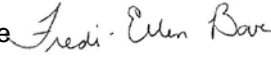


To: DCF Area Administrators  
Child Placing Agency Directors  
Child Welfare Agency Directors  
County Departments of Community Programs Directors  
County Departments of Developmental Disabilities Services Directors  
County Departments of Human Services Directors  
County Departments of Social Services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

From: Fredi-Ellen Bove   
Administrator

Re: Standardized Assessment for the Home Study Process in Foster Care Licensure and Adoption Approval

## **PURPOSE**

As required by 2015 WI Act 378, through this memo the Department is establishing a standardized assessment process, the Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE) tool, for licensing a home for foster care and approval of adoption. This memo establishes required training in the use of the SAFE tool for those approving foster care licenses and adoptive homes.

## **BACKGROUND**

2015 WI Act 378 requires DCF to establish a standardized assessment, commonly referred to as a "home study", for licensing a home for foster care and approval of adoption. This requirement applies to all county and private child placing agencies. Use of a standardized assessment is intended to strengthen the evaluation of prospective foster and adoptive parents. The Department has established the use of the SAFE home study assessment as the standardized assessment tool.

The SAFE home study assessment is a standardized home study developed by the Consortium for Children. The SAFE home study assists agencies in performing a thorough, structured, and uniform evaluation of families who have applied to become foster or adoptive parents. The SAFE home study assists in identifying and addressing strengths and areas of concern that may impede functioning, as well as parenting abilities.

## **POLICY AND PROCEDURE REQUIREMENTS**

Beginning on October 1, 2016, the use of the SAFE home study assessment is required for all foster care licensing in Wisconsin and as the evaluation to determine the suitability of the home for a child who is the subject of an adoption. As specified in Act 378, the requirement for a standardized home study applies to all public and private adoptions in Wisconsin, whether the child is a U.S. or foreign citizen. The new requirement does not apply to an adoption by a stepparent for which other screening standards are

required under current law. Emergency and Permanent Administrative Rules and policy changes regarding SAFE home study procedures and requirements are under development.

## **TRAINING REQUIREMENTS**

Use of the SAFE home study assessment requires that anyone who will be administering, approving, and supervising the SAFE home study attend mandatory training. Agencies may not begin using the SAFE home study tool until both the agency's foster care licensing or adoption approving caseworker(s) and supervisor(s), who will be administering and approving the SAFE home study, have attended the mandatory SAFE training. The required SAFE trainings are as follows:

### Mandatory Two-Day Initial SAFE Training

The two-day initial SAFE training provides participants with an overview of the SAFE instrument, allows for discussion of how the SAFE home study works within our current system, and teaches participants about the process and format of the SAFE home study and home study updates. Additionally, all participants will receive the SAFE Desk Guide and Workbook, be given access to all SAFE forms and templates, and receive continued technical and clinical support.

The two-day initial SAFE training is required for:

- All caseworkers who will be licensing a home for foster care and/or approving a home for adoption.
- All supervisors who will be approving the SAFE home study.

### Mandatory SAFE Supervisors Training

The SAFE supervisors training is targeted to supervisors who are responsible for the on-going supervision of home studies. This is a one-day training which provides guidance as to how to supervise SAFE in the most effective manner. The training also provides direction for the supervision of SAFE, as well as tips, support, and suggestions to make the process efficient. The supervisors training will not focus on what the SAFE Instrument is, but will focus on how to supervise SAFE. Participants are asked to bring their SAFE Desk Guide with them to the supervisors training.

All participants of the supervisors training are required to complete the SAFE 2-day initial training prior to completing the supervisors training. Supervisors need to have an understanding of the SAFE instrument, especially the Desk Guide Ratings, the Psychosocial Inventory and the Mitigation Process, which they receive in the two-day initial training. Additionally, supervisors need to have their own set of materials (i.e. the SAFE Desk Guide & Workbook), as well as access to the SAFE forms and templates; these materials are available only through the two-day training.

The SAFE supervisors training is required for:

- All supervisors who will be approving the SAFE home study.

### Optional SAFE Booster Training

The SAFE booster training is an *optional* training that is available to all foster care licensing and adoption approving caseworkers and supervisors who have completed the two-day initial training, but would like a refresher on the SAFE process. All participants in the booster training must have completed the two-day initial training. Participants are asked to bring their SAFE Desk Guide with them to the booster training.

The booster training will review:

- Improvements that have been made to SAFE.
- How to administer Questionnaire I and II.
- How to use the SAFE Desk Guide and Psychosocial Inventory.
- The SAFE Mitigation Process.

- How to write a SAFE Home Study.
- Support and resources that are available to SAFE Home Study practitioners.

**TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES**

The following training opportunities are available for foster care licensing and adoption approving caseworkers and supervisors who are in need of the SAFE training:

Two-Day Initial SAFE Training		SAFE Supervisor’s Training		SAFE Booster Training	
Date	Location	Date	Location	Date	Location
May 17-18, 2016	Wisconsin Dells	May 19, 2016	Wisconsin Dells	June 10, 2016	Milwaukee
June 7-8, 2016	Milwaukee	June 9, 2016	Milwaukee	June 24, 2016	Stevens Point
June 21-22, 2016	Stevens Point	June 23, 2016	Stevens Point	July 15, 2016	Wisconsin Dells
July 12-13, 2016	Wisconsin Dells	July 14, 2016	Wisconsin Dells		
July 26-27, 2016	Eau Claire	July 28, 2016	Eau Claire		
August 9-10, 2016	Milwaukee	August 11, 2016	Milwaukee		
August 23-24, 2016	Appleton	August 25, 2016	Appleton		

Foster care licensing and adoption approving caseworkers and supervisors must register for the SAFE training through PDS Online. PDS Online will provide the venue of the training, as well as the training start and end times.

**ACTION SUMMARY**

Effective October 1, 2016, the use of the SAFE home study assessment is required when licensing a home for foster care and adoption approval.

All counties, child placing agencies, and the DMCPS are required to comply with all of the requirements set forth in this memo.

REGIONAL OFFICE CONTACT: DCF Area Administrator

CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT: Out-of-Home Care Specialist  
Bureau of Permanency and Out-of-Home Care  
(608) 422-6937

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