To: DCF/DMCPS Administrator
   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: 2017 Wisconsin Act 260: Foster Parent Grants

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to inform county agencies, tribal agencies, and non-profit organizations of a grant opportunity to support foster parents and normalcy opportunities for children in out-of-home care set forth in 2017 Wisconsin Act 260 as enacted as part of the Speaker’s Task Force on Foster Care legislative package.

BACKGROUND

In June 2017, Speaker Robin Vos (R-Rochester) formed the Speaker’s Task Force on Foster Care. The bipartisan group of legislators was tasked with developing ideas to improve the child welfare system in Wisconsin.

In November 2017, the Speaker’s Task Force on Foster Care introduced its legislative package which was titled “Foster Forward.” Eleven of the bills in the Foster Forward legislative package were passed and signed into law in April 2018. A brief summary of all of these and other state child welfare-related legislation passed in the 2017-18 legislative session is provided in DSP Informational Memo 2018-13i issued in April.

This memo provides more detailed information on one of the Foster Forward Acts, 2017 Wisconsin Act 260, which provides a grant opportunity to county agencies, tribal agencies, and non-profit organizations to support foster parents and normalcy opportunities for children in out-of-home care.

INFORMATION SUMMARY

2017 Wisconsin Act 260 provides $400,000 in funding in state fiscal year 2019 to the Department of Children and Families for grants to provide to county agencies, tribal agencies, and non-profit organizations to support foster parents and normalcy activities for children in out-of-home care.

The grant opportunity is open to all county agencies, tribal agencies, and non-profit organizations. Agencies may apply for a grant up to $75,000 in funding in one of the following three topic areas:
- Incentives for the retention of foster parents;
- Foster parent training activities; or
- Reimbursement to foster parents for foster care related expenses that allow for normalcy opportunities for children in out-of-home care.

Costs related to the retention of relative and/or non-relative foster parents may include, but are not limited to, the following activities:
- Respite for foster parents.
- Foster parent support groups.
- Closet or pantry for placement needs such as diapers, clothing in varying sizes, and other non-perishable items that foster parents may utilize at the time of placement.
- Sending greeting cards and gift cards to foster parents on their birthdays, on other significant dates, or to say “thank you.”
- Foster parent appreciation events, such as a foster parent banquet, picnics, etc.
- Hosting a family day for foster families at a waterpark, local ballgame, movie theatre, etc.
- Offering a “date night” for foster parents and providing them with childcare.
- Organizing and partnering with community groups to support foster families, which may include making meals, providing needed items for families accepting emergency placements (i.e. groceries, diapers, formula, clothes, etc.), and check-ins with new foster families.

Allowable costs for reimbursement to foster parents for expenses that allow for normalcy opportunities for children in out-of-home care are outlined in the, DCF-P-PFS0042, Uniform Foster Care Rate Setting Policy, https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/publications. Reimbursement for expenses that allow for normalcy opportunities shall reimburse the share of the exceptional payment made by the agency with placement and care responsibility, or extraordinary payment costs requested by a private child placing agency.

Reimbursement for foster parent training expenses under the grant shall not be used to supplant the current foster parent training structure, which allows for reimbursement through the Title IV-E Foster Parent Training Pass-Through or the administrative rate provided to private child placing agencies. Reimbursement for foster parent training expenses shall exceed the reimbursement received through the current foster parent training structure.

One-time foster parent grant funding is being awarded via a competitive grant process for the purpose of supporting counties, tribes, and non-profit organizations to implement new activities that they would not otherwise be able to accomplish without financial assistance. The Department will review grant applications and grants will be awarded to those agencies that thoroughly provide the information requested in the attached grant application. Agencies may apply for a grant up to $75,000 in funding to support the development of new activities.

Agencies may apply for grant funding to reimburse for qualifying expenses under more than one of the three topic areas. Agencies need not request reimbursement for each qualifying expense, if the agency does not intend to participate in activities under that category.

The attached Foster Parent Grant application packet specifies the grant requirements, including information on each of the three topic areas. Agency activities must contribute to the ongoing improvement and success related to support of foster parents and normalcy opportunities for children in out-of-home care. This is a one-time funding opportunity and grants must be spent by June 30, 2019.

In addition to a completed application and responses to the required questions, all approved applicants shall submit an exit summary to the Department by September 1, 2019 demonstrating the effectiveness of the use of the funds.

Reimbursement provided to agencies through the grant program shall be reimbursed up to $75,000, as funds allow, and up to $400,000 total statewide in state fiscal year 2019. Agencies that receive the grant shall allocate the funding they receive within state fiscal year 2019 and the funds shall be spent by June 30, 2019.

CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT: Out-of-Home Care Specialist
Bureau of Permanence and Out-of-Home Care
608-422-6937

MEMO WEB SITE: https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy
Attachments: Foster Parent Grant Program Application
June 8, 2018

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) invites applicants to apply for a Foster Parent Grant that will assist local efforts to support foster parents and normalcy opportunities for children in out-of-home care set forth in 2017 Wisconsin Act 260. 2017 Wisconsin Act 260 provides $400,000 in funding in state fiscal year 2019 to the Department of Children and Families for grants to provide to county agencies, tribal agencies, and non-profit organizations.

The grant opportunity is open to all county agencies, tribal agencies, and non-profit organizations. Agencies may apply for a grant up to $75,000 in funding in one of three provided topic areas:

1) Incentives for the retention of foster parents;
2) Foster parent training activities; or
3) Reimbursement to foster parents for foster care related expenses that allow for normalcy opportunities for children in out-of-home care.

This is a one-time funding opportunity and grants must be spent by June 30, 2019.

The attached application packet specifies the grant requirements, including information on each of the three topic areas. Agency activities must contribute to the ongoing improvement and success related to support of foster parents and normalcy opportunities for children in out-of-home care. In addition to a completed application and responses to the required questions, all applicants shall submit an exit summary to the Department by September 1, 2019 demonstrating the effectiveness of the use of the funds.

All applications must be completed and submitted to Lindsay Wood via lindsay.wood@wisconsin.gov no later than 5:00pm on July 15, 2018.

Thank you for considering this opportunity and for your commitment and efforts to support foster parents and children in out-of-home care in Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

Fredi-Ellen Bove
Administrator
Division of Safety and Permanence

cc: John Elliott
Ron Hermes
Jónelle Brom
Background and Purpose

In April 2018, the Governor signed into law 2017 Wisconsin Act 260, as part of the Speaker's Task Force on Foster Care legislative package. 2017 Wisconsin Act 260 provides $400,000 in funding in state fiscal year 2019 to the Department of Children and Families for grants to provide to county agencies, tribal agencies, and non-profit organizations to support foster parents and normalcy activities for children in out-of-home care.

One-time foster parent grant funding is being awarded via a competitive grant process for the purpose of supporting counties, tribes, and non-profit organizations to implement new activities that they would not otherwise be able to accomplish without financial assistance. The Department will review grant applications and grants will be awarded to those agencies that thoroughly provide the information requested in the grant application. Agencies may apply for a grant up to $75,000 in funding to support the development of new activities. All counties, tribes, and non-profit organizations (hereafter referred to as “agencies”) are eligible to apply.

Reimbursement provided to agencies through the grant program shall be reimbursed up to $75,000, as funds allow, and up to $400,000 total statewide in state fiscal year 2019. Agencies that receive the grant shall allocate the funding they receive within state fiscal year 2019 and the funds shall be spent by June 30, 2019.

Topic Areas for Activities

Qualifying expenses under the grant may include:
1) Incentives for the retention of foster parents;
2) Foster parent training activities; or
3) Reimbursement to foster parents for foster care related expenses that allow for normalcy opportunities for children in out-of-home care.

Agencies may apply for grant funding to reimburse for qualifying expenses under more than one of the three topic areas.

1) Incentives for the retention of foster parents
The current Wisconsin administrative rule for foster parent licensing, Ch. DCF 56, requires licensing agencies to provide general support to foster parents; encourage peer support among foster parents; and inform foster parents of available supports.

In addition, the most effective resource for recruitment of new foster homes is individuals who themselves have had a positive experience fostering. When licensed foster parents speak positively about foster care in their communities to interested families, friends, neighbors, and community members, others are encouraged to become licensed foster parents as well.

One of the main mechanisms to ensure licensed foster parents have a positive experience fostering is to provide sufficient support to those foster families. Retention activities may take many forms, some require increased efforts and costs, while others require minimal effort and cost.

Activities related to the retention of foster parents may include, but are not limited to, the following activities:
• Respite for foster parents.
• Foster parent support groups.
• Closet or pantry for placement needs such as diapers, clothing in varying sizes, and other non-perishable items that foster parents may utilize at the time of placement.
• Sending greeting cards and gift cards to foster parents on their birthdays, on other significant dates, or to say “thank you.”
• Foster parent appreciation events, such as a foster parent banquet, picnics, etc.
• Hosting a family day for foster families at a waterpark, local ballgame, movie theatre, etc.
• Offering a “date night” for foster parents and providing them with childcare.
• Organizing and partnering with community groups to support foster families, which may include making
meals, providing needed items for families accepting emergency placements (i.e. groceries, diapers, formula, clothes, etc.), and check-ins with new foster families.

2) Foster parent training activities
The current Wisconsin administrative rule for foster parent licensing, Ch. DCF 56, requires foster parents to complete Pre-Placement, Initial Licensing, and Ongoing Training in accordance with their Level of Care certification. In addition, licensing agencies shall provide, arrange, and approve the required pre-placement, initial, and ongoing training for foster parents.

Reimbursement for foster parent training expenses under the grant shall not be used to supplant the current foster parent training structure, which allows for training through the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPD), reimbursement through the Title IV-E Foster Parent Training Pass-Through or the administrative rate provided to private child placing agencies for foster parent training. Reimbursement for foster parent training expenses shall exceed the reimbursement received through the current foster parent training structure.

3) Reimbursement for normalcy opportunities for children in out-of-home care
Licensed foster parents are required to promote normalcy and the healthy development of a child placed in their home with a family-like environment that supports the child's participation in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities and have experiences that are similar to those of the child's peers.

Children in out-of-home care have the right to have a normal childhood or adolescence, and the individuals involved in their lives are responsible for creating as much normalcy as possible. The Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard requires all foster parents to apply the Standard when making decisions about children placed in out-of-home care to allow them to participate in age and developmentally appropriate activities.

Allowable costs for reimbursement to foster parents for expenses that allow for normalcy opportunities for children in out-of-home care are outlined in the Uniform Foster Care Rate Setting Policy, https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/fc/pdf/ufcr-settingpolicy.pdf. Reimbursement for expenses that allow for normalcy opportunities shall reimburse the share of the exceptional payment made by the agency with placement and care responsibility, or extraordinary payment costs requested by a private child placing agency and paid by the agency with placement and care responsibility.

Partnership with Other Agencies
Agencies may apply in partnership with other agencies, including other county or tribal agencies, or non-profit organizations, by submitting one application with one or more partners listed. One agency must be identified as the lead agency and fiscal agent.

Grant Funding Topic Areas
Agencies may apply for grant funding to reimburse for qualifying expenses under more than one of the three topic areas, if appropriate. Agencies do not need to request reimbursement for each topic area, if the agency does not intend to participate in activities under that category.

Contracts
Once qualifying expenses under the foster parent grant have been approved by the Bureau of Permanence and Out-of-Home Care in the Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP), agencies or organizations will be issued a new contract for the grant reimbursement. For entities that are already receiving funds from DCF, a separate SPARC line will be established for the grant reimbursement.

The new contract will be issued by DSP. Fiscal information will be needed annually and the amount identified in the agency fiscal information will set the reimbursement limit for that contract year.

New contracts will be issued for fiscal year 2019 effective back to July 1, 2018 for allowable expenses for the foster parent grant program already provided in fiscal year 2019 that meets the requirements for the grant reimbursement program.
All reimbursement will be based on expenses reported to DCF through the SPARC system. No contract advances will be made to agencies for this program.

Reimbursement provided to agencies through the grant program shall be reimbursed up to $75,000, as funds allow, and no more than $400,000 total statewide. Agencies that receive the grant shall allocate the funding they receive in state fiscal year 2019 and the funds shall be spent by June 30, 2019.

Exit Summary

By September 1, 2019, agencies that receive the grant shall submit an exit summary to the Department that includes all of the following:

1) How the agency used the grant funding to meet its intended purpose.
2) The total associated cost to the agency for activities provided under the grant.
3) The effectiveness of the activities as measured by the agency, which includes agency data specific to:
   a. If the agency requested grant funding to improve foster home retention:
      i. Specific retention activities provided by the agency.
      ii. Number of foster homes licensed by the agency, as of July 1, 2018.
      iii. Number of foster homes licensed by the agency, as of June 30, 2019.
      iv. Average length of licensure of foster homes with the agency, as of June 30, 2019.
      v. Average length of licensure of foster homes with the agency, as of July 1, 2018.
   b. If the agency requested grant funding to provide foster parent training, the total cost to the agency to provide foster parent training that exceeded the reimbursement received through the current foster parent training structure.
   c. If the agency requested grant funding to provide normalcy activities, the total cost of normalcy activities that the agency reimbursed through the Uniform Foster Care Rate, or extraordinary payment costs requested by a private child placing agency, after the conclusion of the grant.

Timeline for Award and Use of Funds

Successful applicants will be notified in August 2018, with an anticipated contract start date of July 1, 2018. The funds shall be used by June 30, 2019.

Application Instructions:

➢ An agency may apply for one grant only, up to $75,000.
➢ Complete the set of questions corresponding to the topic area of your proposed plan.
➢ Limit your response to six single-spaced pages. Use a minimum of 11 pt. font with 1 inch margins.
➢ Please label your responses to indicate which question and sub-question is being addressed.

All applications must be completed and submitted to Lindsay Wood via lindsay.wood@wisconsin.gov no later than 5:00pm on July 15, 2018. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

An application shall not be considered complete until all of the below information is submitted to the Department.
**Foster Parent Grant Application**

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<tr>
<th>Lead agency:</th>
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If applying in partnership, please list the partnering agency(ies) and which agency will be the fiscal agent:

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<th>Agency mailing address:</th>
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<td>Street</td>
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<tr>
<th>Contact person for this proposal:</th>
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<td>Name</td>
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<th>Contact information for point of contact:</th>
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List the amount of money for which you are applying (up to $75,000):

Indicate which topic area your plan addresses (choose all that apply):

- [ ] Incentives for the retention of foster parents (Questions on p.6)
- [ ] Foster parent training expenses (Questions on p.7)
- [ ] Reimbursement for expenses that allow for normalcy opportunities for children in out-of-home care (Questions on p.8)

Complete the set of questions that correspond to the area under which your plan fits. Limit your response to six single-spaced pages. Use a minimum of 11 pt. font with 1 inch margins. Label your responses to indicate which question and sub-question is being addressed.
**Incentives for Foster Parent Retention Questions**

1. Describe the proposed plan and activities. This shall include, at a minimum:
   a. The overall goal of the plan and activities, and the general outcomes sought;
   b. The target population the plan will serve;
   c. The key activities of the plan;
   d. How the activities will achieve the goals and outcomes; and
   e. An overview of how the agency will use the level of funding sought, up to $75,000.

2. Describe how the proposed plan will improve foster parent retention. This shall include, how the activities will meet the intended goal to improve retention.

3. The associated cost to the agency to implement the activities described under number one above. The associated costs shall be specific to the activity the agency is engaging in.

4. List the agency’s key collaborators, such as community partners, and the roles they will serve, if applicable.

5. Measures for how the agency will track and assess the effectiveness of the activities. At a minimum, this shall include agency data specific to:
   a. The number of foster homes licensed by the agency and the average length of licensure with the agency.
   b. The projected increase to the average length of time general licensed foster homes remain licensed with the agency in state fiscal year 2019.
   c. How the agency will track and measure an increase in foster home retention.
Foster Parent Training Expenses Questions

1. Describe the proposed plan. This shall include, at a minimum:
   a. The overall goal of the plan and activities, and the general outcomes sought;
   b. The target population the plan will serve;
   c. The key activities of the plan;
   d. How the activities will achieve the goals and outcomes; and
   e. An overview of how the agency will use the level of funding sought, up to $75,000.

2. Describe how the proposed plan will allow the agency to provide foster parent training that exceeds the reimbursement received through the current foster parent training structure.

3. The associated cost to the agency to implement the activities described under number one above. The associated costs shall be specific to the activity the agency is engaging in.

4. Describe how the grant funding will allow the agency to meet the intended goals of foster parent training as described in Ch. DCF 56.14 Admin. Code. Specifically, describe how it will:
   a. Improve the quality of care provided to children who live in foster or adoptive homes;
   b. Prepare foster and adoptive families to care for and provide stability for foster children in their homes;
   c. Promote communication, respect, and understanding among all involved parties, with a focus on working for the best interests of the foster child;
   d. Provide opportunities to foster parents to mutually explore their values, strengths, limitations, and needs as they relate to compatibility with foster and adoptive children;
   e. Develop an understanding of the child welfare system and the importance of permanency for children; and
   f. Encourage foster and adoptive parent networking and the use of resources.

5. List the agency's key collaborators, such as community partners, and the roles they will serve, if applicable.

6. Measures for how the agency will track and assess the effectiveness of the activities. At a minimum, this shall include agency data specific to:
   a. The current cost to the agency to provide foster parent training.
   b. The projection for the increase in cost to the agency in state fiscal year 2019 to provide foster parent training that exceeds the reimbursement received through the current foster parent training structure.
   c. How the agency will track and measure the frequency and cost of foster parent training.
Normalcy Opportunities for Children in Out-of-Home Care Questions

1. Describe the proposed plan. This shall include, at a minimum:
   a. The overall goal of the plan and activities, and the general outcomes sought;
   b. The target population the plan will serve;
   c. The key activities of the plan;
   d. How the activities will achieve the goals and outcomes; and
   e. An overview of how the agency will use the level of funding sought, up to $75,000.

2. Describe how the proposed plan will allow foster parents to provide normalcy opportunities for children placed in their homes.

3. The associated cost to the agency to implement the activities described under number one above. The associated costs shall be specific to the activity the child is engaging in.

4. Describe how the grant funding will allow foster parents to provide normalcy opportunities for children placed in their homes as described in Ch. DCF 56.09 Admin. Code. Specifically, describe how it will:
   a. Create and promote normalcy for children placed in out-of-home care;
   b. Improve the well-being of children placed in out-of-home care and allow them to develop and normalize relationships; and
   c. Encourage personal growth of children placed in out-of-home care.

5. List the agency’s key collaborators, such as community partners, and the roles they will serve, if applicable.

6. Measures for how the agency will track and assess the effectiveness of the activities. At a minimum, this shall include agency data specific to:
   a. The total cost of normalcy activities that the agency currently reimburses through the Uniform Foster Care Rate, or total extraordinary payment costs requested by a private child placing agency, to reimburse for normalcy opportunities.
   b. The projected costs for state fiscal year 2019 to reimburse for normalcy opportunities.
   c. How the agency will track and measure the cost to reimburse for normalcy opportunities for children placed in out-of-home care.
Eligibility for a Foster Parent Grant requires consent to the criteria below. Please check each box to acknowledge agency acceptance of these terms.

☐ Agreement to commit the time of the necessary staff to accomplish the plan and its intended outcomes, as described above.

☐ Agreement to submit agency exit summary by September 1, 2019.

☐ Agreement to participate in plan evaluation activities.

☐ The agency has reviewed and approved the content of this application.

_________________________________________  __________________________
Authorized Agency Authority - Name                                           Date

_________________________________________
Authorized Agency Authority – Signature