Kin Placements & Foster Care Licensing

Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council

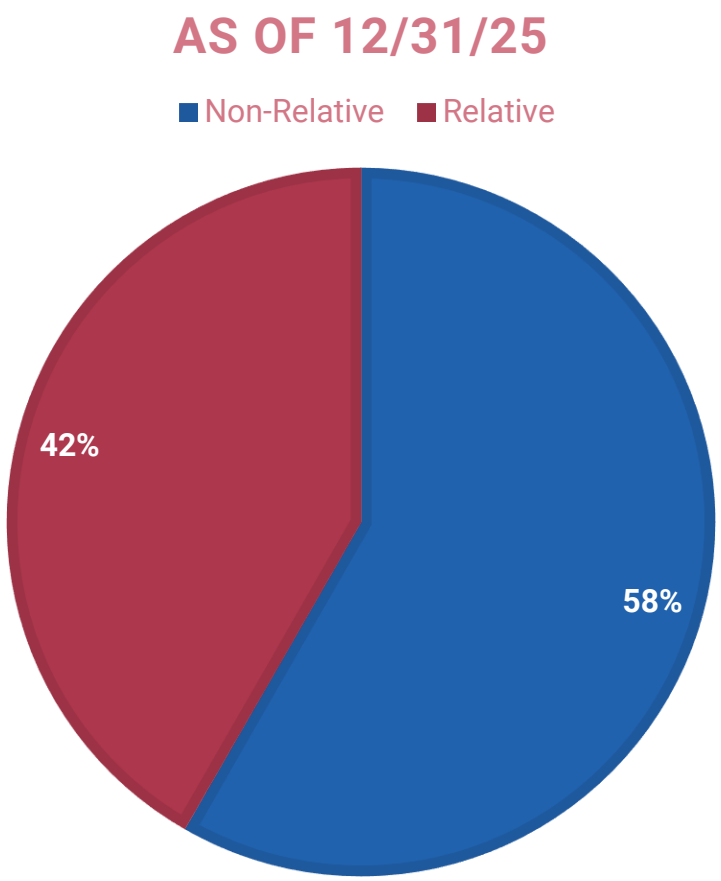
February 20, 2026

Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

Prioritizing Placement with Family

- Mitigates trauma associated with separation from parents
- Increases placement stability and permanency
- Maintains connections to family and community

Current State



- At the end of 2020, **60.8%** of children in OHC **were not** placed with a relative
- At the end of 2021, **60.5%** of children in OHC **were not** placed with a relative
- At the end of 2022, **58%** of children in OHC **were not** placed with a relative
- At the end of 2023, **60%** of children in OHC **were not** placed with a relative
- At the end of 2024, **60%** of children in OHC **were not** placed with a relative
- At the end of 2025, **58.3%** of children in OHC **were not** placed with a relative

Kinship Care: $384 a month per child

Voluntary (no court-ordered placement)

Court-Ordered (placement through child welfare)

Long-Term (after guardianship through child welfare established)

Foster Care Licensing

- Relatives and like-kin **are not required** to be eligible for kinship care or foster care licensing to **maintain placement**.
- If they apply for court-ordered kinship care, they **must pursue** foster care licensure.
- Foster Care Rate is a combination of 4 parts based on the child's age, assessed needs and strengths, and additional support needed to meet their needs.
- At minimum, this rate is $**452** a month per child.

New Federal Rule

Agencies are allowed to **create a kin-specific licensing** or approval process.

Must be “reasonably in accord with **recommended standards of national organizations** for foster family homes”

Allows agencies to determine **their own definition** of kin (or who this applies to)

Recommended Standards Include:

Background Checks

Fingerprint-Based Check

Child Abuse and Neglect Checks

Name-Based State/Local Check

Sex Offender Registry Check

Caregiver Assessment

Section 1) focused on the caregiver's ability to meet the child's needs

Section 2) focused on evaluating safety and needs of the home

***It is not recommended to include any other requirements to license kin**

DCF 56 Revisions

- Creation of separate relative and like-kin licensing process
- Provide pay equity to relative and like-kin caregivers
- Increased flexibility for local agencies to make decisions

- Reduce administrative burden on the applicants and the child welfare workforce
- Decrease barriers for applicants to apply for and become licensed
- Increase the number of children who are placed with relative and like-kin because they have the support they need to accept and maintain placement

What have we seen thus far?

- Relatives and like-kin are being licensed faster
- Relatives and like-kin are getting more financial support faster
- Child welfare workforce spending less time on paperwork and more time engaging with families
- Decrease reliance on congregate care

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Questions?

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