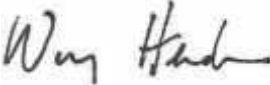


To: DCF/DMCPS Administrator
DCF Area Administrators
Child Placing Agency Directors
Child Welfare Agency Directors
County Departments of Community Programs Directors
County Departments of Human Services Directors
County Departments of Social Services Directors
Group Home Providers
Tribal Social Service/Indian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

From: Wendy Henderson
Administrator 

Re: **Chapter DCF 58- Kinship Care Revisions**

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to notify County and Tribal agencies of updates to Kinship Care policy and to provide the new requirements adopted by Permanent Rule for Ch. DCF 58, effective Nov. 1, 2020.

BACKGROUND

The current kinship care and long-term kinship care rule has not been significantly updated since it was created almost 20 years ago. The rule repeals and recreates the kinship care and long-term kinship care rule to modernize program administration, add specificity, clarify requirements, improve consistency among local agencies, and incorporate statutory updates.

SUMMARY OF RULE UPDATES

Unified Organization of the Rule

The rule is organized into 3 subchapters: general provisions, provisions applicable to the kinship care program only, and provisions applicable to the long-term kinship care program only. The rule creates a single section that lists all of the eligibility conditions for both kinship care and long-term kinship care. Other sections of the rule provide further detail for the more complex eligibility conditions. Differences in detail between kinship care and long-term kinship care are noted throughout the rule where applicable.

Efficient and Consistent Program Administration

The rule includes a number of provisions that will ease the workload of kinship care agencies and provide a more consistent experience for relative caregivers throughout the state, including the following:

- Eliminating the requirement for additional agency-specific policies other than waiting list priorities.
- Requiring the use of forms prescribed by the department throughout the rule.
- Consolidating most agency procedures into a single section of the rule.
- Specifying home visit evaluation standards.
- Requiring a single application if a relative caregiver is applying for payments for more than one child at the same time.
- Simplifying eligibility determination if a relative caregiver is applying for payments for a new child within 6 months after the kinship care agency determined that the relative caregiver was eligible to receive payments for a different child.
- Ensuring that kinship care payments continue when a family moves to a different county within the state of WI.
- Allowing the kinship care agency to presume that living with the relative caregiver is in the best interests of the child if the agency is determining the relative caregiver's eligibility for long-term kinship care or voluntary kinship care and a court order or voluntary transition-to-independent-living agreement placing the child in the relative caregiver's home expired or was terminated within the previous 6 months.

e-WISACWIS ALIGNMENT

Wisconsin's electronic automated child welfare information systems (eWISACWIS) was updated on October 17, 2020 to reflect certain enhanced capacity or documenting and determining kinship care eligibility.

DCF 58 requires that a kinship care agency with access to the eWISACWIS system enter any information related to a relative caregiver's eligibility into the eWISACWIS system within 5 working days of making any decision related to eligibility. Agencies that do not have access to the eWISACWIS system will be required to document eligibility decisions by completing a form prescribed by the Department and obtaining and retaining supporting documentation as necessary.

Documentation in eWISACWIS will allow for increased efficiency when families move to an area of the state served by a different kinship care agency, as agencies will not need to duplicate work that already exists in SACWIS. If the kinship care agency serving either the relative caregiver's old or new residence does not have access to the eWISACWIS system or record, the rule requires that the agency serving the relative caregiver's old residence transfer eligibility documentation to the agency serving the relative caregiver's new residence. Tribal kinship care agencies do not have access to the eWISACWIS system.

ACTION SUMMARY

Kinship Care agencies are required to start implementation of these updates by the Permanent Rule for Ch. DCF 58, effective date of Nov. 1, 2020.

All training and reference material have been updated to reflect the updated Ch. DCF 58 Admin Code. DSP provided virtual training throughout the fall to prepare agencies for the above changes.

REGIONAL OFFICE CONTACT: DCF Area Administrator

CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT: Kinship Care Specialist
Bureau of Permanence and Out-of-Home Care
Out-of-Home Care Section
608-422-6921

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

ATTACHMENT LINKS: Chapter DCF 58 – Kinship Care and Long-Term Kinship Care
https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/dcf/021_099/58