



Wisconsin Child Care Advisory and Recommendation Exchange (WI-CARE)

July 11, 2025
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Attendees

Attended	First and Last Name	Location	Attended	First and Last Name	Location
	Annette Willburn	Milwaukee	X	Kishaunda Ransaw	Milwaukee
X	Bianca Hill	Milwaukee		Leighton Cooper	Milwaukee
X	Carol Jackomino	Rhineland		Liz Tittle	Little Chute
X	Cassie Koch	Madison	X	Lynda Nelson	Middleton
X	Christine Larson Salerno	Milwaukee	X	Margarita Ugalde	Madison
	Corrine Hendrickson	New Glarus		Rose Catlett	Middleton
X	Courtney Zwick	New Glarus	X	Ryann Counce Barnes	Milwaukee
	Cynthia Reineking	La Crosse		Sarah Smith	Racine
X	Jay Martinez	Green Bay	X	Sheri Bishop	Pulaski
X	Joahna Shelton	Spooner	X	Suzette Mayotte	Ashland
	Jolynn Wendt	Arcadia	X	Thanh Bui-Duquette	Eau Claire
X	Kahlila Fennel	Milwaukee	X	Tricia Peterson	Juneau

DCF Staff: Andrea Cammilleri (tech/notes), Michelle Evans (facilitator), Kassidy Farrey (notes), Tina Feaster (facilitator), Tessa Freedberg (facilitator), Alex Gagnon (notes), Daria Hall (facilitator/notes), Justin King (tech), Jason Rahn (notes)

Public: Katie Stieber, Owner of Mama Bears Childcare, Marshfield

Meeting Notes

12:00 – 12:10 **Welcome, Reminder of Meeting Norms, Recap of last meeting**

Daria Hall, Policy Initiatives Advisor

DCF Division of Early Care and Education

Notes: Daria read through the meeting norms, meeting agenda, and shared a recap of ideas that members shared about the topic of child care regulatory ratios, age groups, and rules.

12:10 - 12:55 **Potential Licensing Rule Revisions
Presentation & Discussion**

*Tina Feaster, Program and Policy Analyst Advanced
DCF Division of Early Care and Education*

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All WI-CARE Members

Question 1: Without compromising health and safety of children in care, what rules are overly burdensome or not necessary?

Discussion Notes:

- Suggest re-examining some of the child and staff paperwork requirements.
- Some are redundant and unnecessary.
- I don't love the fact that a new employee cannot count the 100 hours of training (intro) and (skills) toward their yearly training hours.
- I'm hopeful that 17-year-olds can be lead teachers!

12:20 – 12:55 **Time Out Policy**

*Tessa Freedberg, Strategic Initiatives Advisor
DCF Division of Early Care and Education*

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All WI-CARE Members in breakout rooms

- The Wisconsin administrative rule, DCF 251.07(2): Child Guidance, is known informally as "the Time-Out Policy." It was revised in 2023 and implemented in 2024. It effectively does not allow child care providers to remove a child from the classroom setting.
- Providers have expressed confusion over appropriate practices they are allowed to use when assisting a child in regaining their composure.
- Current rule language was shown.
- DCF is considering a rule revision that would maintain the current language in state law, and also recognizes the need to add language that allows for separation from the learning environment to regain composure and maintain the safety of other children, which is different than using a time-out.
- Additional guidance will be provided, including a resource tool kit on addressing challenging behaviors, positive coping strategies, and successful re-entry into the learning environment.
- Draft proposed rule language was shared, as follows: "A provider may separate a preschool age or school-age child from other children when that child needs to regain control of themselves or poses a safety concern for other children. During separation time, the child must remain under the appropriate level of supervision from licensed staff and provided with positive coping strategies for behavior management

and successful re-entry into the learning environment. The child must be in a safe, lighted, well-ventilated room. Separation time should be minimized and appropriate to the needs of the individual child."

Breakout Room 1 Notes

Question 2: How does the current time out rule work (or not work) within your program?

- With the extreme rise in children with special needs including autism, ADHD, and children who get overstimulated and need that break, I feel like this rule honestly does a disservice to those children. Of course removing a child should always be done with respect and not negative.
- There are also times when a child becomes violent and is being sent home for that behavior, and I think we need to be allowed to remove them from their room until their parents arrive.
- I always used the time-out rule. When I was a family program it was a little bit easier for me to monitor: just myself or someone else or two people. Now that I'm in a group center, I've had to get on some people who have abused the time-out. I have three now who are school-agers; and they're siblings who are there every day. Sometimes they can be overwhelming for the school-age teacher so we try to give them supports for those three like we have done interventions, referrals to community, etc. Sometimes I think she does abuse the time-out policy. She will remove them from the classroom. I've caught her taking them to the infant room, which I would never allow. She was doing this when I wasn't there in the program. So I had to observe it myself to say something. She was abusing the system and I also had another teacher that I feel was as well. I did a whole training on time-outs in a staff meeting. My older employees - fifties or sixties - they didn't buy in. Younger employees were more receptive. I notice generation gaps between the staff and how they feel about this.
- Sometimes it's the staff who needs the timeout to regulate. We need to remove someone from the environment to re-regulate; then return to support a child through a rough moment with big emotions. That's not always going to be successful in a classroom. You need to remove all of the triggers to help be successful. Time-out feels outdated. We can be excited and enthusiastic depending on the activity. I've seen removal work well, like to have them get a drink of water, and that's what they needed.
- We aren't going to do time-outs, but we will do calm-downs. Remove that phrase: time-out, and re-frame it in another way that is forward thinking and more growth mindset. I've seen this work well and it depends on what that child is used to from home. The most useful part is helping our staff understand: are you regulated to help the child regulate?
- We don't use time-outs. We do use calming cubes - but there's a fine line with this strategy as not being perceived as a time-out.
- When we're removing the child from the room, I will just say I need to have a talk with the director and take them along, get some water at the water fountain without all the

distractions of the other children, and they're able to calm down and understand what happened.

- We rarely use time-outs. When we do, we put them at a table with a few activities. I think of a time-out as when there's no activities whatsoever, and we don't do that. I think the language needs updating. If I bring them to the office, do I need to write something up to say we used a time-out? We were just talking and not calling it a time-out.

Question 3: Have you seen time-outs used in ways you do not agree with? If so, why?

- I haven't really seen anything out of line, except for that one teacher. I have a Special Ed teacher background for 20 years, a lot of my staff lean on me because of that. I'm always doing some kind of behavioral intervention. Sometimes the staff is the one who needs the time-out. Their patience is so thin, by the time the child did the third, fourth, fifth thing, ok that's it. To prevent them from exploding, the teacher needs a break. So that's what I'm seeing a lot of.
 - Kids know a lot of what they can do to test you.
 - As educators we need to recognize what our hot-buttons are.
- Having more free and open sourced training on this would benefit all. For all ages of children.

Question 4: Have you seen removing a child used as a form of positive child guidance? Under what circumstances do you believe it is appropriate to remove a child from the classroom?

- I use language like, "you are a smart child, you are not using your smart brain right now. How can we fix this and do better?" Then we talk through the rough moment. Having a quiet corner or a 'alone time' space is okay and there are certainly times that children need to be removed from the space to be more successful.
- I share that we need to be firm, fair, and friendly. Having direct and specific expectations that are consistent is critical for all children's success.
- There have been times where staff have sat with a kid who have talked them down, debriefing with them on their actions, usually four-year-old kids or older.

Question 5: What are your reactions to this proposed language?

- It's hard to define "the separation time should be minimized." I understand trying to put a boundary on. And I also see that from experience, it sometimes takes more than a minimal amount of time to successfully return kids to the classroom.
- As it relates to school age children, for example, before school or after school... The school can provide supports, for example with IEP, that a more skilled staff member could provide to support a child that's more consistent with how they are treated during the school day, but our rules won't allow it. It's been a grey area with licensing. However, in this verbiage that grey area is closed off. I could see that becoming a question down

the road for those who are in that school-age exemption. Is this inclusive of summer camp as well?

- I would recommend looking at the summer-camp licensing rule book - it may need to be modified.
- It feels like the examples that come to mind would meet this. I could share specific details with the instance that would apply to the situation in question.
- The language that seems to be missing are the words 'regulation' and 'dysregulation;' removal should be to support the child's success. Sometimes it's more the staff that need the time-out to become regulated to work with a child who is having a rough moment.
- Someone could articulate to their licensor why that amount of time was appropriate. Some kids do take much more time. I feel like for that individual, I could explain to the licensor why that time was needed.
- DCF Facilitator: If we were to remove the minimized part, would your staff be able to explain their rationale to a licensor? When we have grey areas, like the time-out is more than five minutes, it leads to areas that are up for interpretation, which can lead to inconsistencies which we hear a lot about in licensing.
- Our program is small enough, we can have conversations with families. I think I've developed a very good relationship with my licensor. I think we would be comfortable having those conversations. With my previous licensor, we would have back and forth a bit. The licensor can mentor me and give me tips, but if I think this works best and we're not violating any rules, that's what it's going to be.
- Although I could provide the justification, I have experienced licensors who would not accept the justification, unfortunately.

Breakout Room 2 Notes

Question 2: How does the current time out rule work (or not work) within your program?

- I like to use time-outs.
- With the increase in children with special needs, I like to give children a walk to let them calm down.
- Throwing furniture can be traumatizing to other children and can be demoralizing to the child who is melting down—I believe we should allow time-outs in classrooms, to give them time to calm down and/or take a walk.
- As a family provider, I don't use timeouts due to the age of children I have—I instead redirect them.
- I wonder about separating a child who bites but would make sure they still have access to toys – separating in order to keep the other children safe.

Question 3: Have you seen time-outs used in ways you do not agree with? If so, why?

- No
- I'm a family provider without staff, therefore no.

Question 4: Have you seen removing a child used as a form of positive child guidance? Under what circumstances do you believe it is appropriate to remove a child from the classroom?

- Time-outs have worked for situations she has seen in her program – kids are emotional and sometimes they need some space or someone to get down at their level and help them.
- If you try something and it doesn't work, then you need to try something else - don't keep doing something that isn't working.
- I have taken toddlers that were having a melt down and sat them in my lap. They need help regulating the rage they were feeling. Some kids need touch, and others don't want any at all – it can be very individual.
- Yes, it's different for different ages – how they want to be helped when they are dysregulated. They don't always know what they need. She tries breathing with them or talking with them to try and find out what they might need.
- Older children tend to talk more and are more able to share what they need or what would make them feel better
- After COVID, it is more difficult for children to be social and share their feelings/emotions. Electronics use has increased and it has made it hard for kids to be social. I provide other options or ways kids can socialize without electronics – playing outside, running around, etc.
- Outside time is huge for kids and their ability to regulate themselves – green nature time. I recommend walking around with the child and pointing out things they see – it helps them to regulate their bodies.

Question 5: What are your reactions to this proposed language?

- Generalized language would allow for flexibility and meet more situations – would there be a set time frame for how long they could be in a time-out?
- I like the wording – but have a question about a lighted room. Some kids might like a darkened room especially if they are in need of a nap – lights could be stimulating.
- I'm reacting to the idea that someone would put a child in a dark room – I'm upset that we even need that language. A dark room could cause a child trauma and would be demeaning.
- I think any type of activities that children could do to help them regulate would be great to have available to them. Unfortunately, when is only one provider available would be hard to take a child for a walk or even to be outside with a child.

Breakout Room 3 Notes

Question 2: How does the current time out rule work (or not work) within your program?

- We are a Pyramid Model site, and we view behavior as a form of communication. Building connections with children is key. With 20 children in a classroom, it can be difficult when two of them are unable to participate in that environment. While we do

have extra support, it's often just me and our mental health specialist managing these situations. We wish we had a space to take those children to help them calm down, but we don't. It impacts the other children's anxiety levels and isn't fair to them either. Teaching the child who is struggling takes time. We do everything we can to focus on the child, explain their behavior and avoid using exclusionary practices.

- Each classroom has a calming corner and there is a safe space in both buildings where lights are dim and relaxing furniture is provided to help them calm down. Our behavior consultants have given us guidance in calming strategies. Sometimes there are different triggers, like don't want to come inside, sometimes they want more food, and our goal is to help them learn how to respond to those triggers and feel supported.
- In my family child care program when a child is having a difficult time, I use a calming corner with fidget toys and stuffed animals. I can't always step away, so I may need to place the child there and check in when able. If it escalates to the point where the child may have hurt someone else, my priority has to be checking the physical wellbeing of the hurt child. When I have a child that is having a harder time, I have a calming center, with fidget toys and stuffed animals. I can't just hand them off to another adult. I have to put them there and check in when I'm able.
- A few things stand out to me from today's discussion: everyone here clearly values supporting children through these challenging moments and has a great coping process. I have a concern where the staff don't have training to implement a time-out like you all described. If we shift this policy, we must ensure staff are equipped to help children through the process – not just isolate them. A time-out without follow-up care or support isn't effective.
- Our goal is to never remove the child from the classroom. We have a backup space to be accompanied there, but we always elevate the care within the classroom before removing the child.

Question 3: Have you seen time-outs used in ways you do not agree with? If so, why?

- Yes, any time a child is isolated and not coached through it is a way I do not agree with.
- I agree, any time where a child is set aside with no coaching and calming conversations is a poorly executed time-out.
- I have an example of a child from an in-home setting with mom and grandma who was enrolled into HeadStart. For a while, the transition of getting dropped off was tough, the child would cry for hours. He wouldn't eat breakfast. One of the teachers started to just ignore him over time, which wasn't good. So to address it, they had a home visitor help transition from home to school and help soothe him into the environment. Once he felt comfortable, he thrived and this was no longer needed.

Question 4: Have you seen removing a child used as a form of positive child guidance? Under what circumstances do you believe it is appropriate to remove a child from the classroom?

- I can't remove the children from the room, but I try to distract them as best I can. For example, can you help me by grabbing something and doing X, Y, Z with it?
- We have had a couple kids where the over stimulation of a classroom does not help them calm down at all. They have a hard time getting their bodies to regulate, they are embarrassed to talk to adults in a setting with other children watching. The only way to calm children like that down, is giving them a new environment to process.
- Sometimes we have to remember there are underlying emotions at play. If a child just misses their mom, that is a valid and real reason. They may escalate when they are not able to process those feelings. Giving them one-on-one time can help validate them but also help them work through it as well.

Question 5: What are your reactions to this proposed language?

- I agree with it wholeheartedly. Allowing for the discretion as to what is appropriate for each child means a lot.
- I think we may need to further define the word minimized. I have concerns about that getting out-of-hand and taken advantage of. Five minutes should be enough for most, you don't want a situation where it gets to be 20 minutes and they're falling asleep in there, or spending half the day in there.
- I agree to a degree, but at the same time some children need more time than others. After a certain point of time maybe there is a document that could be filled out for allowing additional time after an identified threshold. I also wanted to note that we often see more difficult behaviors in the two-year-old rooms more than preschool, and so there may be an age component to identifying an appropriate time threshold.
- I second that point regarding: two-year-old rooms. They often need opportunities to be a helper and take a walk to get paper towels or whatever else is needed to take a breather, walk and talk, and then come back.

Breakout Room 4 Notes

Question 2: How does the current time out rule work (or not work) within your program?

- We have a huge increase in children with autism, ADHD, behavioral issues – school age IEPs say they have opportunity for safe space or break. We let them sit by the door and give them a chance to breathe, a "time in." appreciate the rule and understand why it's there, but hoping it will change. We need more flexibility. School agers want space, quiet, and time.
- I agree regarding the huge increase in autism bringing significant challenging behaviors, and kids with traumatic backgrounds who don't qualify for an IEP. We use some rule flexibility, especially for children who need a sensory break. if there's a well spelled out behavioral support plan with input from families, we should allow programs to implement them.

- I do positive reinforcement and guidance. I don't believe in time-outs because of the negative connotation of the term and its past use. I use B-3 resources, redirecting. I give them space and time but don't call it a time-out.

Question 3: Have you seen time-outs used in ways you do not agree with? If so, why?

- There's a reason the behavior is there. We need to get to the core. What does a time out accomplish? Will it help or hurt?
- Teachers who need a break from behavior may use time-outs. I try to be the 'time-in' person, but it's hard when we don't have the staffing. We're fortunate to have outside space to allow kids to run it out.

Question 4: Have you seen removing a child used as a form of positive child guidance? Under what circumstances do you believe it is appropriate to remove a child from the classroom?

- Did not discuss this question.

Question 5: What are your reactions to this proposed language?

- I love it, it's basically what we do right now but keep it in the classroom. I could see offering a basket of calming toys and social emotional learning tools.
- At my daughter's school they have a zen den. They have to have permission to be able to use it.
- If we have child destroying a classroom and biting teachers, we evacuate the classroom and work with the child in the classroom.
- It's important to include in the rule that it has to be for safety reasons. We can't remove a child for convenience.
- Will "minimized and appropriate to the needs of the individual child" be evident to teachers?
 - It would be to me, but I have 25 years of experience.
- We should consider the conditions for re-entry.
- I always worry about the grey areas these rules create. Licensors interpret rules in different ways.
- Referring to the part about lighting – for some kids they need to take a brain break from the lights in the room. Could it be natural light?
 - I agree.

Action Items:

- Offer more support and training to child care staff on time-outs and how to handle difficult behaviors.
- In the proposed language, remove ambiguity around "minimizing" the separation time to ensure that this is interpreted consistently and also age-appropriate. Also carefully consider the potential ramifications of setting a firm time threshold that does not allow providers to use professional judgment and skills.

- If a threshold is set for maximum length of time-outs, consider offering a justification form that could be completed by the provider to explain reasons why a longer time-out was warranted.
- In the rule, emphasize that its purpose is to promote regulation and support the child's success. It is not a form of punishment.
- Reconsider proposed language around lighting to ensure that children are not left in the dark and that it would still allow providers to use dim lighting or natural light to design a calming space for separation.
- Consider revising guidance around ages that are appropriate for time-outs to allow use of this strategy with children ages 2 and up.
- Work to promote the use of time-outs as a last resort, particularly in situations where safety is a concern.

11:55 – 12:00 Wrap-Up, Public Comment and Next Steps

*Daria Hall, Policy Initiatives Advisor
DCF Division of Early Care and Education*

Notes

- Katie Stieber commented that this has really impacted her center over the past year with an uptick in big behaviors. It makes her nervous to implement another rule that could be open to interpretation by each licenser. Rule language like "a reasonable amount of time," is too open to interpretation. She wondered whether children should be sent home if they have to be out of the space more than a certain amount of time that we should include in the rule. She also noted that for a lot of kids, one-on-one time with an educator can be wonderful and needed, and this type of approach can lead to some positive relational gains. This is a good reason to explore a requirement that more Pyramid Model, Registry level, or other similar training should be required of staff who are allowed to take kids out of the class learning space to be together one-on-one. She is pleased to see DCF is looking at this rule.
- Next Meeting: Tuesday, August 5 at 12:00 p.m. to discuss Access to Training and Technical Assistance.

English

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Spanish

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