



In-person Pre-adoptive Training Requirements

Purpose

This guidance document provides updates related to the completion of in-person training requirements for pre-adoptive parents under Wis. Stat. § 48.84. The document outlines options for meeting this training requirement during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background

Wisconsin Statute Ch. 48 outlines requirements that proposed adoptive parents must meet 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. DCF Ch. 51 Administrative Code governs the specific pre-adoption training requirements.

The requirements for pre-adoptive training under Wis. Stat. § 48.84 include a specific requirement for 6 hours of in person training, as well as 6 hours of child-specific training (which does not need to be completed in person):

48.84(2g) A proposed adoptive parent shall obtain at least 25 hours of the preadoption preparation required under sub. (1), including all of the following:

- (a) At least 6 hours of training that is provided in person, either individually or in a group.
- (b) At least 6 hours of training that is appropriate to the specific needs of the child to be adopted.

The Department cannot grant exceptions to requirements under Ch. 48; therefore at least 6 hours of training must be completed in person. The remaining 19 hours of statutorily required training do not need to be completed in person.

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 in person training opportunities virtually to families adopting through public adoption. 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.



Training Curriculum Requirements for Public Adoption

There are two options for pre-adoptive families to meet the 19 of the 25 hours of the pre-adoptive training requirements that are not required to be child specific:

- Foundations modules 3, 4a, 4b, 5, and 8 and the 6-hour Fostering to Forever class, OR
- Building Forever Families 3-day course

Details on these options are found on the Pre-adoptive Preparation Training Crosswalk: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/adoption/pdf/adptncrosswalk.pdf>

Pre-adoptive parents must complete at least 6 additional hours of child specific training to complete the 25 hours (see Wis. Stat. § 48.84(2g)(b) above).

Any 6 of the 25 hours detailed above – either child-specific or non-child-specific – can be provided “in person” in order to meet the “in person” component of the pre-adoptive training requirements. If a family has taken at least 6 hours of any of the above options in person, the “in person” training requirement is met, and remaining training may be completed online.

Training Offerings

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 for public adoption. 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.

Classroom Style:

To meet the in person training requirement, WCWPDS will begin offering classroom trainings of the following:

- One day (6 hours) sessions of Fostering to Forever
- One day (6 hours) sessions of Day 1 of Building Forever Families
 - Day 2 and Day 3 of Building Forever Families will be offered in an online format to complete the series.

Participant limits and waitlists will be utilized to follow CDC guidelines regarding the number of participants and sanitation requirements. The health and safety of families, adoption workers, and trainers is the top priority.



Please note that families may have previously attended in person classroom trainings for Foundations modules, child specific training, or adoption specific training. If the previous trainings were attended in person, and if they meet pre-adoptive training requirements, no further in person training is needed, and remaining pre-adoptive training requirements can be met through online virtual training.

Online Virtual:

Current virtual trainings are provided in two different platforms: Zoom (live interactive virtual sessions) or Canvas (self-paced interactive virtual sessions):

- 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 as well.
- 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.

As currently provided, these sessions do not meet the "in person" training requirements but are sufficient to complete the remaining pre-adoption preparation training hours that are not required to be completed in person.

Individual:

The Department recognizes that there are families 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)). If families are unable to attend group in person trainings due to these factors, adoption workers can support families to meet the 6 hour in person requirement. This will require the adoption worker to be physically present with the family for a total of 6 hours while they complete trainings or work on child specific training requirements. This will provide an opportunity for the adoption worker to facilitate the provision of the training by giving guidance, answering questions, and having a focused discussion regarding the information.



This option can be tailored to the adoption worker and family's needs – such as meeting at the family's home or having the family come into the agency office to complete the training requirements – but should be conducted in compliance with agency COVID-19 policy and procedures. This may include but is not limited to social distancing, mask compliance, and adhering to sanitation standards.

It is important to note the time considerations when creating a plan with families. Zoom sessions are scheduled with a strict start and end time. This will require the adoption worker to be present during those hours. Canvas sessions are self-paced and can be scheduled with the family and adoption worker's schedule as the priority within the training timeframe.

Adoption Training Prioritization and Scheduling Options

In August 2020, public adoption agencies submitted Adoption Training Prioritization Requests which provided DCF and WCWPDS with vital information regarding the current training needs of pre-adoptive parents throughout Wisconsin. WCWPDS will individualize training plans for these families in order to prevent further delays in permanency.

Families not prioritized through the above process must register for trainings following the existing registration processes. Adoption workers will work individually with families to identify next steps for training requirements. Adoption workers must work directly with families on registration to ensure that families are registered for the correct sessions, and that they are only registered for sessions that are needed. WCWPDS will be available to support adoption workers with questions and concerns.

All trainings will be listed on PDS and can be accessed by families in the same format that was utilized prior to March 2020. Registration information including locations, dates, and times are available on PDS Online. Registration limits and waitlists will still be utilized for the Zoom and Canvas sessions. This is to ensure that participants gain necessary information, ask questions as they arise, and have in-depth discussions with trainers and other families.