

Levels of Care Desk Guide

What is Levels of Care?

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) implemented Level of Cares to create consistency in placement settings and foster home licensing statewide. Wis. Admin. Code ch. DCF 56 establishes licensing requirements for foster homes and foster parents to protect the health, safety, and well-being of children placed into foster homes. It also establishes the requirements for each level of care certification.

Five Levels of Care

Level One: Foster parent who has a previous or existing relationship with a foster child or their family and **is not** a relative or like-kin to the foster child.

Level Two: Foster parent who is a relative or like-kin to the foster child or a general foster parent.

Level Three: Treatment foster parent that can provide additional supervision and care to children with higher needs.

Level Four: Treatment foster parent that can provide additional supervision and care to a specific population of children with higher needs.

Level 5: Treatment foster parent for a specific child that requires 24-hour awake care by staff, is expected to need long-term care into adulthood, and would benefit from a home-like environment with fewer children than a congregate care setting.

How is my Level of Care Certification Determined?

All foster homes are assigned a Level of Care during the licensing process based on the foster parent's knowledge, training, skills, experience, and relationship the foster child. Each LOC has a specific number of training hours and experience requirements associated with it.



Applicants and licensed foster parents should be involved in determining which certification level they want to pursue. For more information, be sure to talk to your licensing agency.

Certification Requirements

LOC	Relative & Like-Kin Foster Home	Non-Relative Foster Home
Level 1	N/A	Applicant has previous or existing relationship with foster child or their family and is not a relative or like-kin.
Level 2	Applicant is a relative or like-kin to the foster child or their family.	3 favorable references from non-relatives
Level 3	<p>Applicant is a relative or like-kin to the foster child or their family.</p> <p>Have at least 3 of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A minimum of one year of experience with a child residing in the applicant's home. 2. A minimum 5 years of experience working with or parenting children. 3. A minimum of 500 hours of experience as a respite care provider for children. 4. A high school diploma or the equivalent. 5. A college, vocational, technical, or advanced degree in a child's treatment needs. 6. Work or personal experience for which the applicant has demonstrated the knowledge, skill, ability, and motivation to meet the needs of a foster child with a level of need of 3. 	<p>4 favorable references: 3 from non-relatives and 1 from a related adult (preferably an adult child)</p> <p>Have at least 3 of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A minimum of one year of experience as a foster parent or kinship care provider. 2. A minimum 5 years of experience working with or parenting children. 3. A minimum of 500 hours of experience as a respite care provider for children. 4. A high school diploma or the equivalent. 5. A college, vocational, technical, or advanced degree in a child's treatment needs. 6. Work or personal experience for which the applicant has demonstrated the knowledge, skill, ability, and motivation to meet the needs of a foster child with a level of need of 3.
Level 4	<p>Applicant is a relative or like-kin to the foster child or their family.</p> <p>Have at least 4 of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A minimum of one year of experience with a child with needs that require additional supervision and care. 2. A minimum 5 years of experience working with or parenting children. 3. A minimum of 500 hours of experience as a respite care provider for children. 4. A high school diploma or the equivalent. 5. A college, vocational, technical, or advanced degree in a child's treatment needs. 6. Work or personal experience for which the applicant has demonstrated the knowledge, skill, ability, and motivation to meet the needs of a foster child with a level of need of 4. 	<p>4 favorable references: 3 from non-relatives and 1 from a related adult (preferably an adult child)</p> <p>Have at least 4 of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A minimum of one year of experience as a foster parent or kinship care provider caring for a child who has a level of need of 3 or greater. 2. A minimum 5 years of experience working with or parenting children. 3. A minimum of 500 hours of experience as a respite care provider for children. 4. A high school diploma or the equivalent. 5. A college, vocational, technical, or advanced degree in a child's treatment needs. 6. Work or personal experience for which the applicant has demonstrated the knowledge, skill, ability, and motivation to meet the needs of a foster child with a level of need of 4.
Level 5	Level 5 Foster Home Guide	

Foster Parent Training Requirements

LOC	Relative & Like-Kin Foster Home	Non-Relative Foster Home
Level 1	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 hours of preplacement training before or after the placement of a child, but no later than 6 months after initial licensure
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 hours of preplacement training before or after the placement of a child, but no later than 6 months after initial licensure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 hours of preplacement training before or after initial licensure but prior to the placement of any child in the home 30 hours of initial licensing training during initial licensing period 10 hours of ongoing training each year of licensure beyond the initial licensing period
Level 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 36 hours of preplacement training before or after initial licensure but prior to the placement of any child in the home 24 hours of initial licensing training during initial licensing period 18 hours of ongoing training each year of licensure beyond the initial licensing period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 36 hours of preplacement training before or after initial licensure but prior to the placement of any child in the home 24 hours of initial licensing training during initial licensing period 18 hours of ongoing training each year of licensure beyond the initial licensing period
Level 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40 hours of preplacement training 30 hours of initial licensing training during initial licensing period (6 hours must be child-specific or population-specific training) 24 hours of ongoing training each year of licensure beyond the initial licensing period (8 hours must be child-specific or population-specific training) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40 hours of preplacement training 30 hours of initial licensing training during initial licensing period (6 hours must be child-specific or population-specific training) 24 hours of ongoing training each year of licensure beyond the initial licensing period (8 hours must be child-specific or population-specific training)
Level 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40 hours of preplacement training 30 hours of initial licensing training during initial licensing period (6 hours must be child-specific or population-specific training) 24 hours of ongoing training each year of licensure beyond the initial licensing period (8 hours must be child-specific or population-specific training) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40 hours of preplacement training 30 hours of initial licensing training during initial licensing period (6 hours must be child-specific or population-specific training) 24 hours of ongoing training each year of licensure beyond the initial licensing period (8 hours must be child-specific or population-specific training)

*Only one of the foster parents of a relative or like-kin foster home is required to complete the preplacement, initial licensing, or ongoing training for level of care certifications 2 - 4.

*Level 5 Program Staff have different training requirements under s. 56.135 (j) & (k).

Agency Requirements

LOC	Agency Contact	Respite
Level 1	<p>At least 1 in-person contact per month with the foster child (more than 50% of the contacts must be in the foster home, occurring no less than every other month)</p> <p>At least 1 contact per month with the foster parent, which can be in-person, via phone or electronic format</p>	Licensing agency may establish policies and procedures to fund respite care for a foster parent
Level 2	<p>At least 1 in-person contact per month with the foster child (more than 50% of the contacts must be in the foster home, occurring no less than every other month)</p> <p>At least 1 contact per month with the foster parent, which can be in-person, via phone or electronic format</p>	Licensing agency may establish policies and procedures to fund respite care for a foster parent
Level 3	<p>At least 1 in-person contact every other week with the foster child (at least one contact per month must be in the foster home)</p> <p>At least 2 in-person contacts per month with the foster parent (at least one must be in the foster home)</p>	Licensing agency must fund and arrange for a foster parent to have 8 to 24 consecutive hours of respite care per month. The combination of days should be determined by the foster parent and licensing agency.
Level 4	<p>At least 1 in-person contact every other week with the foster child (at least one contact per month must be in the foster home)</p> <p>At least 2 in-person contacts per month with the foster parent (at least one must be in the foster home)</p>	Licensing agency must fund and arrange for a foster parent to have 8 to 24 consecutive hours of respite care per month. The combination of days should be determined by the foster parent and licensing agency.
Level 5	<p>At least 1 in-person contact every other week with the foster child (at least one contact per month must be in the foster home)</p> <p>At least 2 in-person contacts per month with the foster parent (at least one must be in the foster home)</p>	A Level 5 foster home may only provide respite care to a foster child who was previously placed in the foster home or a foster child specifically identified and approved by the department on a planned basis.

*If a foster child with a level of need below 3 is placed in a Level 3 or 4 foster home, the agency must have at least 1 in-person contact with the foster child each month that the child is placed in the home.

*One agency contact with a foster parent per month may be combined with an agency contact with a foster child.

Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS)

All children placed in out-of-home care are assigned a level of need by the Child and Adolescent Needs & Strengths (CANS) assessment. The CANS assessment identifies the child's strengths and needs across several life domains. The information is used to inform placement decisions.

A foster parent's level of care certification does not need to match the child's level of need. If a foster parent's level of care certification is lower than the child's level of need, an exception must be documented by the placing agency that outlines what additional supports or resources the foster parent will receive to meet the child's needs.



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 the Division of Safety and Permanence at (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.