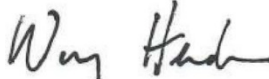




July 11, 2022

Child Welfare Licensing Memo Series 2022-18-lic
Supersedes Child Welfare Licensing Memo Series 2012-11L

To: Group Home Providers
Residential Care Center Providers
Shelter Care Providers
Private Child Placing Agencies

From: Wendy Henderson
Division Administrator 

Re: Use and Storage of Electronic Records

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to notify all licensed child welfare agencies of changes to the Department of Children and Families' policy regarding the use and storage of electronic records. This memo replaces Child Welfare Licensing (CWLS) Memo 2012-11L to reflect advancements in technology and security, and further clarifies the requirements for storage of electronic records.

BACKGROUND

All licensees are required to submit their agency's policies and procedures to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) pursuant to Wis. Admin. Code chs. DCF 52, DCF 57, DCF 59, and DCF 54. Submissions should be made to the agency's assigned child welfare licensing specialist.

INFORMATION SUMMARY

The proposed policies and procedures must be submitted to each agency's licensing specialist for review prior to implementation.

The policies and procedures must contain the following topic areas to ensure the safety and confidentiality of all electronic records.

Use of Electronic Records

- A description of how confidentiality will be maintained for the records
- An explanation of the process used to ensure the integrity of the data being entered into the electronic record
- Documentation identifying which staff will have access to the files and what type of access staff will have (example: read only access, access to edit all files or limited access to edit specific areas in the electronic file)
- An explanation of how shared passwords will be avoided – each user should have to authenticate as themselves to access the electronic records
- An explanation of how data will be time stamped to ensure integrity of the electronic records

- A description of the specific records that the agency intends to maintain electronically (Example: personnel, residents, foster children, foster home, or adoption files)
 - If only parts of the files are going to be electronically maintained, please describe which parts
- A description of how information may be shared electronically with a purchaser and what protections are put in place to ensure confidentiality of those records
- If certain agency staff will not have access to electronic files, a description of how these staff will be kept up to date on the child's progress, including records of treatment plans and progress notes
- A description of the process by which the agency will provide access to electronic records to the Department or for any other governmental agency that has authority to have access to the records at the time of the visit. The process should include:
 - Where [on the premises] the Department or other agencies will view the electronic records and which people within the agency will be assigned to facilitate the review
 - Whether electronic records will be read only for any records reviewed by others outside of your agency

Storage of Electronic Records

Agencies should also consider how electronic records will be stored, and may want to include the following in their policies and procedures:

- Encryption of electronic storage to protect the data in the event that the device is lost or stolen
- Prohibitions on record storage on personal devices; only devices owned and maintained by the agency should be used.
- Removal of access when no longer needed, such as in the event of termination of employment or change of responsibilities
- Cadence in which access will be reviewed on a regular basis
- Protection of personally identifiable information (PII) by not utilizing email for client information unless it is contained in an encrypted file
- Avoidance of shared passwords, and utilization of individual authentication to access the data
- Back-up process and firewall protection for the information stored

CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT: Child Welfare Strategic Initiatives Specialist
 Bureau of Permanence and Out of Home Care
DCFCWLR@wisconsin.gov

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

LINKS: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwlicensing/forms>