



Tuesday, October 2, 2020

Dear Prospective Adoptive Parents,

The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) recognizes the challenges that COVID-19 has brought into the adoption process and appreciates your diligence in supporting the children in your care. It is important to share information with you and again seek your partnership as we prepare to continue, and provide additional, training opportunities to help families reach permanency.

As you move toward adoption, there are several requirements that must be met, including trainings and classes. Wisconsin Statute Ch. 48 outlines requirements for proposed adoptive parents in order to complete the adoption process. Generally, Wis. Stat. § 48.84 requires that all proposed adoptive parents who have not previously adopted a child must receive training before the adoption is finalized. The requirements for pre-adoptive training under Wis. Stat. § 48.84 include a specific requirement for at least 6 hours of “in person” training. The Department cannot grant exceptions to a requirement under Ch. 48.

### **COVID-19 and Pre-adoptive Training Requirements**

In March 2020, the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS), in consultation with the Department, stopped providing in person training options due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To continue to meet training needs, WCWPDS began offering training opportunities virtually. During this time, the Department explored options to address the statutory in person training requirements under Wis. Stat. § 48.84. After careful consideration and exploration of options, the Department has determined that in person training must resume due to statutory requirements. “In person” is interpreted to mean that there is an individual who is facilitating the training physically present with the pre-adoptive parent when training is provided. The Department recognizes that participating in in person trainings may be a burden for families and may be challenging in light of other agency protocols that you are working with. Due to the explicit statutory requirement for in person training, the Department has asked WCWPS to resume in person classroom style training options for families to ensure that adoption requirements are met prior to adoption finalization.

In order to keep the amount of in person training time during the COVID-19 pandemic to a minimum, the Department will only provide in person offerings to meet minimum statutory



requirements. Some in person classroom style training will resume in order to meet the 6-hour in person training requirement, but the majority of pre-adoptive training requirements will continue to be offered online as the remaining 19 hours of the 25-hour statutorily-required training does not need to be in person.

Pre-adoptive parents who have completed at least 6 hours of the pre-adoptive training requirements in person will be able to take all remaining trainings online to satisfy requirements. Please consult your adoption worker to determine what options will best fit your training needs.

Pre-adoptive parents who have not completed the 6 hour in person requirement will now be able to register for in person classroom options. WCWPDS will offer a limited number of in person courses throughout the state.

### **Health & Safety Guidelines**

The Department and WCWPDS take the health and safety of families seriously. As required in person trainings are offered, extra precautions will be implemented. In person trainings will be provided in smaller groups with sanitation guidelines for the facilities per CDC requirements. Social distancing practices (6-foot separation from people not living in your home) will be adhered to and masks will be required. Additional requirements for these trainings will be provided directly to pre-adoptive parents attending these training sessions.

The Department recognizes that there are pre-adoptive parents who are unable to participate in group in person trainings due to health concerns or other factors. This may include people who are at an increased risk of severe illness or people who care for someone at an increased risk of severe illness (more information can be located on the CDC website [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)). Pre-adoptive parents who fall into this category should speak with their public adoption worker about possible options to meet in person training requirements.

### **Training Offerings and Options**

WCWPDS will provide classroom style in person training options in various locations across the state. Waitlists and prioritization strategies may be used in order to ensure families waiting for adoption are not further delayed. In person training sessions will be reserved only for pre-adoptive parents who have not yet completed the in person training



requirement for adoption. Please direct questions on this prioritization to your adoption worker.

Ch. 48.84 requires only 6 of the 25 required hours to be completed in person, while the remaining 19 hours may be completed in an online format. As such, online training options will continue to be offered. Online trainings will have a maximum number of participants for each session in order to ensure active participation and access to trainers. Two online training formats are currently offered:

- Zoom offers participants the opportunity to participate live with a WCWPDS trainer to work through material in real time. Sessions will commonly be completed in one day. Participants will utilize a microphone and camera, which is typically built into a laptop, cellphone, or tablet. This will allow them to visually and auditorily interact with the trainer and the other participants. There is a live chat function that can be utilized to ask questions during the session.
- Canvas is a self-paced platform that allows participants to complete modules within a timeframe. Each training is divided into sections/modules, which can be completed in conjunction with the family's schedule. Discussion posts are utilized to facilitate group learning and are required to complete the training.

All training offerings, including both in person and online, may be found on [www.pdsonline.csod.com](http://www.pdsonline.csod.com) under the "Learning" section.

Thank you for your continued commitment and care for children in Wisconsin. As we continue through the COVID-19 pandemic together, remember to keep in touch with your licensing caseworker and any caseworkers for children placed in your home. DCF will regularly update the guidance and recommendations located on the COVID-19 website as new information is received. If you have any questions or concerns regarding DCF's response to the pandemic, feel free to send them to the DCF COVID-19 mailbox:

[DCFMBCOVID19@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DCFMBCOVID19@wisconsin.gov).