

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) promotes the connections of relatives to children placed in foster care. DCF recognizes the importance of familial connection and wants to ensure relatives receive necessary support from child welfare agencies as they fulfill this essential need for children.

Maintaining familial connections benefits children by creating stability, preserving cultural connections, and influencing reunification for children in foster care. Every child deserves to have a special connection that only family can provide.

*The Fostering Connections to Increasing Success and Adoptions Act of 2008* included multiple changes impacting children in foster care, aiming to increase relative involvement with children placed in out-of-home care. These changes led to Wisconsin's Level of Care initiative, which requires child welfare agencies to license all qualified relative caregivers as foster parents.



## FOSTERING BY FAMILIES

DCF recognizes and appreciates that families step up and care for each other in times of need; that's just what families do. Family provides children with meaningful connections that develop their sense of belonging. While in out-of-home care, that sense of belonging helps the child feel safe and stable.

When a child welfare agency finds it necessary to remove a child from the parent due to abuse or neglect, the agency is required to 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 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, including:

- Recognition as an essential part of the foster care team;
- Benefits for both you and the child you have taken in - healthcare coverage, WIC benefits, childcare assistance, Food Share, free school meals, etc.;
- An initial clothing allowance when the child is first placed in foster care;
- Respite care to give the caregivers a break. Respite care is care provided for 48+ hours, or another time frame arranged with licensing agency approval;
- Payment through the Foster Parent Insurance Program for damages or injuries caused by a child placed in your home that are not fully covered by private insurance policies;
- The right to appeal decisions made about your home and decisions to remove the child from your home after the child has been placed for 6+ months; and
- The ability to truly make a difference in the life of a child!



## FOSTER CARE LICENSING

All foster parents are given a Level of Care certification based on qualifications, training hours, reference checks and prior experiences. Level 1 certification is reserved for "child-specific placements." For relative caregivers, this means you are licensed to care for your specific relative, but not any other foster children.

There are fewer requirements to qualify for Level 1 licensure, including 6 hours of training. Level 1 providers also receive \$244 per month per child, regardless of the level of the child's needs.

All foster parents certified as Level 1 caregivers have the opportunity to move up to a Level 2 certification. The higher level of certification offers an increased monthly payment, which starts at \$404 per child per month, based on the age and needs of the child. In order to be certified as a Level 2 caregiver, you will need to complete an additional 30 hours of training. In order to be re-licensed as a Level 2 provider after your original licensure period, you will need to complete 10 hours of training each year to maintain your license. The licensing agency will work with you to try to remove any barriers you may have to becoming a licensed foster parent.

There are higher certifications for foster parents who are licensed as Level 3-5 foster homes. These foster parents meet additional qualifications and have the experience necessary to provide treatment level care. They care for children with special behavioral, mental, or physical health care needs.

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 Kinship Care payments) if the child welfare agency recommends and the court orders the placement to continue.

A copy of the current Ch. DCF 56 Foster Care Licensing Code can be found at: [http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin\\_code/dcf/021\\_099/56/](http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/dcf/021_099/56/).



The Department of Children and Families is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access services, receive information in an alternate format, or need information translated to another language, please call (608) 266-8787. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or speech disabled can use the free Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) – 711 to contact the department.  
DCF-P-4092 (R. 08/2019)



## BECOMING LICENSED AS A FOSTER PARENT WHEN CARING FOR A FAMILY MEMBER



DIVISION OF SAFETY AND PERMANENCE