

Post-Reunification Support Program Referral Guide

May 23, 2016

This document provides detailed information on how to make referrals for children and their families to participate in the Post-Reunification Support (P.S.) Program. Referring children to the P.S. Program involves a three step process, and each step in the process is explained in more detail below.

1. Identify children the agency plans to reunify. Talking with families about the opportunity to enroll in the P.S. Program should only occur after a referral is approved.
2. Check the Re-entry Prevention Model (RPM) score for those children via the Pre-Enrollment Report in eWiSACWIS.
3. Submit eligible referrals to DCF via the secure online server, the PS-HUB.

<https://share.dcf.wisconsin.gov/ps-hub/default.aspx>

NOTE: Only county and DCF approved PS-HUB users are able to log in. Please ask your county's primary program contact and the P.S. Program Coordinator about receiving access to log in.

1.1 Planning for Reunification

Prior to the decision to reunify a family, the primary goal is to re-assess safety. Reunification can occur when the assessment and analysis of impending danger indicates one of the following:

- Child safety can be controlled through an in-home safety plan.
- Parent/caregiver protective capacities are sufficiently enhanced to manage threats to child safety.
- It is in the child's best interest to reunify.

When the worker assigned to the reunifying family ensures court approval and is developing a plan to address how changes in family dynamics will be managed, it is also important to consider the RPM score of the reunifying child to determine their eligibility for the P.S. Program.

The RPM score may also be useful to consider for non-P.S. Program eligible reunifications as statewide data patterns indicate a correlation between the likelihood of a re-entry with higher RPM scores.

The target population for the P.S. Program is children with a case type or dual case type that includes 'CPS – Family' or 'Child Welfare (CW) – Voluntary.' If a child has a 'Juvenile Justice' only case type, the case type can be modified in the case management page of eWiSACWIS or

by entering a new 'Service Report' with the identified new service including enhanced services following reunification.

1.2 Trial Reunification

County agency use of trial reunification is encouraged when the agency and their court system identify families in which reunification on a trial basis is safe and feasible, and the family may benefit from a conditional reunification status while they continue to work on various needs and goals.

Up to 60 days prior to a trial reunification, or at any time during a trial reunification, a referral to the P.S. Program may occur if the agency believes the family will complete the trial reunification and the discharge to reunification will occur. If a trial reunification is utilized, an approved referral is locked in pending the completion of the trial reunification.

Trial reunification can last from 7-150 days and is a placement setting; it is not a discharge from Out of Home Care. As such, actual enrollment into the P.S. Program doesn't begin until the successful conclusion of the trial reunification, when the full 12 months of support and funding will then follow.

1.3 Identification of Eligible Children and When to Reunify

The decision to reunify families must be made in accordance with the Ongoing Services Standards and should be based primarily upon the local child welfare agency's assessment of safety, readiness, and capacity. If the family is ready to reunify and the child is eligible for the P.S. Program at or near the time of the planned reunification, access to program resources and supports may be factored into the county agency's decision when to reunify. However, program eligibility is always secondary to safety and the other factors listed above.

2.1 Using the Pre-Enrollment Report

The Pre-Enrollment Report, available in eWiSACWIS as "SM08X116B - PS Program Pre Enrollment," is available to all counties and provides a list of all children in Out of Home Care (OHC) who may be eligible for the P.S. Program, and a Re-entry Prevention Model (RPM) score for them. These children have the following characteristics:

- an **approved** primary, concurrent, or proposed goal of reunification;
- a case type that is not Juvenile Justice only, or pre-adoptive;
- an approved CANS for the child within the last six months.

Children in OHC who do not appear on the Pre-Enrollment Report may have:

- no goal listed due to a short amount of time spent in OHC;
- a target population that is not Juvenile Justice or Delinquent.

The Pre-Enrollment Report is run automatically on a monthly basis for each county as a batch report. It is also available to be run on demand for a specified time period or for a specific child by the eWiSACWIS Child ID. The default setting for this report is to run for the most recently concluded month, and will show all kids in care who meet the above criteria in that month. The batch report will show the details for each variable in the RPM.

If a child does not appear on the batch run of the Pre-Enrollment Report, the most likely cause is that the goal is not “approved,” or the CANS was not completed and approved within the last six months.

2.2 Running the Pre-Enrollment Report “on demand” by child

To do so, you enter the case ID for the child and the start and end dates for the period of time you would like to determine eligibility.

If the RPM score on the planned reunification date is 0.18 or more, then up to 60 days prior to the planned reunification date you are encouraged to submit a referral.

2.3 How frequently should counties review the Pre-Enrollment Report

In 2013, 24.5% of reunifications occurred after less than a month in Out of Home Care. It is important for each county agency to designate a lead person to review the pre-enrollment report on a weekly basis to identify and refer eligible children prior to reunification. The importance of this may vary based on the size of the county agency and how familiar each ongoing case worker is with the P.S. Program eligibility and referral process. Even small counties who tend to know their reunifying population well will benefit from running the report twice a month on their own, as the monthly batch report will not provide a frequent enough update to identify the children who reunify quickly. Medium and larger counties are highly encouraged to develop local policy and procedures on who runs the report and how often so they do not miss program eligible reunifications that are in care for a short period of time.

2.4 The RPM Variables

Information about the RPM is available on the P.S. Program website. RPM 2.0 will generally produce a stable score over time, though there are two potentially dynamic variables that may change during placement.

The placement of a child in a treatment foster care setting will decrease the child’s RPM score.

The child’s most recent CANS strengths and needs may change over time, and the number of needs documented as a 2 or a 3 in the child’s life domain functioning will have a significant effect on the RPM score. If county refers a child and the referral is approved, but the child’s CANS indicate improvement within the 60 days prior to reunification, an approved referral will not be rescinded.

3.1 Submitting Referrals

The form to submit referrals on is available on the program website and on the PS-HUB:

<http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/forms/doc/470.doc>

When completing the Referral Form, it is important to specify:

- Whether each child on the form is intended to be a state or locally funded referral.
- If the child is reunifying on a trial reunification basis, and the planned end date for the trial reunification
- The primary and secondary caseworkers' names and email addresses

3.2 Referrals with Siblings

If a referred child has sibling who are also in an Out of Home Care placement and who will reunify at the same time as the referral child, or within 60 days of the referral child, then those siblings are automatically eligible to also participate in the P.S. Program. This includes siblings with existing delinquency petitions, and all siblings are eligible regardless of legal status or case type. However, if a juvenile justice only or delinquency adjudicated sibling is referred to the P.S. Program, the program requirements and Ongoing Services Standards apply to the agency's involvement with that child.

The county agency may determine whether or not they wish to refer some or all of the siblings who reunify. If siblings will also be referred, the county may also decide whether those siblings will be state funded program participants, or local reinvestment funded participants.

When a reunifying family has three or more children who are referred, DCF recommends that counties assess the needs of the family members and use that assessment to determine if one or more of the siblings would receive equal benefit if that child were a local reinvestment funded referral.

If there are multiple children referred to participate but they reunify at different times, then those children will have a different P.S. Start Date, and their program practice requirement timeframes will vary.

3.3 How quickly will referrals be reviewed?

The response time to approve or deny referrals will be within one working day. If the caseworker and county primary contact do not receive a response to the referral after two working days, please follow up with the P.S. Program Coordinator to confirm the referral was received.

3.4 Changes in Planned Reunifications

If there are changes in the planned reunification of an approved referral, please inform the P.S. Program Coordinator of the new date the reunification is intended to occur, or if the reunification will not be likely within the next 60 days.

3.5 Referring Children Multiple Times

If a child is referred and the reunification is delayed, the same child may be referred again at a later time if that child continues to have an eligible RPM score. If a child had previously participated in the P.S. Program and a re-entry and placement of more than 30 days occurred, that child may be referred to participate again. That child would then begin the full 12 month intervention after their reunification occurs, as if the child were a new referral.