

The Department of Children and Families promotes the connections of relatives to children placed in foster care. We appreciate family and want to ensure they are supported in their important role by child welfare agencies.

Keeping family connections benefits children by creating stability, improving reunification, and preserving the cultural connections for children in foster care.

In Wisconsin, child welfare agencies are licensing all qualified relative caregivers as foster parents. Recent legal changes have made foster care licensing requirements more flexible for relatives.



### Fostering by Families

The Department of Children and Families recognizes and appreciates that families step up and care for each other in times of need. That's just what families do.

When a child welfare agency finds it necessary to remove a child from the birth parent due to abuse or neglect, the agency will first look to relatives to care for the child. The child welfare agency is required to notify adult relatives within 30 days of a child being removed from the parent and placed in out-of-home care. This notification ensures family members can be involved with the child while the parent makes the changes needed to again care for their child. Family members may be asked to become licensed foster parents for the child.

## Benefits of Fostering

There are several benefits to becoming a foster parent in Wisconsin. These include:

- Recognition as an essential part of the foster care team.
- You may likely get benefits for both you and the child you have taken in. Some such benefits include: healthcare coverage, WIC, child care assistance, food stamps, free school lunch, and others.
- An initial clothing allowance when the child is first placed in care.
- You may request respite for the child in your care. Respite care is care that is provided for 48 hours or more, or another time frame arranged with the agencies approval.
- You may get paid back for damages or injuries caused by a child placed with you that are not fully covered by private insurance policies through the Foster Parent Insurance Program.
- The right to appeal decisions made about your home and decisions to remove the child after the child has been in the foster home for 6 months.
- The ability to truly make a difference in the life of a child!

## Foster Care Licensing

The Levels of Care project became effective on January 1, 2010. The child welfare agency will explain the process to you. For current Kinship Care providers receiving payments, child welfare agencies have until the Annual Renewal date to begin the licensing process. The county agency or the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare will work with all current Kinship Care providers to complete the foster care licensing process. Kinship Care payments will continue during the foster care licensing process. Providers who meet all of the foster care licensing requirements will be licensed as a foster parent.

Laws have changed to allow foster parents to be certified at different levels based on their training and experience. Level 1 certification is

reserved for “child-specific placements” only. For relative caregivers, this means you are licensed to care for your specific relative, but not any other foster children. There are fewer requirements and you need to do only 6 hours of training. Level 1 providers receive \$215 per month (\$220 after January 1, 2011).

All foster parents certified as Level 1 providers will have the opportunity to move up to a Level 2 certification, which offers a higher monthly payment that is based on the age and needs of the child in care. You will need an additional 30 hours of training, as well as 10 hours of training each year to keep your license.

There are additional certifications for foster parents who are licensed as treatment foster homes. They care for children with special behavioral, mental, or physical health care needs.

The licensing agency will work with you to try to remove any barriers you may have to becoming a licensed foster parent.

If a relative caregiver is unable to be licensed as a foster parent, there may be an opportunity to continue as a court-ordered relative caregiver (and receive the Kinship Care payments) if the child welfare agency recommends and the court orders the placement to continue.

DCF is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access this information in an alternate format, or need it translated to another language, please contact the Division of Safety and Permanence at (608) 266-8787 or 711 TTY. For civil rights questions call (608) 422-6889 or 711 TTY (Toll Free).

A copy of the current DCF 56 Foster Care Licensing code can be found at: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/0131.pdf>.



## Becoming Licensed as a Foster Parent When Caring for a Family Member



Division of Safety and Permanence