



Division of Safety and Permanence DCF 56 Advisory Council Meeting

June 19, 2024 12:00 – 2:00 p.m.

VIRTUAL Meeting Link: <https://dcfwi.zoom.us/j/86109121304?pwd=S0FzZW5kMmRoL2xGWmNUMkv3QUMrdz09>

Meeting ID: 861 0912 1304 Passcode: 285021 or dial in: +1 (312) 626-6799

DCF Staff			
Name	Present	Name	Present
Shannon Braden	x	Elaine Pridgen	x
Emily Erickson	x	Jennifer Sailer	x
Dana Johnson	Absent with notice	Britny Isaacs	x
Shelby McCulley		Kristie Buwalda	x
Allison Fern		Lauren Washington	
Rachel Nilli			

Steering Committee Members (not required to be in attendance for this meeting)				
Member	Present	Nominating Organization	Agency Employed	Area of Expertise
Lisa Broll		Wisconsin County Human Services Association (WCHSA)	Walworth County Department of Human Services	Ongoing Child Welfare and Foster Care
Emily Coddington		Wisconsin Association of Family and Child Agencies (WAFCA)	Wisconsin Association of Family and Child Agencies (WAFCA)	Child Welfare
Jill Collins		Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS)	Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS)	Ongoing Child Welfare and Foster Care
Deanna Collins		Forest County Potawatomi Tribe	Forest County Potawatomi Tribe	Ongoing Child Welfare and Foster Care
Brent Ruehlow		WCHSA	Jefferson County Department of Health and Human Services	Ongoing Child Welfare and Foster Care
Machelle Shipman		WAFCA	ANU Family Services	Private Child Placing Agency



Advisory Council Members (17 participants with DCF staff)				
Member	Present	Nominating Organization	Agency Employed	Area of Expertise
Kristen Agenten		Public Adoptions	Children's Wisconsin	Foster Care and Adoptions
Patty Baker		Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS)	Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS)	Child Welfare Training
Cassandra Eggert	x	WCHSA	Outagamie County Human Services Department	Ongoing Child Welfare and Foster Care
Laura Goba	x	WAFCA	Children's Wisconsin	Private Child Placing Agency
Katlyn Graebner	x	WCHSA	Green County Health and Human Services	Ongoing Child Welfare and Foster Care
Kate Gravel	x	WCHSA	Dane County Health and Human Services	Ongoing Child Welfare and Foster Care
Laura Halonen-Schultz		DMCPS	Wellpoint	Congregate Care Facilities and Services
Allison Higgins	x	WAFCA	Foundations for Healthy Transitional Living	Private Child Placing Agency
Julie Kay		Forest County Potawatomi Tribe	Forest County Potawatomi Tribe	Ongoing Child Welfare and Foster Care
Andrea Leaman	x	DMCPS	Children's Wisconsin	Ongoing Child Welfare and Foster Care
Michelle Jones Lim	x	WCHSA	Waukesha County Health and Human Services	Ongoing Child Welfare and Foster Care
Tracy Schumacher	x	WCHSA	Forest County Human Services	Ongoing Child Welfare and Foster Care
Brittany Shellenberger	x	WCHSA	Winnebago County Health and Human Services	Ongoing Child Welfare and Foster Care



Julie Zidek		Public Adoptions	Lutheran Social Services	Foster Care and Adoptions
Jamie Socolick		Private Adoptions		

Special Guest Presenter Marina Nitze

Public Attendees: Karla Meyer (Eau Claire), Kristin Lampe on behalf of Patty Baker

MINUTES

I. Call to Order, Welcome – Emily Erickson

II. National Organizations Relative Rule Recommendations, Q&A – Emily Erickson, Marina Nitze & Britny Isaacs

Marina gave background on how she became involved on helping draft the National Model Standards. Then gave a quick high-level overview of the recommendations for states to consider when developing a relative rule for licensing a foster home. Wisconsin was a leader in the area of waivers allowed for applicants. As of December 1, 2023 title IV-E agencies have the option to have a kin-specific licensing or approval process that recognizes the unique needs of kinship caregivers.

Two main requirements: reasonably in accordance with recommended standards of national organizations for foster family homes & caregivers need to comply with federal requirements regarding background checks.

Only one model standards which is made up of 3 components and include:

1. Background checks
2. Caregiver suitability assessment
3. Safety and needs assessment of the home

Goal is 100% licensure/approval on same day as placement with kin. Standards include implementation guidance and example template forms. Co-designed with 100's of agency employees and kin caregivers. During their feedback request from agencies, they took the best of each emergency placement processes in designing how to get same day approval. Consulted with experts to write the model standards based with best practice in mind.

Expected benefits of a relative/like-kin rule: 100% equitable support for kinship caregivers with placement, no unsupported placements, more kin placements, more kin guardianship (adoptions were a way to get financial support but take a long time to finalize), staff can focus on higher priorities and supports.

417(a)(20) is federal rule for kinship caregivers. Nothing has changed in this area. For each adult living in the kinship caregivers home you need to check the child abuse and neglect registry of any state where that adult lived I the last 5 years. CAPTA or ICWA require fingerprints. Wisconsin already meets these requirements for background checks.



WI list of federally disqualifying crimes is more rigorous than the federally disqualifying crimes (4 disqualifiers). Feds don't disqualify that a placement cannot occur it only prohibits payment.

Created a consent to background checks form which was left behind, so relatives know what they had agreed to. There is also a Spanish version.

Redesigned a background check/application model form with input from DOJ and kinship caregivers. There is ability to fill out by hand or online.

Kinship denial model form was based off Wisconsin denial letter.

Criminal history evaluation model form helps to reduce bias.

Out of state child abuse request model form. Used 100A form as a guide. WI has the best request process. This has been an area where there is a delay due to differences in practice between agencies.

Safety/Needs Assessment Model Form. There is a list of intentional exclusions with reasons why it was deleted.

Kinship Caregiver Assessment Model Form/Question Bank – will be available in 2 formats.

Think about verbiage choice; if there is a requirement which does not occur right away it delays the relative payment. The applicant has to be "completed" in order to get paid for the care of a child. If you add a requirement to the "licensing" versus ongoing case management, you may lack financial reimbursement.

Questions posed: What changes are needed for the court process? Are there steps (like a perm plan) which judges are used to seeing? Recommended that they loop the perm plan from licensing.

Crosswalk tool is an equivalent to Attachment X. Can be used as a guide to write out the new relative/like-kin rule. National organizations would like to know if we don't follow the crosswalk why we chose not to.

Considerations: You may have front loaded permanency into your current licensing process. Use tighter fingerprinting timeframes. Expand kin finding, if you want an extended timeframe for completing these steps beyond day one, you need to front load financial support, financial support from day one is paramount; let's look at meeting families where they're at and providing supports. Various states have made changes including committees which evaluate the print results daily. Adding options to complete print. Some places have 90% placement rates with relatives. How can we add in money for relatives if there is a gap in getting them licensed.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1V30W6Ft_uEUpVIQ062wPh12HrYHNod0b43T25wrp190/edit#heading=h.6lspa2pm3ydt (p. 58 is where the list of items not included is housed; p. 57 is the assessment tool)

Questions/Concerns:



Looking at areas not included, several refer back to Reasonable & Prudent Parenting Standards language. Some agencies never included RPPS before in their assessment of applicants.

Advisory Council had a desire to point to safe & clean environment considerations in determining the home presented a danger to the child to be placed. "Other hazards."

Was public health consulted in determining when deciding what constituted a health or safety concern. Workers don't know what the threshold is for assessing "clean".

When we are placing children, we should be finding a way to license. If there are concerns (example fleas) how can the county help mitigate the concern? Can they fumigate a home and assist?

Placement danger threats overlap with the kinship concerns. Home environment is one of the placement danger threats which workers assess.

Kinship Caregiver Assessment. **Is there any guidance on how funding will occur?** (i.e. flea example). Agencies are getting better at getting reimbursement for licensure & IV-e admin funds. **Care Portal**, professional puts out a request for something and then the community helps to provide the needed items. **Care Portal \$312 was the average amount to support a kinship placement. How do we unlock the 4E administrative funds?**

Vehicle safety have limited requirements in relative rule (recommended). It was recommended that foster home licensing does not include oversight of following laws related to insurance. It is important to have a transportation plan. Persons who are transporting a child should have a driver's license.

Room sharing and co-sleeping: Culturally, many groups do room/bed share. Tribal partners requested this current requirement in rule to be removed because relatives sleep in settings like a long house together. Research indicates that co-sleeping with an infant is dangerous, therefore they leaned into child abuse experts in determining how this area should be written. Experts also indicated room sharing did not increase incidents of sexual abuse. You can consider child preferences and safety concerns on a case-by-case basis (ex. You have a youth who has known sexual abuse issues). Can still have discretion in determining if the situation is safe and appropriate given the individual needs of each child.

BREAK 1:25 - 1:30

DCF 56 Rule Revisions 56.21 - Kristie

56.21 Respite

Comments: Too much gray regarding respite and certification process. Allowed agencies to determine which background checks need to be conducted. Background checks are often a barrier to licensure. Could use the rehab review process to review background challenges. Some agencies require "certification" to provide respite for people who are known to the foster parent or foster child.



Respite should be required for levels 1 & 2; current Wisconsin rule says only Levels 3 and higher. In a recent retention study, respite was cited as a need. Earn 1 day a month of respite to be used at any time. Need to explore funding options for respite. County should be paying/providing respite. CPA's build in cost of respite for administrative rate. CPA's are saying they don't have enough respite providers. Respite is not covered under rate regulation. Respite is taxable income if earnings are over \$600.

Need more of a uniform process for determining how a respite provider is approved. Need more clarity when it comes to what background checks are required for someone to provide respite. Do barred offenses remain applicable here? From barred offense publication "applies to applicants for an initial foster care license, renewal foster care license, interim caretakers and successor guardians receiving subsidized guardianship payments, and adoptive parents receiving adoption assistance."

Counties should/could be the ones paying/providing respite at the same rate that respite providers get. CPAs built into their administrative rate for respite (who license Level 3 & 4 homes). Currently, achieving this respite goal is not being met. CPAs use county foster homes for the respite service and then there is a discrepancy between the rates of respite when the same service is being paid for by the county, thereby confusing caregivers. Increased respite rates because it is taxable income if over \$600 (have to set so much for that already in taxes).

Do any agencies barter respite services between licensed providers (so then payment might not be needed)? Green County encourages that to increase sense of support with other licensed homes. Other counties do that, but still pay for that service.

DCF 56 Rule Revisions 56.22 Assessment of Strengths & Needs - Kristie

- Anything else you would change in this section?
 - Can this section be deleted because it is mostly the CANS. OLC states that it has to remain how it is because in standards alone it is not enforceable. Curious why this has to remain because this is already in Ongoing Standards. Another consideration worth adding how and if the foster parent is consulted when the CANS assessment is being completed.
 - Add in who is doing the CANS; all it says is "collect information". Because the CANS impacts the rate and case planning. **CANS should be done *with* the foster parent.**
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- **56.15(2) QUALIFICATIONS FOR SUPERVISING AGENCY CASEWORKER FOR LEVEL 3 TO 5.** A supervising agency caseworker shall have all of the following qualifications to perform the responsibilities under sub. (3) for a child with a level of need of 3 or higher in the agency's care who is placed in a foster home with a Level 3 to 5 certification:
 - (a) One of the following:



1. A master's degree or higher in a social work or related field.
2. A bachelor's degree and a minimum of 2 years of post-degree experience in a social work-related field.

DCF 56.15(2)(b) Licensed or certified under ch. 457, Stats., and ch. MPSW 3, 6, 11, 12, or 17.

- **Advisory Council question:** How do you hire for this, do you follow this, is this something you required at your agency? Do you currently staff at this level and with these requirements?
- **Advisory Council question:** Would you like it to list more about experience vs. degree? Does this add value and is it attainable?
- Master's level is a barrier and limits candidate pool (% of masters and bachelors – so if the agency is small, almost all the employees have to be at a masters level). Suggestion of deleting (b) and Emily likes that idea.
- Should we be regulating who is doing these responsibilities? Agreement that this should be removed. It is a lot of waiting for licensure/certification. There are a lot of qualified professionals that do not have a degree/license.
- Would it make sense that this refers back to CPA rule requirements?

Next meeting is scheduled for July 17, 2024 from 12:00 to 2:00pm.

(2:00) Adjourn