



Frequently Asked Questions Related to DCF 56 Licensing of Relatives and Like-Kin

Why did DCF create specific requirements for licensing relatives and like-kin?

On 9/28/2023 the Administration for Children and Families published a [rule](#) that allows title IV-E agencies to adopt kin-specific licensing or approval standards for kinship foster family homes. The rule requires title IV-E agency's kin-specific licensing or approval standards to be "reasonably in accord with recommended standards of national organizations." Kin-specific foster home approval standards were developed and are recommended by the following national organizations: [A Second Chance, Inc.](#), [American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law](#), [Children's Rights](#), [CWP Policy](#), [Generations United](#) and its [Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network: A National Technical Assistance Center](#), [National Indian Child Welfare Association](#), [National Association for Regulatory Administration](#), [New America's Child Welfare Playbook & Working Group](#), and [Think of Us](#).

DCF developed specific requirements for agencies to follow when licensing a relative or like-kin caregiver based on these recommended standards. For more information about the federal rule, benefits of kin-specific licensing standards, and the national organizations' recommended standards, visit: [Kin-Specific Foster Home Approval Standards](#).

Are relatives and like-kin required to be licensed to obtain or maintain placement of a child?

No. Children may be placed with relatives and like-kin under 48.207 and 938.207 without being licensed. However, if the caregiver applies for court-ordered kinship care, under s. 48.57(3m)(am)1. and DCF 58.04(1)(b)1.; they require that the caregiver also pursues foster care licensure to continue receiving kinship care benefits. A [Relative Caregiver Licensing Decision](#) can be completed if the relative or like-kin caregiver cannot or does not want to be licensed, which would allow the court to order continuation of the kinship care payment without becoming licensed as a foster parent.

How do I know what parts of rule apply to licensing relatives and like-kin?

First, look at section 56.25 of administrative rule DCF 56, which is the relative and like-kin section of rule. Then you will need to cross-reference what is written in that section with the sections that apply to nonrelatives (DCF 56.01-56.24).

When you see the phrase "notwithstanding s. DCF 56.XX" that means despite what is written in that specific section for nonrelatives, it does not apply exactly as written to a relative or like-kin foster parent.

For example:

56.04 (2) Before an applicant may be issued an initial license to operate a foster home, the applicant shall submit all of the following to the licensing agency: (a) A completed **application form provided by the licensing agency** that is signed by each applicant.

Notwithstanding s. DCF 56.04 (2) (a) and (3) (a), an applicant who is a relative of, or like-kin to, the foster child shall submit a completed application form **that is prescribed by the department instead of the licensing agency**.

When you see the phrase “Section DCF 56.XX does not apply to a relative of, or like-kin to, a foster child” that means that specific section of nonrelative rule does not apply to licensing relatives and like-kin.

For example:

56.078 (1) A foster parent or other person acting on behalf of the foster parent who transports a foster child for any purpose shall possess a valid driver’s license and vehicle liability insurance.

56.078 (5) If it is anticipated that a foster child will drive the foster parent’s motor vehicle, the foster parent shall ensure that the foster child is insured.

Section DCF 56.078 (1) and (5) **do not apply** to a foster parent who is a relative of, or like-kin to, the foster child.

Are there any sections of DCF 56 that apply to both relatives/like-kin and nonrelatives?

Yes. When a section is not specifically called out under DCF 56.25, that means whatever is written in that section for nonrelatives also applies to licensing relatives and like-kin.

For example, everything written in sections DCF 56.072, 56.074, and 56.076 are also required of relatives and like-kin.

What does “diligent efforts to assist relatives and like-kin with obtaining the required items in s. DCF 56.07 and 56.072 to expedite the licensing process” mean?

This means partnering with relative and like-kin caregivers in obtaining the items necessary to care for the child at the time of placement and necessary for licensure. This allows for a caregiver to immediately provide support and safely meet caregiving needs, so as to remove simple barriers towards licensing.

How is it possible to begin background checks on relative and like-kin applicants within 5 working days?

Most relatives and like-kin who seek licensure will already have placement of the child. That means a confirming safe environments assessment will have been started or completed by the placing agency. This includes gathering information about the caregiver(s) and other household members (e.g., name, date of birth, contact information, etc.) to complete the required reverse address sex offender registry check and eWiSACWIS person search. Therefore, some of the background checks required for foster care licensing have already been completed by the time licensing gets involved.

Placing and licensing professionals should work together to provide as much information to caregivers as possible during the initial home visit required for confirming safe environments. This includes providing caregivers with the payment vs. placement options in brief form, kinship application, foster care application, background information disclosure forms, and instructions to complete FBI fingerprints so relative and like-kin caregivers can make an informed choice about if they want to pursue

kinship care or foster care licensing and receive financial assistance as close to placement occurring as possible.

How is it possible to make a licensing decision on a relative or like-kin application within 10 working days?

Most relatives and like-kin who seek licensure will already have placement of the child. That means a confirming safe environments assessment will have been started or completed by the placing agency. This includes gathering information about the caregiver(s) and other household members (e.g., name, date of birth, contact information, etc.) that is required to complete background checks for the CSE and an assessment of the caregiver's ability to care for a specific child. All this information can be utilized for the licensing process to reduce redundancies and focus on what still needs to be completed for licensing. Just like current rule, the timeframe to make a licensing decision **does not begin until the licensing agency has all the information they need to make a decision**, not that all of the information required for licensing is obtained by the licensing agency within 10 days.

Which level of care certifications apply to relatives and like-kin?

Relatives and like-kin can be licensed at a certification level 2-5. A relative or like-kin **should not** be licensed at a level 1, as this will be reserved for non-relative foster parents who have not completed the training requirements to maintain a level 2 certification.

Most relative and like-kin caregivers will initially be certified as a level 2 foster home but may be eligible to be licensed at a certification level of 3-5 if the licensing agency licenses homes at the level of care and the caregiver chooses to adhere to the additional qualification and training requirements associated with that certification level.

Will relative and like-kin foster homes still be considered child-specific?

Yes, as one of the foster parents needs to be a relative or like-kin to the child they are caring for or proposing to take placement of.

General foster homes may also be licensed to care for a specific child that is not related to them.

In a two-parent household, are they both required to be listed as the foster parent?

No. Any household member who acts in the role as a foster parent is considered an applicant, regardless of marital status. Therefore, if only one person in a two-parent household will be the caretaker for a child, they are the only one required to be considered the foster parent. This applies to both relatives and like-kin and nonrelatives.

What is required to license a relative or like-kin caregiver at a Level 2?

- Relative and Like-Kin Foster Home Application
- Background checks under DCF 55.055
- Relative and Like-Kin Foster Home Licensing Checklist
- Home or renter's liability insurance or waiver issued by the licensing agency
- Relative and Like-Kin Licensing Assessment (home study)

- Confirming the home and premises meet the applicable requirements under DCF 56.07, 56.072, 56.074, 56.076, and 56.078

Are there any changes to the barred crimes list for relatives and like-kin to become licensed?

No. Wisconsin Stat. s. 48.685 currently outlines what offenses are bars for foster care licensing. If a relative or like-kin caregiver has been convicted of a crime that is a bar for foster care licensing but is eligible for a rehabilitation review, the licensing agency is required to provide them with information to apply for a rehabilitation review. Reminder, that agencies can complete their own rehabilitation reviews and can determine the timeliness of the process.

Are there different forms to utilize when licensing relatives and like-kin?

Yes.

Form	Relatives/Like-Kin	Nonrelatives
Application	DCF-F-5863	Licensing agency may create their own or utilize DCF-F-5863
Licensing Checklist	DCF-F-5587	DCF-F-CFS0787
Home Study/Assessment	DCF-F-5864	DCF-F-2402a (initial) & DCF-F-CFS2623a (update/renewal)

Are there different training requirements for relative and like-kin foster parents?

Yes.

Level of Care	Relatives/Like-Kin	Nonrelatives
Level 1	N/A	Each foster parent must complete 6 hours of preplacement training before or after the placement of a child, but no later than 6 months after initial licensure
Level 2	Only one of the foster parents must complete 6 hours of preplacement training before or after the placement of a child, but no later than 6 months after initial licensure	Each foster parent must complete 6 hours of preplacement training before or after initial licensure but prior to the placement of any child in the home 30 hours of initial licensing training during initial licensing period 10 hours of ongoing training each year of licensure beyond the initial licensing period
Level 3-4	Same training requirements as nonrelatives, however,	

	only one of the foster parents must complete the preplacement, initial licensing, or ongoing training	
Level 5	Same training requirements as nonrelatives	

Do currently licensed relative and like-kin foster homes need to have an updated home study or a new license issued?

No. However, you should review the current exceptions on their license to see if they still apply or are under a different citation. When it comes time to renew their license, you would use the Relative and Like-Kin Foster Home Application, Relative and Like-Kin Foster Home Licensing Checklist, and Relative and Like-Kin Licensing Assessment to complete that process.

Is the home study assessment for relatives and like-kin completed in eWiSACWIS?

No, not at this time. You will complete the fillable form and upload it as an image under the provider.

Do these licensing requirements meet the requirements for public adoption?

No. DCF 50, which is the public adoption administrative rule requires applicants to be assessed using all components of the SAFE Home Study Assessment prior to adoption finalization. For relatives and like-kin who are already licensed, they met this requirement and a public adoption professional working with the family should complete a SAFE Home Study Assessment Update.

For relatives and like-kin who will be licensed with the Relative and Like-Kin Foster Home Licensing Assessment, the public adoption professional working with the family will complete a comprehensive SAFE Home Study Assessment utilizing the information already obtained in the relative and like-kin assessment. Relatives and like-kin will need to provide the public adoption professional with:

- Vital documents including birth records of all household members and marriage, divorce, and naturalization documents for the applicants
- Financial information to confirm they can financially support the child
- References
- Health exam for each household member

Relatives and like-kin will also need to complete the required 25 hours of pre-adoption training prior to adoption finalization, with 6 of those hours being child-specific.

Are there any changes to DCF 50 because of this change?

No.

What happens if a licensed relative or like-kin wants to become a general foster parent?

A relative or like-kin's foster home license may be modified to a nonrelative license to accept general foster care placements. This involves meeting all the sections of nonrelative rule including, the components of the SAFE Home Study Assessment (references, financial

information review, health exams), completing initial licensing and ongoing training, and adhering to the physical environment requirements that previously did not apply to them.

When can I start licensing relatives and like-kin this way?

When the rule is promulgated.

What are the anticipated outcomes of this change?

- Relatives and like-kin will receive pay equitable to nonrelative foster parents
- Reduced administrative burden on applicants and the workforce by streamlining the licensing process for relatives and like-kin
- Increase the number of relatives and like-kin licensed, by eliminating rules that have historically excluded them from achieving licensure
- Increase the number of children placed with relatives and like-kin because their caregivers have the support they need to accept and maintain placement

Will DCF be monitoring the anticipated outcomes of this change?

Yes. The department currently tracks how many children are placed with relative and like-kin caregivers and number of licensed relatives and like-kin foster homes. Agencies can also track their outcomes with the following eWiSACWIS Reports and eWiSACWIS Dashboards:

- Provider Detail Report (PM02A03)
- Licensing Timeliness Report (PM04A103)
- Placement Activity and Detail Report (SM10A112)
- Out of Home Care Analysis Dashboard
- Child Welfare Implementation Support Metrics Dashboard

To access these resources, you will need to login to eWiSACWIS. More information about navigating these resources and obtaining data is found here: [eWReports User Guide](#).

[Type here]