



Division of Safety and Permanence

Child Welfare Licensing Memo Series 2025-08-lic
Replaces DCFS memo Series 2002-07

April 18, 2025

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

From: John Elliott
Administrator

Re: Sharing of Abuse or Neglect Records with Licensing Agencies

PURPOSE

This memo clarifies the sharing of child abuse or neglect records with licensing agencies.

BACKGROUND

The Department has recently received inquiries about whether a county department can share child abuse or neglect records with other county departments and private child placing agencies that are seeking information on applicants for child welfare licenses (e.g., foster care, group home, shelter care, treatment foster care and residential care centers licenses) or adoption approval.

INFORMATION SUMMARY

Wis. Stat. § 48.981(7)(a)4p. states that reports and records of child abuse or neglect may be disclosed to “[a] public or private agency in this state or any other state that is investigating a person for purposes of licensing the person to operate a foster home or placing a child for adoption in the home of the person or for the purpose of conducting a background investigation of an adult congregate care worker, as defined in s. 48.685(1)(ap).”

Pursuant to this statute, county agencies and the Department of Children and Families’ Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS) can share child abuse or neglect records with other county departments, DMCPS, or a public or private child placing agency in Wisconsin or another state that is seeking information on applicants for child welfare licenses (e.g., foster care, group home, shelter care, treatment foster care and residential care center licenses) or adoption approval. The subject of the report (i.e., the individual applying for the license) is not required to sign a written authorization for the release of the records to the licensing agency. Agencies should consult with their legal counsel if they have any legal questions relating to these disclosures.

CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT:

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