

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: Wendy Henderson 
Administrator

Re: Foster Home Recruitment Activities

PURPOSE

Wisconsin continues to be experiencing high numbers of children entering and remaining in out-of-home care due to a number of factors, including the rise in opioid abuse, which disproportionately impacts younger children. As a result, child welfare agencies continue to struggle to identify and recruit enough foster homes to meet the need. In addition, Foster Care Coordinators are experiencing an increase in their workload related to relative placements and licensure due to more children in out-of-home care living with relatives. In many counties, Foster Care Coordinators have other responsibilities, such as serving as ongoing caseworkers and Kinship Care workers. As a result, child welfare agencies are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit a sufficient number of new foster homes on their own.

BACKGROUND

There are approximately 5,600 foster homes and 2,050 Kinship Care homes serving approximately 7,829 foster care and Kinship Care placements statewide. There are 124 agencies that license foster homes throughout Wisconsin. Of these 124 agencies, there are 72 counties, 41 private child placing agencies, and 11 tribes, licensing foster homes.

The current Wisconsin administrative rule for foster parent licensing, Ch. DCF 56, requires licensing agencies to recruit a pool of foster parents: who are interested in and capable of working with the types of children who are commonly placed by that agency; assess and screen families who are interested in becoming foster parents; and develop foster homes to meet the needs of a specifically identified child in need of placement.

There are three different types of foster home recruitment: general, targeted, and child specific. Child welfare agencies often struggle the most with recruiting targeted and general foster homes. There are current resources and supports throughout the state to assist agencies with general, targeted, and child specific recruitment, such as assistance from the State Permanency Consultants, the Geographic Placement Resource System, and the Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center (FCARC) managed by the Coalition for Children, Youth, and Families.

The most effective resource for recruitment is individuals who themselves have had a positive experience

fostering. When licensed foster parents speak positively about foster care in their communities to other interested families, friends, neighbors, and community members, others are encouraged to become licensed foster parents as well.

The information below will assist agencies in recruitment of new foster homes.

INFORMATION SUMMARY

To assist foster home licensing agencies in recruiting qualified foster parents, the Department implemented a series of recruitment activities during fiscal years 2018 & 2019. The recruitment series has two components, as described in DSP Informational Memo Series 2017-29j, Foster Home Recruitment Activities, <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy>. These activities will continue in fiscal year 2020.

To continue to support these efforts, one-time foster parent recruitment grant funding is being awarded for the purpose of supporting counties, tribes, and private Child Placing Agencies who participated in the recruitment series in fiscal years 2018 or 2019 or any new series in fiscal year 2020. Agencies may apply for a grant to support the recruitment of new foster homes. All counties, tribes, and private Child Placing Agencies who participated in the recruitment series in fiscal years 2018 or 2019 and any new series in fiscal year 2020 (hereafter referred to as “agencies”) are eligible to apply.

As part of the recruitment series and activities, the Department will provide licensing agencies reimbursement funds for costs incurred by their licensed foster parents who participate in recruitment activities.

Qualifying expenses under the grant may include foster parent:

- 1) Time;
- 2) Travel;
- 3) Childcare costs; and
- 4) Mileage.

Agencies shall determine the amount of the stipend to provide to their licensed foster parents who participate, up to \$50 per hour, for their time. Reimbursement for the costs of travel, childcare, and mileage shall be for the actual costs incurred and shall not exceed the state rate for these expenses. The state rate is detailed on the State of Wisconsin Pocket Travel Guide, <https://dpm.wi.gov/Documents/BCER/Compensation/PocketTravelGuide.pdf>. Agencies will be reimbursed through their SPARC contract with the Department.

Reimbursement provided to agencies through the grant program shall be reimbursed as funds allow in state fiscal year 2020. Agency applicants may receive full or partial approval, or may be denied, as funds allow. Agencies that receive the grant shall allocate the funding they receive within state fiscal year 2020 and the funds shall be spent by June 30, 2020.

Agencies shall apply for reimbursement for recruitment activities on the attached application. Applications for state fiscal year 2020 will be accepted until June 28, 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, 2020, demonstrating the effectiveness of the use of the funds.

In addition, the Department will continue to support child welfare agencies in their recruitment of new licensed foster homes by providing licensed foster parents with a gift card with a value of \$100 for successfully recruiting new licensed foster parents. This is open to any foster parent licensed by a public, private, or tribal licensing agency. Foster parents are the greatest recruiter of new foster parents. Foster parents who successfully recruit new foster parents throughout the state will receive a gift card with a \$100 value from the Department.

Newly licensed foster parents recruited through a licensed foster home will complete and submit postcards to the Department, which will identify the foster parent(s) who recruited them. The postcards can be submitted to the Department through the mail on pre-addressed and postage pre-paid postcards. The Department will monitor the submission of the cards on a monthly basis. Once a new foster parent is successfully licensed and the postcard is submitted, upon verification by the Department of foster home licensure, the Department will provide a monetary reward to the licensed foster parent who recruited the licensed foster home. It is important to note that the newly licensed foster parent does not need to become licensed by the same agency as the foster parent recruiter; but can become licensed by any agency in the state to care for children in the public child welfare system.

CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT: Out-of-Home Care Specialist
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MEMO WEB SITE: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy>

LINKS: Foster Home Recruitment Activities
 <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/memos/2017-29i.pdf>

 State of Wisconsin Pocket Travel Guide
 <https://dpm.wi.gov/Documents/BCER/Compensation/PocketTravelGuide.pdf>

 Foster Parent Recruitment Grant Application
 <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/fc/doc/recruitment-grant-application.docx>