



Division of Safety and Permanence      Child Welfare Licensing Memo Series 2026-22L  
Supersedes DCF Child Welfare Licensing Memo Series 2022-01-lic

June 1, 2026

To:            DCF/DMCPS Administrator  
                DCF Area Administrators  
                Child Placing Agency Directors  
                Child Welfare Agency Directors  
                County Departments of Community Programs Directors  
                County Departments of Human Services Directors  
                County Departments of Social Services Directors  
                Group Home Providers  
                Tribal Social Service/Indian Child Welfare Directors  
                Child Placing Agencies  
                Residential Care Center Providers  
                Shelter Care Providers  
                Tribal Chairpersons

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Elliott".

From:        John Elliott  
                Administrator

Re:            Serious Incident Reporting Requirements, Exception Requests, and Shelter  
                Care Extensions

## **PURPOSE**

This memo notifies licensees of updated serious incident reporting (SIR) requirements. For group home providers, certain reporting requirements have been changed pursuant to [Wis. Admin. Code. ch. DCF 57](#), effective June 1, 2026.

This memo also provides information regarding the submission of exception and shelter care extension requests, previously addressed in Child Welfare Licensing Memo 2022-01-lic.

## **BACKGROUND**

All licensees are required to report serious incidents and to timely request exceptions and extensions pursuant to [Wis. Admin. Code ch. DCF 52](#), [ch. 54](#), [ch. 57](#), and [ch. 59](#), and [Wis. Stat. §. 48](#), as applicable.

The process for reporting serious incidents was last revised in Child Welfare Licensing Memo Series 2022-01-lic to protect the confidentiality and security of personally identifying information (PII) using a secure web-based form.



[Wis. Admin. Code ch. DCF 57](#) has since been revised to modify certain reporting requirements for group homes. This memo also updates guidance regarding reporting requirements for other licensed providers.

## INFORMATION SUMMARY

### SIR Requirements

The process for submitting SIRs remains unchanged; however, certain reportable incidents and reporting requirements have been revised.

All serious incidents must be submitted to the department using the SIR form, [DCF-F-CFS-2146-E](#), via the web-based application available at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwlicensing/sirsubmittal>.

The SIR form has been updated to reflect changes to reportable incident requirements. The form is digitally fillable, must be completed as fully as possible at the time of submission, and electronic signatures are accepted.

Reporting timeframes:

- Serious incidents must be reported within 48 hours of the occurrence for residential care centers and private child placing agencies, 72 hours for group home providers, and as soon as possible for shelter care facilities.
- Deaths must be reported within 24 hours, unless otherwise specified by applicable administrative rule.
- Timeframes are calculated in accordance with [Wis. Stat. § 990.001\(4\)\(a\)](#), and do not include Sundays or state legal holidays (from midnight to midnight).

Scope of reporting requirements:

- Residential care centers pursuant to [Wis. Admin. Code ch. DCF 52](#), must comply with reporting requirements established by rule and any additional reporting required by the department.
- Group homes pursuant to [Wis. Admin. Code ch. DCF 57](#), must report the specific serious incidents identified in [Wis. Admin. Code s. DCF 57.09](#), including medication administration errors that result in an adverse reaction.
- Child placing agencies pursuant to [Wis. Admin. Code ch. DCF 54](#) must report incidents as required under applicable administrative rules.
- Shelter care facilities pursuant to [Wis. Admin. Code ch. DCF 59](#), must report incidents as required under applicable administrative rules.

The attachment provides additional guidance on reportable incidents. Incidents that do not require submission of an SIR must still be documented in the child's record. Placing

agencies and the child's parent, guardian, legal custodian, or Indian custodian should be notified of incidents, as appropriate.

If there is uncertainty about whether an incident must be reported, providers should consult with their licenser.

Individuals who are mandated reporters pursuant to [Wis. Stat. § 48.981\(2\)\(a\)](#) shall report suspected child abuse or neglect to a child welfare agency or law enforcement as required.

### **Exception Requests**

The process for submitting exception requests remains unchanged.

All requests for exceptions pursuant to Wis. Admin. Code ch. DCF 52, ch. 54, ch. 57, and ch. 59, must include a justification for the exception and, where applicable, an alternative that meets the intent of the rule. Requests can be made by submitting the following forms, as applicable: the following forms, as applicable:

- Child Welfare Request for Exception, [DCF-F-5023-E](#)
- Child Welfare Request for Exception – Age, [DCF-F-5085](#)

All exception requests must be submitted to the department using the web-based form available at: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwlicensing/exceptionrequest>.

Upon successful submission, the department will email confirmation to the address provided on the form. Providers should retain this confirmation for their records.

### **Shelter Care Extensions**

The process for submitting shelter care extension requests remains unchanged.

All shelter care extension requests must be submitted to the department using the web-based form (DCF-F-2601-E) available at:

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwlicensing/exceptionrequest>.

Upon successful submission, the department will email confirmation to the address provided on the form. Providers should retain this confirmation for their records.

For more information or questions, please contact the following:

CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT:      Licensing Section  
   Bureau of Permanence and Out-of-Home Care  
   Division of Safety and Permanence  
   [DCFCWLR@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DCFCWLR@wisconsin.gov)



MEMO WEB SITE: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy>

ATTACHMENTS: [Wis. Admin. Code ch. DCF 57](#)  
Serious Incident Report Requirements: Reportable Incidents

## Serious Incident Reporting (SIR) Requirements: Reportable Incidents

### Residential Care Centers ([DCF 52](#)):

Required Reporting (within 48 hours unless otherwise specified):

- Death or serious injury of a resident.
  - Must report within 24 hours after the death of a resident when reasonable cause exists to believe that the death was related to the use of a physical restraint or a psychotropic medication or was a suicide.
  - A “serious injury” includes any injuries requiring hospitalization.
- Serious incidents involving law enforcement.
- Reported child abuse or neglect.
- Suicide attempt by a resident.
- Medication errors adversely affecting a resident.
- Relocation of residents.
- A fire that requires the services of the fire department.
- Any use of a restraint resulting in injury or death of a child.
- Use of force to prevent a Type 2 resident from going missing.
- Damage to the premises that affect compliance with administrative rules and endangers resident safety.
- Equipment failure that affects compliance with administrative rule and endangers resident safety.
- Any incident requiring execution of the facility’s disaster plan or closure of the facility.
- An outbreak of a serious communicable disease, as defined in [Wis. Admin. Code Ch. DHS 145, Appendix A](#).

### Child Placing Agencies ([DCF 54](#)):

- Required Reporting (within 48 hours unless otherwise specified):
  - Unusual incidents such as a major fire.
    - A “major fire” is defined as one that requires the services of the fire department.
  - Death or serious injury of a child.
    - “Serious injury” is defined as one which requires the hospitalization of the child.

### Group Homes ([DCF 57](#))

- Required Reporting (within 72 hours unless otherwise specified):
  - Suspected or reported child abuse or neglect involving staff, contractors, or volunteers.
  - Incidents involving law enforcement services that occur on group home premises or at location where licensee has primary responsibility for resident’s immediate care and supervision.
  - Use of physical restraint on a resident.

- Serious injury or trauma requiring services of medical provider.
- Medication errors adversely affecting a resident.
- Suicide attempt by a resident.
- A case or suspected case of a communicable disease, as defined in [Wis. Admin. Code Ch. DHS 145, Appendix A](#), in the group home.
- Facility damage or equipment failure affecting compliance with administrative rule and endanger a resident's physical safety.
- A fire that requires the services of the fire department.
- Incident or condition that requires relocation of residents or closure of the facility.
- Death of a resident (report within 24 hours).

#### **Shelter Care Facility ([DCF 59](#)):**

- Required Reporting (report as soon as possible):
  - Death of a child.
  - Serious illness or injury.
  - A fire that requires the services of the fire department.

#### **Clarification and Guidance:**

- Child abuse or neglect:
  - Report, when applicable, any suspected or reported abuse or neglect that occurs while the child is under the facility's supervision or that involves a staff member, volunteer, contractor, another resident, a household member (as defined in [DCF 56](#)), or an unapproved caregiver.
  - Do not submit an SIR for incidents that occurred before placement, were already reported, did not involve the facility, or do not involve one of these individuals. However, these situations may still need to be reported under mandated reporter laws.
- Suicide attempt:
  - Report, when applicable, a suicide attempt when a child tries to end their life or shows repeated behaviors or statements indicating they want to die (which may or may not include a plan).
  - Do not submit an SIR for self-harm without suicidal intent, such as superficial injuries that do not require medical attention.
- Adverse reactions to medication:
  - When applicable, report any medication error that causes an adverse reaction within SIR requirements (e.g., 72 hours for group homes, 48 hours for RCCs).
  - Notify the placing agency and the child's parent, guardian, legal custodian, or Indian custodian within 24 hours, and document the reaction in the child's record. Group home providers may use the Medication Administration Record – Group Home ([DCF-F-CFS2338](#)) to meet documentation requirements.

- An adverse reaction is an unwanted side effect from medication, such as upset stomach, fever, dry mouth, rash, or drowsiness. Seek emergency care for severe reactions and contact a healthcare provider for milder symptoms as soon as possible.