual indicator is on the case tab of the home screen and on the address tab in the person management page.

The screenshot shows the eWiSACWIS interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'eWiSACWIS' and 'WASO Screenshot' on the left, and user information 'Caitlin C. Cake (Milwaukee County)' and 'Log Out' on the right. Below the navigation bar are several tabs: Home, Cases (475), Providers (215), Workers (88), Appraisals (1245), Access Reports (115), JCPC Referrals (12), YJ Referrals (1), Home Inquiries (38), and Quick Links. The 'Cases' tab is selected. Below the tabs, there are filters for 'View by' (Case selected, Participant unselected) and 'Filter by' (Date restricted unselected, Not approved/cancelled unselected). The 'Cases: 475' and 'Multiselect' options are visible. A 'Create case work' button and a search box are also present. The main content area shows details for a case: 'Aardvark, Amy B. (9223716)' with a 'Safe at Home' indicator. Case details include 'CPS Family - Initial Assessment', 'BMCW-Admin', and 'Open ORP exists for associated participant(s)'. Case address is '111 River Boat Drive, Apt. #22A Lot B, Milwaukee, WI 53201'. Primary worker is 'Caitlin C. Cake'. An 'Actions' dropdown menu is visible. Below the case details is a 'View case information' section with a grid of icons for various functions: Access Reports, Administration, Assessments, Assets and Income, Assignments, Background Checks, Case/Permanency Plan, Education, Eligibility, ICWA, Legal, Narratives, Permanency Consultation, Planning, Related People, Safety, and Youth Justice.

### Safe at Home

Last Updated By: Caitlin C. Cake on 10/02/2020

Primary Residence 02/26/2020 - Present [Edit](#) [Delete](#)

S123  
3902 Milwaukee Street  
P. O. Box 7188  
Madison, WI 537077188 United States  
Phone (123)456-7895 Ext 123  
Email someone@ewisacwis.com

### Actual Physical Address - Do Not Release

Beta Rays  
123 Alpha Drive, Apt 123  
Madison, WI 53711 United States  
Dane County

Address Instructions: Beware of large dog

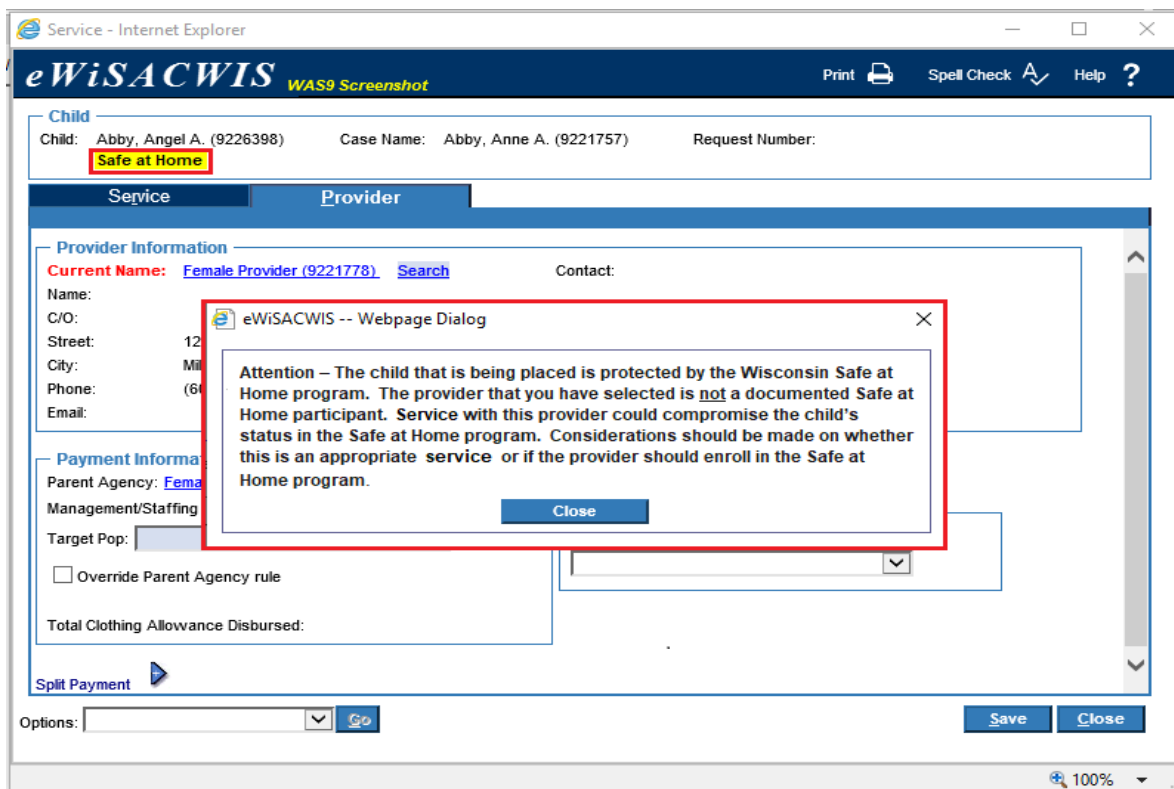
**Attention:** The address information for this participant is protected under the Safe at Home Program. Please take the necessary steps to ensure the privacy of this address information.

## Out-of-Home Placement Considerations

When a child who is a participant in Safe at Home, is placed with an out-of-home care provider who is not enrolled in Safe at Home, the actual residential address of the provider will become the address of the child on eWiSACWIS. In this scenario, the CPS

or YJ professional will receive a message indicating the conflict between the child's enrollment in Safe at Home and the provider's non-enrollment. If the provider's actual residential address is disclosed as the child's placement, the child's safety and enrollment in Safe at Home may be compromised.

The CPS or YJ professional will also receive a similar alert when an out-of-home provider who is enrolled in Safe at Home receives placement of a child who is not enrolled in Safe at Home. Placement of a non-enrolled child with an enrolled out-of-home care provider may compromise the out-of-home care provider's address confidentiality. Additionally, the CPS or YJ professional will receive the same prompt when documenting the placement of a child in a congregate care setting, as congregate care settings are not eligible for Safe at Home enrollment.



This prompt is intended to alert the CPS or YJ professional of the conflicting Safe-at-Home program statuses for the child and the out-of-home care provider and the potential impact that could have on the child's safety and Actual Address confidentiality.

In all of these situations, local child welfare agencies should consult with their legal representatives and Safe at Home program when, appropriate, to ensure compliance with Safe at Home.

## Other Considerations

### Best Practice Guidance

CPS or YJ professionals may work with a child, family, or out-of-home care provider who is enrolled in Safe at Home at multiple points during the case process. To best ensure confidentiality of the Actual Address of Safe at Home program participants, caseworkers and other child welfare agency staff are encouraged to:

- 1) Document the child, family, or out-of-home care provider as a Safe at Home participant in eWiSACWIS as soon as possible after learning about enrollment.
- 2) Utilize the Safe at Home participant's Assigned Address, as required by law. Local child welfare agencies should consult with their legal representatives before sharing or using the participant's Actual Address, or any portion thereof.
- 3) Review any automated communication processes to ensure that communications are sent to a Safe at Home participant's Assigned Address only.
- 4) Consider time-sensitive communication when communicating by mail as delivery may be delayed for families enrolled in Safe at Home.
- 5) Review all documents that are disclosed externally to verify that a confidential Actual Address is not being released.
- 6) Communicate the child, family, or out-of-home care provider's Safe at Home status and the need to keep Actual Address information confidential to all staff who may be working on the case (e.g., a caseworker who may be covering the case due to an absence or leave, staff overseeing visits or assisting with transportation, etc.).
- 7) Where there is court involvement with respect to a Safe at Home participant's case, work with the agency's legal representative to make sure that the agency's legal representative is aware of the participant's Safe at Home status and to ensure that the agency is not disclosing confidential address information in the court proceeding. For more information about the court process and service of process for Safe at Home participants, see <https://www.doj.state.wi.us/ocvs/courts-and-service-process>.
- 8) In addition to working with the local child welfare agency, Safe at Home participants may be referred back to Safe at Home, or to a local victim service provider (<https://www.doj.state.wi.us/ocvs/find-local-crime-victim-resources>) to help address safety needs.



## Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

The Department of Children and Families is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access services, receive information in an alternate format, or need information translated to another language, please call the Bureau of Safety and Wellbeing at 608-422-6919. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or speech disabled can use the free Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) – 711 to contact the department.