

Division of Safety and Permanence

DSP Numbered Memo Series 2025-25

Supersedes DCF Numbered Memo 2016-34

November 21, 2025

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
Private Child Placing Agencies
Residential Care Center Providers
Shelter Care Providers
Tribal Chairpersons

From: John Elliott
Administrator

Re: Uniform Assessment System for Issuing Foster Home Licenses

**PURPOSE**

This memo provides information related to the changes to Wis. Admin. Code DCF 56 Foster Home Care for Children and the uniform assessment system for issuing a foster home license, effective December 1, 2025. This memo supersedes DSP Numbered Memo Series 2016-34 SAFE Home Study Assessment Policy.

BACKGROUND

The Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services, county agencies, and certified child placing agencies are required to adhere to Wis. Admin. Code DCF 56 when licensing a foster home.

2015 Wisconsin Act 378 requires the use of a uniform assessment system for all foster home licensing and adoption approval determinations. The uniform assessment system consists of the following 4 components:

- 1) Application
- 2) Home visit/inspection of the home
- 3) Background checks
- 4) Standardized assessment tool, generally referred to as a "home study"

These components create a comprehensive assessment that provides a reliable, qualitative evaluation of a proposed foster or adoptive family's personal characteristics, criminal history, age, health, financial stability, and ability to meet the requirements pursuant to Wis. Admin. Code DCF 56 and Wis. Admin. Code DCF 50 (for adoption approval).

POLICY AND PROCEDURE REQUIREMENTS

Pursuant to 2015 Wisconsin Act 378, the department must approve a standardized assessment tool for licensing agencies to use in assessing potential foster home and adoption applicants.

- The [Relative and Like-Kin Licensing Assessment](#) (DCF-F-5864) is the standardized assessment tool to assess relatives and like-kin for a foster home license for both initial licensing and licensing renewals or modifications.
- The [Multipurpose Home Study Report](#) (DCF-F-2402A) for initial licenses and the [Multipurpose Home Study Update/Recertification](#) (DCF-F-2623A) for license renewals or modifications, is the standardized assessment tool to assess nonrelatives for a foster home license and all applicants for an adoption approval. This standardized assessment tool is commonly referred to as the SAFE Home Study.

The Relative and Like-Kin Licensing Assessment does not require relatives and like-kin to provide references or household financial information, complete a health examination, or have their household members provide a statement regarding their physical and mental health. Relative and like-kin foster homes are licensed to care for a specific child(ren). If a foster parent who was issued a relative or like-kin foster home license has an additional child, who is a relative or like-kin relation, placed in the home within 6 months of the license effective date, an additional assessment is not required to modify the license to include the additional child.

Below is a summary of the components of uniform assessment system as they apply to each type of applicant.

Component	Relative or Like-kin Initial Foster Home License	Nonrelative Initial Foster Home License	Relative or Like-Kin Foster Home License Renewal	Nonrelative Foster Home License Renewal	Relative or Like-Kin Pre-Adopt Conversion	Nonrelative Pre-Adopt Conversion
Application	Relative and Like-Kin Foster Home Application (DCF-F-5863)	Agency-specific	Relative and Like-Kin Foster Home Application (DCF-F-5863)	Agency-specific	Public Adoption Application (DCF-F-CFS0136)	Public Adoption Application (DCF-F-CFS0136)
Home Visit/ Inspection	Number of home visits not prescribed	Number of home visits according to SAFE	Number of home visits not prescribed	Number of home visits according to SAFE	Number of home visits according to SAFE	Number of home visits according to SAFE
Background Checks	Pursuant to Wis. Admin. Code s. DCF 56.055	Pursuant to Wis. Admin. Code s. DCF 56.055	Pursuant to Wis. Admin. Code s. DCF 56.055	Pursuant to Wis. Admin. Code s. DCF 56.055	Pursuant to Wis. Admin. Code s. DCF 56.055	Pursuant to Wis. Admin. Code s. DCF 56.055

Standardized Assessment Tool	Relative and Like-Kin Licensing Assessment (DCF-F-5864)	Multipurpose Home Study Report (DCF-F-2402A)	Relative and Like-Kin Licensing Assessment (DCF-F-5864)	Multipurpose Home Study Update/Recertification (DCF-F-2623A)	Multipurpose Home Study Report (DCF-F-2402A)	Multipurpose Home Study Update/Recertification (DCF-F-2623A)
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eWiSACWIS DOCUMENTATION

For licensing agencies with eWiSACWIS access:

When licensing a relative or like-kin applicant, licensing agencies will complete the electronic version of the [Relative and Like-Kin Licensing Assessment](#) (DCF-F-5864), found on the [DCF Forms website](#). Once completed, licensing agencies will upload it as an image under the Provider tab in eWiSACWIS. When licensing a nonrelative foster parent or completing an adoption assessment, licensing agencies will continue to complete the [Multipurpose Home Study Report](#) (DCF-F-2402A) and [Multipurpose Home Study Update/Recertification](#) (DCF-F-2623A) directly in eWiSACWIS.

For licensing agencies without eWiSACWIS access:

Regardless of the applicant, licensing agencies will complete the applicable standardized assessment tool found on the [DCF Forms website](#). Licensing agencies will continue sending completed assessments to DCFCPALicensingRequests@Wisconsin.gov to be uploaded as an image into eWiSACWIS, along with the other required documentation for a foster home license.

ACTION SUMMARY

The department is partnering with the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS) to facilitate training sessions for current licensing professionals and their supervisors to learn, understand, and implement the changes pursuant to Wis. Admin. Code DCF 56. Licensing professionals and supervisors will be able to access the 1-hour, web-based prerequisite training by searching “Implementing DCF 56: Pre-Work” in [PDS Online](#). After completing the required prerequisite, licensing professionals and supervisors will be able to register for a “Implementing DCF 56” training session in [PDS Online](#). All training sessions will be 3.5 hours and held virtually via the Zoom platform.

All Wis. Admin. Code DCF 56 applicable forms and publications have been revised and published on the [DCF Forms & Publication website](#). All applicable DCF websites have been revised to include updated information pertinent to the revised Wis. Admin. Code s. DCF 56.

For more information or questions, please contact the following:

REGIONAL OFFICE CONTACT: DCF Area Administrator

CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT: Out-of-Home Care Section
Bureau of Permanence and Out-of-Home Care
Division of Safety and Permanence
DCFDSPPGeneralFosterCare@wisconsin.gov



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

Attachments [DCF 56 Foster Home Care for Children](#) (DCF-P-PFS0131)