

Respite Care Policy

Policy Number:	FCA 21.00, IIH 6.00, OCM 48.00
Subject:	Respite Care Policy
Eliminated Policy:	Provision of Respite Care to Foster Care and Kinship Care Providers
Last Updated/Reviewed:	July 15, 2016
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Any information referenced within this document is considered to be a part of this policy with the exception of the “related resources” section.

Summary:

This policy establishes standards for the provision of respite care for foster parents, court-ordered kinship care providers, treatment foster care (TFC) providers, and children receiving intensive-in-home services, who are residing in their parent’s home pursuant under [§56.21](#) Wisconsin Statutes. Respite care is temporary childcare for more than 48 hours that provides a primary caregiver(s) with support while maintaining a stable and safe child care.

Policy:

Respite care provides safe, temporary care of a child for more than 48 hours in a licensed foster home, licensed facility, or unlicensed caregiver approved by DMCPS or a contracted agency. A respite provider may be a natural or informal support person (such as a friend or relative) to the foster parent/kinship provider or may be a formal respite provider identified through the contracted agency.

- Licensed foster home: includes foster homes and foster homes licensed only for respite care
- Licensed facility: includes residential and group homes
- Unlicensed caregiver approved by DMCPS or the contracted agency who meets DCF respite care qualifications

This policy ensures standards for respite providers are in compliance with [§56.21](#) and respite requests from caregivers are processed in a timely manner, to ensure the safety of the child(ren) in foster care. Respite care is also used by contracted agencies when a placement danger threat arises and may be a part of a safety or protective plan.

The procedures detailed in this policy address the identification of eligible respite care providers, documentation required for respite care, and process when respite care is requested by a caregiver. For information about respite care that is initiated by a contracted agency, refer to the Ongoing Standards for information about controlling for child safety. Adherence to this DMCPs policy and procedures are required by contracted agencies.

Temporary childcare for less than 48 hours for children in foster homes (level 1-4) must comply with Wisconsin Statutes §56 and §48. Under [§56.21\(4\)\(b\)](#), the licensing agency is required to provide 8 to 24 consecutive hours of respite per month to level 3 and 4 foster homes.

For level 1 and 2 foster homes, contracted agencies are required to have a formal Practice Standard, informed and in compliance with the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard ([§48.383](#)), detailing how communication occurs with foster home providers regarding the use of temporary care for less than 48 hours. Under [§48.383](#), agencies cannot implement policies that limit OHC provider's ability to make reasonable and prudent parenting decisions regarding the child(ren)'s temporary care for less than 48 hours.

Procedures:

Contracted agencies are required to make respite care available to foster parents and kinship care providers by ensuring respite providers meet eligibility requirements, caregivers and providers are informed about the process for obtaining respite care, and must provide assistance to the respite care provider should an issue arise as part of the process (56.21(b)).

To facilitate continuity of care and minimize disruption for the child, whenever possible, respite care is to be planned in advance using providers known to the child and family. Respite care is provided for a maximum of seven consecutive days. In a few rare circumstances, long term respite may be considered and approved by ongoing agency management based on the child and caregiver's need. If respite care exceeds seven days, the CM will contact the respite provider on a weekly basis.

Identification and Eligibility of Respite Care Providers

Eligibility and qualifications for respite care providers are noted in [Wisconsin Statutes §56.21\(3\)](#). Respite care providers may be any of the following:

- Licensed foster home: includes foster homes and foster homes licensed only for respite care
- Licensed facility: includes residential and group homes
- Unlicensed caregiver approved by DMCPs or the contracted agency who meets DCF respite care qualifications

Contracted agencies must identify respite care providers. The identification of respite care providers may occur before foster care placement or while foster care placement is in place. The identification process is as follows:

1. During the foster parent licensing process, the ongoing Case Manager (CM) or Licensing Specialist will work with the foster parents or kinship providers to identify individuals (family members, friends, etc.) that may serve as respite care providers.
2. During the licensing process, if the foster parent/kinship care providers is not able to identify any individuals who might serve as respite care providers, or if the individual recommended does not meet respite eligibility requirements ([§56.21\(3\)](#)), then the ongoing agency will ensure a respite care provider is identified as needed and documented in eWiSACWIS prior to providing respite care.
3. Documentation: Identified routine and emergency respite care providers must be entered by the CM or Licensing Specialist in eWiSACWIS. The following information must be documented about the respite care provider in eWiSACWIS prior to the provision of respite care:
 - a. The provider's name, home address, telephone number and date of respite care
 - b. The results of the home assessment to confirm safe environment
 - c. Background check results including CCAP, CPS record check, and Sex Offender Registry
 - d. The specific support needs for the child(ren) at the time of care

Process for Requesting Respite Care

The foster parent or kinship care provider must request respite care from the CM, Supervisor or an agency representative at least 72 business hours in advance unless an emergency exists. Under [§56.21\(1\)\(c\)](#), licensing agencies are required to develop a pool of approved respite care providers, provide training to respite care providers, develop a respite care schedule with the foster parent and CM, and provide the schedule to the respite care provider.

Emergency respite care may be requested when a crisis occurs in the out-of-home care provider's life that requires time away from their responsibility in caring for the child or when the child's behaviors are affecting the out of home care providers ability to safely manage their home. Foster parents and kinship care providers may contact their designated CM, Supervisor or on-call agency representative.

The ongoing agency will follow this process when respite care is requested by the foster parent or kinship care provider:

1. When CM, Supervisor, or on-call agency representative receives a request, they will check eWiSACWIS to ensure the respite care provider's qualifications and all background check information is documented. For foster homes with level 3 or 4 certification, the CM or designated agency representative must work with the licensing agency to obtain this information and may need to conduct a CCAP check, as part of the required background checks needed, prior to receiving respite care.
 - o Background checks must be conducted within a year from the date of the request for respite and specifically include a CCAP check,

reverse address Sex Offender Registry check and CPS records checks (detailed in [Ongoing Standards](#) page 53).

2. If a respite provider has not been identified or if the identified respite care providers are not available, the agency representative (after hours or on-call supervisor, or CM) will find a qualified and approved respite care provider or work with the licensing agency to find a respite provider.
3. Once a respite care provider is confirmed and approved the agency representative will notify the foster parent/kinship care provider.
4. The birth parents of the child must be notified by the agency representative. The respite provider's name, phone number, the dates the child will be in the respite provider's care, and the reason respite care is needed will be shared with the birth parents, unless there is a safety concern associated with the birth parents.
5. Documentation: Identified routine and emergency respite care providers must be entered by the CM or Licensing Specialist in eWiSACWIS. The following information must be documented about the respite care provider in eWiSACWIS prior to the provision of respite care:
 - The provider's name, home address, telephone number and date of respite care
 - The results of the home assessment to confirm safe environment
 - Background check results including CCAP, CPS record check, and Sex Offender Registry
 - The specific support needs for the child(ren) at the time of care

Responsibilities:

Contracted ongoing agencies CMs, Licensing Specialists, Supervisors, and on-call agency representatives (Saint A and Children's Hospital of Wisconsin Community Services):

- Ensure respite care is available for foster parent(s)
- Gather required information to ensuring respite providers meet all eligibility requirements
- Inform foster care parents about the process for obtaining respite care,
- Provide assistance to the respite care provider should an issue arise as part of the process
- Ensure foster parents or kinship providers can reach an ongoing agency representative at any time in the event of an emergency.

Respite Care Providers:

- Ensure the child(ren) attends all necessary appointments (including school, visitation with biological parents, court, and health appointments) while in the respite provider's care.
- In the event of an emergency, contact the CM, Licensing Specialist or on-call agency representative.

DMCPS: Ensure compliance with Wisconsin Statutes and provide guidance regarding respite care policy.

Treatment Foster Care: work with CM and foster parent to ensure respite care is provided when requested and appropriate in accordance with Wisconsin Statutes.

Related Resources:

- [DCF Child Welfare Licensed Agency Policies and Rules webpage](#), Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard (RPPS)
- [DSP Memos](#) regarding Prudent Parenting, Foster Care Rates and Kinship Care Rates
- [eWiSACWIS Out of Home Placement Manual](#)
 - Respite Care
- [Ongoing Standards, page 53 and 112](#)
- [Wisconsin Statutes Chapter 56 Foster Home Care for Children](#)