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Governor Tony Evers
Secretary Emilie Amundson

Division of Safety and Permanence

Monday, March 16, 2020

Re: Exception and Waiver Granting Process for Out-of-Home Care Regulations or Requirements During 2020 COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

Dear Local Child Welfare Agency,

Thank you for your continued commitment to Wisconsin's children and families. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) remains committed to supporting you as this situation progresses. Many of you have asked questions about certain child welfare regulations or requirements. This memo provides information about an expedited exception process that agencies can use. As this is an ever-changing situation, we will continue to communicate as we have updates.

- Congregate Care Facilities:
 - The Department has the authority to grant waivers and exceptions to many areas of current administrative rule. If your agency would like any exceptions granted related to COVID-19, please use form DCF-F-5023-E. Exception requests should be emailed to your licensor, the Child Welfare licensing mailbox at DCFCWLR@wisconsin.gov, and to david.sorenson@wisconsin.gov. This form can be used for both broad facility or resident-specific exceptions, such as but not limited to:
 - Physical plant requirements
 - Staff training requirements
 - Staff qualification requirements
 - Staff ratio requirements
 - Grouping of residents by age and developmental level
 - Age range for admission
- Foster Care (County and Child Placing Agencies):
 - Wis. Admin. DCF 56.02(2)(b) outlines a process by which the Department may make exceptions to Wis. Admin. DCF 56. The Governor has suspended the panel size requirements (56.02(2)(b)7.a.) for approving exception requests in the foster care system. This will allow DCF to expedite exception requests and approvals.
 - Private agencies without access to eWiSACWIS should use form DCF-F-CFS0847-E and submit via email to michael.hoffmeister@wisconsin.gov and DCFCWLR@wisconsin.gov.
 - County agencies should submit exception requests via eWiSACWIS

The Department is aware that many parts of normal programming may shift to accommodate this public health emergency. The Department advises that facilities document changes in

programming, staffing, training, outings, medical care, etc. related to COVID-19 so this can be reviewed later if there were to be questions about departures from regularly-expected operations.

Please send any questions to DCFCWLR@wisconsin.gov.