



September 9, 2022

Child Welfare Licensing Memo Series 2022-22-lic
Replaces Child Welfare Licensing Memo Series 2014-01L

To: Residential Care Center Providers

From: Wendy Henderson
Division Administrator *Wendy Henderson*

RE: Assessing Risk and Use of Restrictive Measures for Runaways at
Residential Care Centers

PURPOSE

This memo provides guidance to Residential Care Centers (RCC) for Children and Youth regarding children who run away from a RCC or leave staff supervision while off premises on a RCC sponsored activity. This memo outlines the risk screening process that should be completed with each child placed in a RCC facility and provides guidance on the use of restrictive measures when intervening in runaway behavior. This memo replaces Child Welfare Licensing Memo Series 2014-01L.

BACKGROUND

Wisconsin Admin. Code s. DCF 52.42(5) identifies specific parameters for emergency safety interventions, including physical restraint or physically enforced separation. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is updating its guidance specific to assessing risk and intervening in runaway behavior.

INFORMATION SUMMARY

Assessing Risk

Wisconsin Admin. Code s. DCF 52.21(2) requires RCCs to prepare an Admission Screening Report for each prospective resident. As part of this screening, the RCC should review a child's history of runaway behavior, and this history should be incorporated into the preadmission review included in the Admission Screening Report. The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool has a specific item and subcategories related to children who run away and may provide critical information for the Admission Screening Report, the child's assessment and treatment plan, and emergency intervention planning. The RCC should request and review the CANS report from the placing agency prior to each child's admission to the RCC. The RCC should request similar information from out-of-state placing agencies if the placing state does not use the CANS.

Children admitted to a RCC must have an assessment and treatment plan under Wis. Admin. Code s. DCF 52.22. The assessment and treatment plan must be child-specific in all areas including the runaway behavior section. All components of the treatment plan, including the runaway behavior section, should be reassessed during treatment plan reviews to determine whether the risk has been reduced or if new interventions need to be considered. All staff who work with the child should be made aware of the child's treatment plan and the steps to take if the child leaves the facility or leaves staff supervision when off premises.



Use of Restrictive Measures with Runaway Youth

For the safety and well-being of RCC residents and staff, and in accordance with Wis. Admin. Code s. DCF 52.42(5)(ae), DCF requires that staff attempt feasible alternatives to de-escalate a child and situation before using more restrictive measures, including restraint or physically enforced separation. Further, Wis. Admin. Code s. DCF 52.42(5) permits the use of emergency safety intervention, including physically enforced separation or a physical hold only when the resident's behavior presents an imminent danger of harm to self or others. Interventions may only be used for the shortest time possible in the individual circumstance and carried out in a manner that does not cause undue physical or emotional discomfort, harm, or pain to the child.

Staff must follow the child-specific procedures specified in the child's treatment plan to mitigate the risk of runaway behavior or to safely intervene when the child is running away. Not all children who leave the premises may be of imminent danger to themselves or others.

At no time shall the use of physical intervention be used for the convenience of staff. Wisconsin Admin. Code s. DCF 52.42(5)(b)8. prohibits use of physically enforced separation in a time-out room as a substitute for supervision of a resident who is at risk of running away.

If a child goes missing from out-of-home care, providers must follow Missing from Out-of-Home Care requirements identified in DCF Memo Series 2008-12: Definition of Missing from Out-of-Home Care and Documentation Requirements and DCF Memo Series 2016-26: 2015 WI Act 368: Missing from Out-of-Home Care and Child Photograph Requirements.

RCCs are required to include clear documentation in the facility's restraint log when staff use restrictive measures under this policy. Your licenser will periodically request this information so DCF can assess the effectiveness of the policy and determine if revisions or revocation of the policy are necessary.

If you have any further questions or comments, please contact your licensing specialist.

CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT:

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MEMO WEB SITE:

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