



DCF 56 Steering Committee Meeting - MINUTES

7/15/2024 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

DCF Staff			
Name	Present	Name	Present
John Elliott	X	Elaine Pridgen	
Emily Erickson	X	Jennifer Sailer	
Dana Johnson	X	Britny Smuk	
Shelby McCulley	X	Kristie Buwalda	X
Shannon Braden			

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



Advisory Council Members				
Member	Present	Nominating Organization	Agency Employed	Area of Expertise
Kristen Agentin		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		WCHSA	Outagamie County Human Services Department	Ongoing Child Welfare and Foster Care
Laura Goba		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		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		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		DMCPS	Children's Wisconsin	Ongoing Child Welfare and Foster Care
Michelle Lim		WCHSA	Waukesha County Health and Human Services	Ongoing Child Welfare and Foster Care
Tracy Schumacher		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



AGENDA

- (10:00-10:05) I. Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions
- (10:05-10:20) II. DCF 56 Non-Relative Rule Status
- (10:20-10:40) III. DCF 56 Relative Rule Status
- (10:40-10:50) IV. Questions and Considerations
- (10:50-10:55) VII. Next Steps
- (11:00) VIII. Adjourn

MEETING NOTES

- I. **Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions (Dana)**
 - a. Roll call taken and introductions made

- II. **DCF 56 Non-Relative Rule Status**
 - a. Shared areas where no changes were made; no comments
 - b. Reviewed non-relative rule updates:
 - i. **Question:** RE: well water testing requirements and concern about whether this should be a requirement or requested if concern is identified within a foster home? **Answer:** The rule is concerned about access to safe drinking water and some homes use bottled water, purchase safe drinking water from alternate sources, and contaminated well water can still be used for bathing. While well water may be subject to contamination (and even city water), it may be something not left up to an applicant, as the property might be rented or out of their control. Licensing requirements would be more helpful if it did not require such testing, unless someone believed it was a concern for the health and safety of a child placed in the home. The revised version of the rule will provide agency decision-making in this area.
 - ii. Recommendation from Steering Committee member: Suggested that the foster home provide verification that their well has been tested. Also, current rule only required well testing if requested by the agency.
 - iii. **Question:** Remove 56.20 from rule to remove all evaluations and the reasoning behind that decision? **Answer:** Advisory Council stated that this was not being tracked by licensors and there was no value add with this requirement. Recommendation from Steering Committee Member: How the foster parent is doing the work as a caregiver and as part of a treatment team is important to evaluate and there is value to doing an evaluation. DCF believes there is a difference between best practice and minimum licensing requirements. At this time, best practice may dictate an evaluation, but this requirement is not part of Federal Model Standard and is not current practice across 72 counties.



- iv. **Question:** What is the status on rule language of whether the CANS information will stay the same or be revised in rule as prior meeting notes suggested there may be a change in this section. **Answer:** Office of Legal Counsel recommended the rule language stay as is; keeping the CANS specific information in future rule.
- v. Additional questions asked of the Steering Committee Members: *What workforce issues do you foresee? What communication points or messages do we need to be mindful of? What disagreements might we run into?*

Response: Broadening staff requirements was well received. What is “necessary” to do the work.

III. DCF 56 Relative & Like Kin Rule Status

- a. Shared National Organizations recommendations for all states to consider in implementing a relative/like-kin licensing pathway.
- b. Draft is currently under review with several offices (DCF Secretary’s Office, DSP Administrator’s Office, Office of Legal Counsel, Tribe Liaison, Lived Experience Coordinator).
- c. Questions asked of the Steering Committee Members: *What workforce issues do you foresee? What communication points or messages do we need to be mindful of? What disagreements might we run into?*

Response: DCF 56 Advisory Council is interested in the relative licensing track and what it means for the workforce and the licensing process of relatives and like-kin. Concern is making sure that language states that requirements are different and not “easier” per-se, in that safety of children is important. Philosophical change will be needed that we should license the home if placement is safe using the Confirming Safe Environment tool, relatives/like-kin should receive parity with the non-relative payment rate. Licensing agencies will need to reconsider how they opt-in to support relative care providers in curing any non-safety related issues to licensing, so that relative providers can be licensed more rapidly and supporting relative caregivers. Child welfare professionals have indicated they are concerned about how fast relatives will be licensed and approved, as it may not provide ‘enough’ time to conduct an assessment. The assessment tool used for foster homes is the SAFE Assessment, and many of the questions may not pertain to relative caregivers and many lived-experience voices have expressed that the SAFE Questionnaire is too intrusive. The National Organizations recommend that licensing occur on the same day as either placement occurs, or the family begins the process. Concerns with how to obtain fingerprint background checks quickly, including the suggestion that DCF utilize funding to support ‘field print’ scanners for all counties. Part of the licensing process is the ability to assess a person’s ability to meet the child’s needs, training, etc. There is some reluctance on the part of child welfare professionals to meet this identified threshold. Training will be important and re-center requirements of case managers to monitor that the placement is safe under these standards. It was identified it may be



overwhelming for families to take placement and do all the things that are required for licensing 'same day', and to complete both an assessment and background checks with a licensor. There may be additional costs to raise a child and to purchase objects for the home to cure safety issues; there may be pushback that relatives should take on the financial responsibility of raising a child and not require a government payment.

IV. Next Steps

- a. Shared rule promulgation timeline.
- b. Soliciting feedback regarding rule items and language from many community partners. Please send any feedback to DanaL.Johnson@wisconsin.gov

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

Advisory Council Meeting: August 21, 2024 - 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm via Zoom

Steering Committee: September 9, 2024 - 10:00am to 11:00am via Zoom