



wisconsin department of  
**children & families**

201 East Washington Avenue, Room E200

P.O. Box 8916

Madison, WI 53708-8916

Governor Scott Walker  
Secretary Eloise Anderson

Division of Safety and Permanence

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July, 2011

Dear Foster Parent:

Recently, there have been a number of changes affecting foster care in Wisconsin. These changes include Levels of Care, the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths tool (“the CANS”), and changes in your foster care rates. This letter along with the enclosed attachments provides information to address any questions or concerns you may have regarding these changes. Included with this letter are a brochure titled “Levels of Care: Foster Care Licensing,” a brochure titled “Information for Families Regarding the Wisconsin Comprehensive Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Tool,” and the “Placement Complexity Chart,” which is an appendix of Ch. DCF 56, Admin. Code. You can also visit our website at: <http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cans> for more information.

As a foster parent you should know what the use of the CANS will mean for your foster child. The CANS tool assesses a child’s needs and strengths in different areas such as school, trauma, mental health needs, and risk behaviors. The CANS uses algorithms to provide three different results:

- a mental health screen, to determine whether a child has mental health needs
- a Level of Need, to recommend a level of placement for a child based on the identified needs and strengths
- a supplemental rate to be included in the foster care reimbursement.

The attached Placement Complexity Chart shows the appropriate placement options for a child based on their Level of Need. A specific Level of Need does not require a specific provider or placement, but it will be used to help choose a placement based on the child’s identified needs. A child may be placed with a provider who has a lower level of certification than the Level of Need if an exception is documented to show additional supports will be given to that provider. The Level of Need will be used to better match children to their providers and to improve the stability of placements.

The CANS is completed by the child’s primary caseworker, however, foster care licensing code requires the primary caseworker collect information from members of the child’s treatment team, including you.

A supplemental rate will be determined by ratings on specific items. The supplemental rate is calculated for a child by adding the items included in the algorithm scored as a ‘2’ or a ‘3’ and multiplying that number by \$5.50. The attached CANS brochure explains the rating scale for the CANS.

The supplemental rate is only one portion of the foster care rate; the basic maintenance payment is set by the legislature based on the child’s age, and the exceptional rate is determined by the agency based on specific criteria. Your licensing worker can provide you with the Uniform Foster Care Rate brochure to further explain the portions of the foster care rate.

T 608.266.8787 F 608.266.5547 [dcf.wi.gov](http://dcf.wi.gov)

The department's policy requires that all children who were placed into foster care on or after February 21, 2011 have a CANS completed within 30 days of placement into a foster home, and have a CANS reassessment every six months. Children who were in foster care prior to February 21, 2011, are required to have a CANS completed at the next rate review, so all children in foster care in Wisconsin will have a CANS completed by August 2011. Regardless of when a child has their first CANS, a CANS reassessment is required every six months. You or other members of the treatment team can request a reassessment of the CANS at any time if you feel that the child's needs or strengths have changed.

We believe that the Levels of Care and the CANS tool will help to create better outcomes for the children in foster care, and we hope this information was helpful in answering some of your questions. Please contact your licensing worker if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ron Hermes', written in a cursive style.

Ron Hermes  
Director  
Bureau of Permanence and Out-of-Home Care  
Division of Safety and Permanence  
Department of Children and Families