



Sleeping Arrangements Consent

Best Practice Tips for Conversations with Children

Wis. Admin. Code § DCF 56.07(4) added requirements for children to provide consent for certain sleeping arrangements if the child is aged 6 and over. This document outlines the situations in which consent must be obtained for situations in which a child is placed in a non-relative foster home and for situations in which a child is placed in any foster home. It is helpful to think about the obtaining of consent as a process of a child granting *permission* to share a bedroom with a child.

The specific situations in which foster children aged 6 and over are required to provide consent in **non-relative foster homes** include:

- When a foster child aged 6+ is sharing a bedroom with another child (DCF 56.07(4)(d))
- When a foster child aged 6+ is sharing a bedroom with an adult who is not their sibling or someone they were previously sharing a bedroom with prior to one of them turning 18 years of age (DCF 56.07(4)(c)3)
- When a foster child aged 6+ shares a bed with a child they are related to (DCF 56.07(4)(f))
- When a foster child aged 6+ does not have a sleeping space with a door (DCF 56.07(4)(j))

The specific situations in which foster children who are 6 years of age or over are required to provide consent in **any foster home** (including relative and like-kin licensed homes) include:

- When a foster child is regularly sleeping in a separate structure from the foster home (DCF 56.07(4)(m))

The approval of the supervising agency is required in **all** instances. No specific form or signature is required. Consent is obtained through a conversation with the child and documented in a case note.

Conversations can explore the most suitable sleeping arrangements, preferences, and honor children's choice. A few strategies include:

- **Determine sleeping environment when making placement determination**

When determining the placement of a child in out-of-home care, the sleeping arrangements of children should be part of the assessment of the best placement setting, noting the specific needs of the child, and incorporation of the child's voice.

- **Clear identification of where and who a child will sleep in proximity with/to**

Include information about the location of the sleeping space, the type of sleeping surface, and who the child may share sleeping space with. Include individual sleeping habits of other children.

Child welfare professionals **should not provide personal identifying information of other children** who reside in the foster home when having sleeping arrangement conversations. It may be important to share gender expression, sexual orientation, and nighttime behaviors (e.g., snoring) with children and caregivers to help make the best sleeping arrangement



decision.

- **Child welfare professionals should not use coercion or tell the child that there are no other options available**

Children should have a choice in their sleeping arrangements, as it is a necessary safe experience for children to feel secure when sleeping. Ensure that this vulnerable time of day is secure and that a child's consent/permission has been obtained to support their own personal sense of security. Licensing agencies may grant exceptions in accordance with DCF 56 if another sleeping space in the home is modified to create additional arrangements for children placed in the home.

- **Discomforts associated with sharing a sleeping space**

Discuss the sleeping arrangements available and listen to any of the child's discomfort regarding sharing a sleeping space. It may be helpful to share pictures of sleeping spaces, highlight the difference between discomfort and safety, and offer alternatives. Consider discussing a trial period of the sleeping arrangement and revisiting the conversation upon a follow-up visit.

- **Consent is only required of children who are in out-of-home care**

Children and other individuals who reside in the home of the caregiver are not subject to DCF 56 sleeping arrangement requirements. It may be helpful to discuss the sleeping arrangements with other household members, but it is not required to document or obtain consent.

- **Consent/Permission regarding sleeping arrangements must be documented in eWiSACWIS as a Case Note**

If your agency does not have eWiSACWIS, please document it in the child's official record the consent/permission obtained and any additional relevant details.

- **Sleeping arrangements should be discussed at each face-to-face contact home visit**

During all visits to the home, child welfare professionals should check-in with the child on the child's comfort and safety in the home. Document findings and decisions in a case note, including any concerns the child shares regarding sleeping arrangements and addressing the concerns for safety related issues.

- **When household members change, revisit sleeping arrangements**

Discuss changes in household composition when caregivers or children enter or leave a foster home. Discuss new sleeping arrangements, sleeping habits, and any safety issue or other concerns.

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