

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: **Uniform Foster Care Rate eWiSACWIS Enhancements**

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to inform child welfare agencies of enhancements in the June 2021 eWiSACWIS release to the foster care rate page. The changes to the foster care rate page will specifically impact documentation of the exceptional rate justification.

BACKGROUND

All licensed foster parents receive a foster care payment to support the care of a foster child placed in their home, called the Uniform Foster Care Rate (UFCR). The UFCR is composed of the basic maintenance, supplemental, and exceptional rates. All components of the UFCR are designed to maintain the child in the foster home. All licensed foster parents are eligible for the basic maintenance rate. Only licensed foster parents certified as a level 2 or higher are eligible for the supplemental and exceptional payments.

The basic maintenance rate is a statutorily set dollar amount by the state legislature. This rate is based on the age of the foster child and is intended to cover food, clothing, housing, basic transportation, personal care, and other expenses on a monthly basis.

The supplemental rate is an additional monthly payment based on the emotional, behavioral, and physical needs of the foster child and is provided for those needs that exceed typical child development and expectations covered by the basic maintenance rate.

The exceptional rate is a payment to support the care of a foster child with a level of need that is above and beyond what is covered by the basic and supplemental portions of the foster care rate. The amount of the exceptional rate is determined by the agency with placement and care responsibility and is provided to support the child's placement in a foster home in order to prevent placement in a more restrictive setting. The exceptional rate may reimburse foster parents for the following:

- to enable the child to be placed or remain in a foster home instead of being placed or remaining in a more restrictive setting;
- to enable the placement of siblings or minor parent and minor children together;
- to assist with transportation to the school the child was attending prior to placement in out-of-home care;
- to replace a child's basic wardrobe that has been lost or destroyed in a manner other than normal wear and tear; and
- for a child placed in a foster home before February 21, 2011, and who remains placed in that foster home, to equalize the total payment amount lost by the child's foster parent due to the implementation of the method of determining supplemental payments.

Justification for the exceptional rate must be documented on the foster care rate page in eWiSACWIS. Only expenses that are allowable under Title IV-E may be reimbursed through the exceptional rate (Section 475(4)(A) of the Social Security Act lists the scope of foster parent costs that are reimbursable under Title IV-E).

To ensure that only allowable expenses are reimbursed through the exceptional rate, the department has contracted with MAXIMUS to provide monitoring and oversight of allowable costs documented in eWiSACWIS. Each month, MAXIMUS reviews all foster care rates and identifies any exceptional costs that are unallowable. If improper justification is found, MAXIMUS contacts the foster care rate setter at the local child welfare agency to ensure the rate(s) is corrected. This process of correction requires that the foster care rate be "made in error" and re-entered with the correct justification.

More information about the Uniform Foster Care Rate can be found in the Uniform Foster Care Rate Setting Policy and the Understanding the Uniform Foster Care Rate brochure.

POLICY AND PROCEDURE REQUIREMENTS

The June 2021 eWiSACWIS release will include an enhancement to streamline and improve documentation of justification for the exceptional rate by requiring the user to select pre-determined categories for allowable expenses. The enhancement, which is described below, will improve the documentation of the exceptional rate and will reduce the number of errors that must be corrected.

eWiSACWIS DOCUMENTATION

Beginning on June 19, 2021, eWiSACWIS will generate categories and subcategories for allowable exceptional rate costs. These categories, once selected, will provide a text box to

document the dollar amount being reimbursed under that category, as well as a narrative field which will display with pre-filled text. In addition, eWiSACWIS will automatically calculate the total exceptional rate based on the dollar amount that is documented within each category.

The following categories and subcategories will be added to eWiSACWIS:

- Equalization
- Minor parent/minor child placement
- Replacement of basic wardrobe
- Sibling placement
- Transportation to school of origin
- Least restrictive setting:
 - Foster parent supervision, time, and training (child has behavioral, emotional, or physical needs)
 - Personal incidentals – care needs:
 - Over-the-counter medications and special dietary foods
 - Hygiene and cosmetic supplies
 - Extra infant and toddler supplies, including highchairs and diapers
 - Personal incidentals – normalcy activities:
 - Driver’s education costs
 - College prep costs – ACT/SAT tests, application fees, etc.
 - Work-related costs (uniforms, etc.)
 - Reasonable and occasional costs of such items as tickets or other admission fees for sporting, entertainment, or cultural events, or dues for clubs
 - Transportation to:
 - Court hearings
 - Family interaction
 - Independent living skills: work or work-related training
 - Independent living skills: college visits
 - Meetings with caseworker/child welfare agency
 - Extra-curricular activities
 - WI Shares

Additional information about how to document the Uniform Foster Care Rate in eWiSACWIS can be found in the Foster Care Rate eWiSACWIS User Guide. A detailed description of the June 2021 release is described in the eWiSACWIS June 2021 Release Highlights.

ACTION SUMMARY

Effective June 19, 2021, eWiSACWIS will include categories and subcategories for the foster care exceptional rate to improve the process by which the exceptional rate is documented within eWiSACWIS.

REGIONAL OFFICE CONTACT: DCF Area Administrator

CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT: Out-of-Home Care Specialist
Bureau of Permanence and Out-of-Home Care
(414)270-4728
DCFDSPPGeneralFosterCare@wisconsin.gov

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

ATTACHMENTS: Uniform Foster Care Rate Setting Policy
<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/fc/pdf/ufcr-settingpolicy.pdf>

DCF-P-PFS0142: Understanding the Uniform Foster Care Rate brochure
English: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/0142.pdf>
Spanish: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/0142s.pdf>
Hmong: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/0142h.pdf>

Foster Care Rate eWiSACWIS User Guide
<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/ewisacwis-knowledge-web/quick-reference-guides/placement/foster-care-rate.pdf>

June 2021 eWiSACWIS Release Highlights
<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/ewisacwis-knowledge-web/release-notes/release-highlights-june-2021.pdf>