



STATE OF WISCONSIN

Foster Parent Handbook



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, please contact (608) 266-8787 or the (Wisconsin Relay Service WRS) - 711 TTY. For civil rights questions call (608) 422-6889 or (Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) - 711 TTY.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WelcomeIntroduction

Chapter 1: Foster Care Overview..... Section 1

Chapter 2: Expectations of Foster Parents..... Section 2

Chapter 3: Caring for Children in Foster Care..... Section 3

Chapter 4: Developing and Maintaining Family Connections Section 4

Chapter 5: Foster Family Self Care..... Section 5

Appendices Section 6

Bibliography Section 7

WELCOME TO FOSTER PARENTING IN WISCONSIN

This handbook is intended to give basic information about foster care in Wisconsin to newly-licensed foster parents and to serve as a refresher for experienced foster parents. In it, foster parents will find an overview of the foster care program, information about what is expected of foster parents, a discussion about the care of children in foster care, an explanation of the critical need to work cooperatively with birth families, and an emphasis on the importance of foster family self-care. This handbook also provides additional tools and resource lists if foster parents want to learn more about a specific topic.

It is important to understand that this handbook is **not** intended to replace Wisconsin foster parent licensing requirements included in state statutes, Ch. DCF 56, Adm. Code, "Foster Home Care for Children." Foster families should always consult the State of Wisconsin's licensing rules for specific information about licensing standards. Appendix 2 in Section 6 of this Handbook contains a web link to access Ch. DCF 56, Adm. Code, if foster parents want to review licensing requirements.

Also, it is important to know that each licensing agency has the authority to create policies that outline additional requirements beyond the State's minimum standards. In addition, tribes have the authority to establish tribe-specific standards for licensing foster homes. Because licensing agencies have this flexibility, foster care services might look a little different from agency to agency, tribe to tribe, or county to county. It is always a good idea for foster parents to first check with their licensing agency if they have a question about something.

We have an immense appreciation for all that foster families do. The hard work and commitment they provide do not go unnoticed. In fact, we all know that without dedicated and caring foster parents, the foster care program in Wisconsin could not provide the safety and stability that the children who come into care need so much.

**Thank you for providing hope, guidance, and assistance to
Wisconsin's children and families!**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Department of Children and Families, formerly, the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, would like to thank the following developers and contributors to this handbook, especially those who wrote letters of personal experience that bring this handbook to life.

Foster Parent Handbook Committee

Committee Chair:

Oriana Carey – Project Manager; Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center, Adoption Resources of Wisconsin, Inc.

Committee Members:

Kari Behling – Recruitment Supervisor; LSS First Choice for Children (in partnership with the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare), Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, Inc.

Toni Chambers – St. Croix County Foster Parent and Trainer and Curriculum Developer for the Western Wisconsin Training Partnership

Jennifer Heil – Foster Care Coordinator; Outagamie County Department of Health and Human Services

Sarah Kate Johnson – Out-of-Home Care Planner; Bureau of Program and Policies, Division of Children and Family Services, Department of Health and Family Services

Cathy Pelot – former Wood County Foster Parent and current Family Group Home Operator

Tanya Vickery – Foster Care Coordinator; Winnebago County Department of Human Services

Other Contributors

Linda Kuzma – Resource Librarian; Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center, Adoption Resources of Wisconsin, Inc.

Jane Ottow – LGBT Youth Program Coordinator and Child and Family Therapist; Children's Service Society of Wisconsin

John McMahon – Jordan Institute for Families, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Social Work

We would like to extend a special thanks to all the foster parents, state, county, tribal and private agency staff, birth parents, and former youth in care who provided information and comments to the handbook committee.