


To: DCF Area Administrators
Child Placing Agency Directors
Child Welfare Agency Directors
County Departments of Community Programs 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: Non-Profit Volunteer Host Families

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to inform counties and partner agencies of the ability, under 2015 WI Act 55, to engage and utilize nonprofit volunteer programs and host families for the placement of children whose parents or guardians have agreed to participate in such programs.

BACKGROUND

2015 Wisconsin Act 55 Sec. 9106 (2e) requires the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families to establish a plan for engaging and using nonprofit volunteer programs to place children, with parent or guardian consent, in homes of volunteer host families that are not required to be licensed under Wisconsin Statute section 48.62(2).

INFORMATION SUMMARY

Wisconsin Statute section 48.62(2) provides that: A relative, a guardian of a child, or a person delegated care and custody of a child under section 48.979 who provides care and maintenance for the child is not required to obtain the license specified in this section.

Non-profit volunteer host families are a potential resource for families who are not under ch. 48 or 938 court orders, including families who have reports that are screened out, families whose cases are closed after initial assessment, or families seeking to do a parental delegation under s. 48.979 Wis. Stats. While the children in these families may be safe, the family may be facing stressors and may find the use of a volunteer host family helpful. Counties and partner agencies should consider providing information about local non-profit volunteer host families, along with other resources, to families they have contact with, but are not formally involved in the child welfare system. Information regarding the use of non-profit volunteer host families that is provided to families should clearly state the family has the discretion to decide whether to access the resource, that any arrangement between the birth family and a host family is voluntary, and that public child welfare agency oversight is not provided.

For families subject to CHIPS, TPR, JIPS, delinquency, guardianship orders or certain other ch. 48 or 938 orders as specified in section 48.979(1)(bm), non-profit volunteer host families may only be used as approved by the juvenile court.

Volunteer host family homes are not subject to foster home licensing requirements in section 48.62 (2) for children under their care through a parental delegation of authority as provided under section 48.977. Therefore, Department of Children and Family Services is not providing oversight to these programs, services, and homes.

Consistent with DCF policy, relatives or licensed foster homes and facilities should be utilized for court-ordered out-of-home care placements, whenever possible. If a county or partner agency uses a volunteer host home for a court-ordered placement via a parental delegation under section 48.979, there must be parent or guardian consent for the placement as provided under section 48.979 and court approval. A county or partner agency may also use an unlicensed volunteer host home with court approval and without a section 48.979 parental delegation just as it can make other temporary unlicensed placements under Wisconsin Statute section 48.207(1)(f), 48.345(3)(b), 938.207(1)(f), 938.34(3)(b) or 938.345(1). These placements are labeled as unlicensed non-relative placements. The placements may be for up to 30 days with an additional 30 day extension, as prescribed by law.

CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT: Permanency Program Planner
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(608) 422-6943

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