

PROCEDURE FOR OBTAINING AN INITIAL LICENSE TO OPERATE A CHILD PLACING AGENCY

Child Placing Agencies are child welfare agencies required to be licensed under s. 48.60, Wisconsin Statutes, and ch. DCF 54 to place or receive children for placement into adoptive homes, foster homes or group homes, to accept custody or guardianship of children or to license foster homes and / or treatment foster homes. The Department of Children and Families (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, contact the Division of Safety and Permanence at (608) 266-8787 (general) or (888)-692-1401 (TTY). For civil rights questions, call (608) 422-6889 or (866) 864-4585 TTY (toll free).

1. Begin by determining the need for the program you are considering and the proposed geographic areas to be served. Involve other agencies and members of the community in which you intend to serve children; engage in discussions with potential agencies that will be interested in contracting with you for your services to license foster homes, place children or provide adoption services. As part of your license application, you must submit written supporting documentation from current or potential referring placement sources (such as counties, child placing agencies or other placement sources) indicating that there is a demonstrated need for the services your agency is proposing to offer.
2. Read and study the enclosed "DCF 54 Licensing Rules for Child Placing Agencies" and all other administrative codes related to the operation of a Child Placing Agency.
3. Decide who will assume the responsibilities of administrator / executive, director (if applicable) and casework supervisor. Ensure that there is sufficient staff hired to meet the required staff-to-child ratios. Qualifications of staff are as follows:
 - a) **Executive / Administrator** (meet all of the following)
Possess knowledge of child welfare services; and demonstrated actual or potential administrative skill; **and** graduate of college or university with at least 15 graduate credits in social sciences; **and** 2 years experience in administrative or supervisory capacity.
 - b) **Director of Social Services** (optional position)
Master's degree in social work; **and** 2 years post-Master's experience in supervisory capacity with experience in family / child welfare.
 - c) **Casework Supervisor**
Master's degree in social work or its equivalent; **and** 2 year's supervised experience in family / child welfare; **and**
 - **If placing children in foster care:** One year of experience in study of foster home licensing, placement and supervision of foster care.
 - **If placing children in treatment foster care:** Licensed or certified social worker under ch. 457 and ch. SFC 3 and Master's degree in a social work related field or Bachelor's degree and 2 year's post-degree experience in a social work related field.
 - **If accepting guardianship and placing children for adoption:** One year of experience in study, placement and post-placement services in licensed adoption agency.
 - d) **Advanced Social Worker**
 - Master's degree in social work; **or**
 - One year of graduate school in social work or its equivalent and 2 years supervised experience in family / child welfare; **or**
 - College graduation and 3 years supervised experience in family / child welfare; and 12 graduate credits in social work; and approved in-service training.
 - e) **Other Social Work Staff**
College graduate with 15 hours in social sciences **and** an approved in-service training program within 1 year of employment.
 - f) **Social Work Assistants**
Must have professional social worker supervision **and** may not assume responsibilities and duties normally assigned to a social worker.

4. If your agency will place children in foster homes and / or license foster homes, your agency is required to place and/or supervise at least 5 children a year. If your agency will accept guardianship and / or place children for adoption, the agency must place at least 15 children in adoption a year. Child placing agencies are required to be corporations. Decide whether the corporation is "For-Profit" or "Not-For-Profit". Contact the Internal Revenue Service to obtain a Federal Tax Identification Number (FEIN) which must be included on the application for licensure.
5. Prepare a business plan including start-up and operating budgets. You must be able to demonstrate to the department that you have sufficient start-up funds to carry you through the initial year of operation and must provide evidence to that effect. The agency should have at least \$25,000 available of operating expenses for the first year of operation. This \$25,000 may be a line of credit, cash or a loan.
6. Check with a lawyer, accountant and / or governmental agency to determine any obligations regarding income tax withholding, social security contributions, worker's compensation and unemployment compensation.
7. The board of the corporation shall adopt written policies for personnel. Policies and procedures should be detailed and well written so staff will know what your expectations are and should include the following areas:
 - a) Job specifications for all positions of 6 months or longer duration in the agency including compensation, hours of work and performance evaluations.
 - b) Staff pattern. There shall be staff sufficient in number and qualifications for the scope of the agency's services.
 - c) Vacations, leaves of absence, sick leave and holidays.
 - d) Probationary status.
 - e) Grievance procedures.
 - f) Method of wage adjustments.
 - g) Termination procedures.
 - h) Retirement program.
 - i) Agency chain of command.
 - j) Employment outside the agency.
 - k) Health and other insurance programs.
 - l) For the specific job classification of which application is being made:
 - Compensation.
 - Hours of work.
 - Job specifications.
 - Performance evaluations.
8. The agency shall develop and follow written policies concerning the children you intend to serve, including:
 - a) Intake policies that include asking the referring party to indicate if the child or at least one of the child's biological parents is of American Indian descent.
 - b) Accepting a child only when authorized to do so.
 - c) Obtaining written medical consents for immunizations and emergency and routine medical treatment.
 - d) Placement and discharge from service.
 - e) Continuing services to child and family and / or foster family while child is in placement.
 - f) Confidentiality and record keeping.
9. Arrange necessary liability insurance coverage. A certificate of insurance or an insurance binder will need to be submitted with the application for a license.
10. Obtain equipment and furnishings necessary for agency's functioning, including locked cabinets for confidential materials.
11. Obtain any forms needed for either the children's files or staff files. The department has developed forms that meet the requirements of the rules (see the enclosed checklists, CFS-369, Personnel Record Checklist; CFS 380, Foster Child Case Record Checklist). Copies of DCF forms are also available on the DCF homepage at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwlicensing/forms> .
12. Caregiver Background Checks (CBC) **completed by the Department of Children and Families**. See the enclosed Background Check Information Schedule for information about CBC fees. This fee should be included on the same check or money order as your licensee fee. Submit completed Background Information Disclosure (BID) forms with the initial application and at every continuation for the individuals listed below.
 - a) Licensee – i.e., owner, president of the board of directors of the corporation.
 - b) If the CPA office is located in a home, all adult non-client residents of the home who are not staff.

Note: Wis. Admin. Code DHS 12.07(3) states that when a person begins residing at or is expected to reside at an entity, or the signatory for licensure changes, the entity shall, as soon as possible, but no later than the department's next business day, report the residency, expected residency, or signatory change to the department and submit to the department a completed BID form for the new non-client resident or new signatory.

13. Caregiver Background Checks (CBC) **completed by the licensee.** You (licensee / owner) are responsible for conducting CBCs (which includes collecting BID forms, submitting completed DJ-LE250 or DJ-LE-250A forms and fees to DOJ, and conducting any necessary investigations) for the individuals listed below. See the enclosed Background Check Information Schedule for additional information.
 - a) Administrator and employees age 18 or older.
 - b) Student intern, age 18 or older, who will have access to children in care for 60 days or more.
 - c) Any person under contract with the CPA who will have access to children in care.
 - d) Licensed foster parents and pre-adoptive parents.
 - e) Non-client residents age 12 through 17 who answer "Yes" to any question in Section A on the BID form.
14. A licensing fee of \$254.10 is charged every two years. A prorated fee of $\frac{1}{4}$ the total fee is charged for the initial 6-month probationary license. A check or money order that includes both the CBC fee and the license fee should be made payable to the "Department of Children and Families" and mailed to your regional Department of Children and Families office along with your application materials.
15. The following materials and information must be submitted as part of your application for initial licensure:
 - a) Completed License Application – Child Placing Agencies and all materials applicable to your agency.
 - b) Completed BID forms for the licensee (or designated board member).
 - c) CBC fee and licensing fee.
 - d) Certificate of insurance for liability insurance coverage.
 - e) Completed Licensing Checklist – Child Placing Agency.
 - f) Agency policies and procedures.
16. Allow at least 60 working days after the submission of all required application materials (including fees) as a projected date of licensure to allow for a complete review by your licensing specialist, including results from required Caregiver Background Checks. The assigned licensing specialist will contact you to schedule an on-site visit. During the visit, items not in compliance with the licensing rules will be identified and you will be instructed to request another initial licensing study when all the items have been met. When you notify the department to schedule another visit, the department will attempt to make a visit within the next 20 working days. It may take longer depending on regional licensing workloads. If you are not in compliance after 2 visits, your application for a license may be denied because you do not meet the minimum requirements for a license.
17. Under the authority of s. 48.73, Wisconsin Statutes, the department must be granted unrestricted access to the licensed premises for the purpose of monitoring your compliance with the licensing rules. If you fail to allow access to a department representative, the department shall take enforcement action against your license under s. 48.715, Wisconsin Statutes, including issuance of orders, forfeitures or revocation of your license.
18. To apply for a license, at least 60 days prior to your desired date of licensure, mail all completed application materials and one check to:

CHILD WELFARE LICENSING
DCF/DSP – Room E200
P.O. Box 8916
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