WISCONSIN'S ONGOING SERVICE STANDARDS

Division of Safety and Permanence

June 2026

Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

INTRODUCTION 4
REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL CASE TYPES 6
The Case Transition Process 6
New Information Received While Open to Ongoing Services 10
When a Parent or Family Moves 11
Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children 12
Exceptions 12
CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES IN-HOME CASE TYPES 13
Assessment and Planning Process 13
Timeframe for Initial Contacts 14
Engagement During the Change Process 15
Family Teaming 15
Determining What Must Change 17
Developing the Family Case Plan 18
Evaluating the Family Case Plan 21
Managing Safety 23
Contact Requirements 24
Locating and Involving Non-Household Parents, Relatives, and Like-kin 26
Evaluating the Safety Plan 27
Achieving Safety 28
Closure 29
CHILD WELFARE IN-HOME CASE TYPES 32
All Requirements 33
CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES OUT-OF-HOME CASE TYPES 34
The Assessment and Planning Process 35
Timeframe for Initial Contacts 36
Family Interaction During Ongoing Services 36
Engagement During the Change Process 37
Determining What Must Change 38
Developing the Permanency Plan 40
Additional Requirements When the Child is an Indian Child 43
Managing Safety During Ongoing Services 44
Confirming a Safe Environment when Children are Placed in Out-of-Home Care 46
Contact Requirements 54
Locating & Involving Non-Household Parents, Relatives, and Like-kin 59

Children Missing from Out-of-Home Care **60**
Evaluating the Permanency Plan **60**
Revising the Permanency Plan **62**
Evaluating the Safety Plan **64**
Evaluating and Revising the Safety Plan 64
Reconfirming Safe Environments When Children are Placed in Out-of-Home Care **65**
Additional Situations When Reconfirming a Safe Environment is Required 66
Placement Danger Threats and Placement Decisions 66
Permanence Determination and Achievement **68**
Full Disclosure 72
Achieving Permanence 73
Permanency Goals 74
Transitioning a Child to Permanence **82**
Independent Living Planning **83**
Case Closure **91**
CHILD WELFARE OUT-OF-HOME CARE CASES 94
Family Interaction Plan **95**
Child Welfare Cases (CHIPS only 96
Additional Requirements 96
Case Planning **97**
Determining Change **98**
Developing the Permanency Plan **99**
Confirming a Safe Environment When Children are Placed in Out-of-Home Care **102**
Contact Requirements **111**
Locating & Involving Non-Household Parents, Relatives, and Like-kin **114**
Documentation 114
Children Missing from Out-of-Home Care **115**
Permanency Plan Evaluation **115**
Subsequent Permanency Plan 118
Timeframe and Documentation 118
Reconfirming Safe Environments **119**
Documentation 120
Permanence Determination and Achievement **121**
Achieving Permanence 125
Prior to reunification for all case types 127
Documentation Requirements 133
Independent Living Planning **134**
Case Closure **144**
Requirements for All Children Placed in Out-of-Home Care 145

Sleeping Arrangements **150**
Minor Parent with Child in Out-of-Home Care Placement **151**
Placing a Child in Out-of-Home Care **152**
Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Tool **154**
Change of Placement **156**
ADDITIONAL OUT-OF-HOME CARE POLICIES 158
Family Interaction When a Child is in Out-of-Home Care **158**
Locating Non-Household Parents, Relatives, and Like-kin **165**
Trial Reunification **174**
Child Welfare Professional Face-to-Face Contact Requirements **183**
Children Missing from Out-of-Home Care **188**
Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan **195**
Extension of Out-of-Home Care **201**
Supervised Independent Living **209**
Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard to Promote Normalcy **213**
Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children **220**
Regulations 229
Out-of-Home Care Placement in Settings Certified as Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP) **248**
Appendix 1: Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act Resources **261**
Appendix 2: Identification and Engagement Tools for Locating Non-Household Parents, Relatives and Like-kin **262**
Appendix 3: Placement Danger Threats **263**
Appendix 4: Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan (Additional Information) **271**
Appendix 5: Supervised Independent Living Agreements and Guidelines **275**
Appendix 6: Information to be Provided to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children **283**
Appendix 7: Assessment When a Child is No Longer Missing **285**
GLOSSARY OF TERMS 287

ONGOING SERVICES STANDARDS

INTRODUCTION

The Ongoing Services Standards provide a framework for the ongoing case management process and focuses on safety, permanence, and well-being for children and their families served under Wisconsin Statute Chapters 48 and 938. Practice expectations set by the Standards ensure families statewide receive consistent, effective, and responsive intervention that supports the change process. Practice requirements are contained within the boxes, and additional information is included outside of the boxes to provide further guidance about best practice. Child welfare agencies must ensure that all actions of either agency or contracted staff comply with Standards. While the Standards establish requirements throughout the ongoing case process, county agencies and the Division of Milwaukee Child Welfare (DMCW) may develop more prescriptive policies and procedures.

When conditions exist to warrant the opening of a family for Ongoing Services, on a voluntary basis or by a court order, the purpose of agency intervention must be clearly communicated to all parties involved (parents/guardians[1], youth, and any legal parties). The purpose of agency intervention directs the case planning process and clarifies the child welfare professional's role with the household, as well as formal and informal providers. Service provision decisions are based on inclusive assessments and planning with the family to establish goals that achieve measurable outcomes. Throughout the provision of Ongoing Services, the primary role of the agency child welfare professional is to engage families in a positive working relationship to achieve safety and permanence for children.

Safety

Safety intervention is a continual process that focuses on assessing for, and controlling, impending danger threats while collaborating with parents/guardians to establish a capacity to minimize risk factors and protect children from harm.

Child Protective Services (CPS) implements and manages sufficient, feasible, and sustainable safety plans to control for impending danger threats. Implementing a safety plan does not mean a child is safe; rather, impending danger threats are controlled through an in-home safety plan or an out-of-home placement until protective capacities are established, and the family is able to manage safety. When out-of-home placement is required, agencies must determine whether the placement environment is safe for the duration of the placement.

[1] Parent/guardian as used throughout these Standards refers to any individual with legal guardianship or legal custody of a child including an Indian custodian as defined in Wis Stat. s. 48.02(8p).

The safety intervention process uses a family centered approach where parents/guardians are viewed as the experts in their family and, as such, are the focus of the intervention. This requires agencies to continually engage families in a change process while simultaneously recognizing that only the family can decide when or if they are ready to change. Support of a parent/guardian's right to self-determination is significant in achieving sustainable change and ensuring safety for children in the household.

Permanence

When a child is placed in out-of-home care, the child welfare professional must begin planning for the child's permanence. Legal permanency options include reunification, guardianship and adoption.

Permanency planning must reflect the voices and insights of parents and their informal supports. If the child is not able to be placed with a relative or like-kin, the child welfare agency should help facilitate partnerships between the family and the out-of-home care provider to achieve permanency and maintain the child's familial relationships and cultural identities.

Well-Being

A child's well-being is dependent upon the caretaker's ability to meet their physical health, mental health, behavioral health, educational and cultural needs. Agencies should make efforts to assess child and adult needs in these areas throughout the case process and address identified needs as part of case planning activities. Children and families should be meaningfully engaged in all aspects of the service process to build and maintain a trusting, supportive working relationship.

Safe Case Closure

Safe case closure occurs when a child is safe, protected, and in a permanent home. Before ending involvement, the agency should assist the family in establishing supports that will remain in place after case closure. These supports may include connections within the family network or community that can be created, facilitated or reinforced to provide the parent/guardian ongoing resources and assistance.

REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL CASE TYPES

The Case Transition Process

Transitioning occurs when the agency explains the purpose of continued agency intervention while introducing the family to a new child welfare professional.

The Transition Process includes:

- Sharing and understanding information collected and decisions made during the initial assessment process, ongoing case management services, or other points in the case process.
- Ensuring a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities of child welfare professionals and formal and informal family supports.
- Identifying additional agency and community resources, services, and supports to the family.
- Preparing the newly assigned child welfare professional for the initial meeting with the family.

Applicability

This Standard applies to all families, except youth justice in-home families, when there is a transition from one child welfare professional to another child welfare professional. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Internal agency transitions.
- Changes of venue from one county to another county.
- Transitions from a county to an Indian Child Welfare Agency.
- Joint supervision situations.
- Transitions from a county child welfare professional to a contracted public adoption child welfare professional.
- Transitions from a contracted public adoption child welfare professional to a county child welfare professional.

Supporting Families and Agency Requirements During the Transition Process

The child welfare professional initiating the transition maintains responsibility for case management until the conclusion of the transition staffing. This includes:

- Managing and overseeing the safety plan, as applicable.
- Managing and overseeing the Family Interaction Plan, as applicable.
- Communicating with a child and their parents/caregiver/legal custodian/Indian custodian/state guardian.
- Communicating with assigned tribal workers, formal and informal service providers, and out-of-home care providers.

When there is more than one child welfare professional assigned, those child welfare professionals shall determine who has the responsibility for the items listed above.

Preparing for Transition

The newly assigned child welfare professional reviews documentation to prepare for the transition staffing. Full disclosure of information and determinations about the family assists the child welfare professional in assuming safety and case management responsibilities. The following documentation will be reviewed prior to the transition staffing as applicable:

- All assessments
- Case plan, Permanency Plan and Court Report and any other court related documentation
- Safety Analysis
- In-Home Safety Plan
- Confirming Safe Environments
- Family Interaction Plan
- Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths tool (CANS)
- Out-of-Home Care Support Plan

Transition Staffing Requirements

Requirements for All Families

In situations where the Initial Assessment process requires a family to be opened for ongoing services, the transition staffing must occur within seven working days from the ongoing services supervisor's receipt of an approved Initial Assessment in eWiSACWIS. The transition staffing must include both the initial assessment and the ongoing child welfare professional.

For all other types of transition, the two agency child welfare professionals must schedule a transition staffing.

The following must be discussed at the transition staffing:

- Documentation, gaps in information, and decisions made.
- Child needs, including a summary of medical, mental health, and school information, as available.
- Efforts to confirm whether the child is a member or eligible for membership in a federally recognized tribe.
- If the child has been found to be an Indian child in accordance with the Indian Child Welfare Act/ Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA/WICWA); the steps taken to notify and involve the Indian child's tribe in the assessment and case plan development.
- Any existing court orders, upcoming court obligations, and timeframes for the completion of court reports.
- Status of involvement of any non-household parent and the child welfare professional's due diligence to locate and involve them.

- Status of the Birth-to-Three referral or services when maltreatment has been substantiated involving a child under the age of three.

Additional Requirements When a Child Is Unsafe (CPS Case Type)

Safety management is the primary responsibility of the agency when a CPS case type is transitioned. The transition process communicates the status of impending danger threats to the receiving child welfare professional, who will examine the safety plan to ensure it is sufficient, feasible, and sustainable.

In addition to sharing documentation, a face-to-face discussion must occur between the current and receiving child welfare professional and parent(s)/guardian(s). These conversations must be timely to ensure the oversight of the safety plan continues during case transition to ensure the child is safe and protected.

When a child is unsafe, the transition staffing includes the disclosure of:

- Identified impending danger threats.
- The safety analysis and whether it resulted in the least intrusive, sufficient, feasible, and sustainable safety plan.
- The identified safety services/actions and whether they continue to be available at the needed frequency to control each impending danger threat.
- The continued suitability, role, and commitment of safety service providers.
- The presence of existing parent/guardian protective capacities and general family strengths.
- The status of parent/guardian involvement in the safety plan.

Additional Requirements When a Child is Placed in Out-of-Home Care

When a child is placed in out-of-home care on a Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) order or a through a Voluntary Placement Agreement (VPA), the transition staffing must also include the Family Interaction Plan, including sibling contact, and whether it is sufficient to meet the developmental needs of the child. (For additional information, refer to the "Family Interaction for Child Protective Services Case Type When a Child is in Out-of-Home Care" section, located on page 159.

For all children placed in out-of-home care on a CHIPS order, Juvenile in Need of Protection or Services (JIPS) order, or Delinquency order, the transition staffing must focus on the status of the child's current placement. The following must be discussed:

- Information about the safety of the placement setting (Confirming Safe Environments).
- The most recent face-to-face contacts with the child, parent/guardian, and out-of-home care provider.
- Efforts to locate and place the child with relatives, like-kin, siblings, or other adults identified by the parent/guardian.
- The results of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool and any implications for service needs for the child or out-of-home care provider.

- The status of the placement and licensing process for any relative or like-kin out-of-home care providers, as applicable.
- Efforts to ensure that the child has regular opportunities to engage in age or developmentally appropriate activities following the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.
- The child's eligibility for independent living (IL) services, as applicable.
- Compliance with placement requirements if the child is placed in a facility certified as a Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP).
- Efforts made to comply with the Indian Child Welfare Act/Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA/WICWA) placement preferences under Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(7) for Indian children.
- Compliance with Notice requirements under Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(4)(a).
- Efforts to provide natural and unsupervised family interaction in the most natural setting that can ensure the Indian child's safety, as required by ICWA/WICWA.

For additional WICWA information and requirements, refer to the WICWA Online Resource.

Additional Requirements When Permanency is Not Achieved Within Two Years of Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)

If permanency is not achieved through the public adoption program within two years of TPR, the department may, in accordance with Wis. Stat. s. 48.43(7)(b), petition the court to transfer legal custody of the child back to the county department. The public adoption child welfare professional and county child welfare professional shall follow all transition requirements to transition ongoing case management services back to the county. The department shall remain the child's guardian and the child welfare professional shall consult with the DCF state guardian regarding any guardianship needs.

Current and previous supervisors and tribal or private agency child welfare professionals, as applicable, should participate in the transition staffing to assist in understanding and clarifying outcomes and decisions. Early collaboration must occur with the tribal child welfare agency with focus on ensuring that WICWA and ICWA requirements are met. In some situations, tribal child welfare agencies will not assign a worker at the onset of ongoing services but will ask that information regarding the child's case be shared to inform future decisions.

Transition to a child welfare professional may occur during or following the completion of the initial assessment. In some situations, the family will transition to ongoing services but will not transfer to a new child welfare professional. In these situations, the child welfare professional and supervisor will need to focus on changing roles and responsibilities to provide necessary services and supports to the child and family.

Modifying the Safety Plan

When results of the transition staffing determine the safety plan is not sufficient, feasible, or sustainable, the ongoing child welfare professional meets with the family, including the parent/guardian, child (when age appropriate), and the family's team to modify the safety plan to effectively control impending danger threats. Changes must be made with and communicated to all participants and providers involved in the safety plan.

Modifications to the Safety Analysis and Plan must be approved by a supervisor and documented on a new safety plan in eWiSACWIS.

The Department of Children and Families has current policy for accepting cases from county agencies as children transition to permanence. County agencies should reference the "Wisconsin Inter-County Agreement on Venue, Jurisdiction, Placement, and Funding Responsibility in CHIPS, JIPS, and Delinquency Cases" to support transitions between county agencies. This agreement is located at Wisconsin County Human Service Association - Resources.

Documentation

The content, date, and time of the transition staffing must be documented as a case note in the eWiSACWIS record. Agencies must determine which child welfare professional is responsible for documenting this information.

New Information Received While Open to Ongoing Services

At times, county agencies receive new reports of alleged maltreatment about families open with Ongoing Services. In other circumstances, the assigned child welfare professional may observe or receive new information about a family or out-of-home care provider and must determine if the information requires a CPS response, a modification to an existing safety plan, or a change in services or supports. In some situations, reported information does not contain any new allegations of maltreatment, but is simply information already being addressed in the case or safety plan. In these situations, the child welfare professional must seek supervisory consultation to formulate the appropriate response.

CPS Reports While Open to Ongoing Services or While a Child is Placed in Out-of-Home Care

When a report of alleged maltreatment that involves a child currently open for Ongoing Services or regarding an out-of-home care provider is received, the report must be screened and responded to in accordance with the "Child Protective Services Access and Initial Assessment Standards."

When a Parent or Family Moves

When families involved in the child welfare system relocate to another county or state, the agency may need to request a home study, supervision, or other services for the family at their new location.

Requirements to Notify Agency When a Parent or Family Moves to a New County

When a county agency learns a family currently receiving services has moved to a new county, the original county must notify the new county of residence or Division of Milwaukee Child Welfare of the family's change in residence. Notice must be provided to the new county of residence even if the original county of residence is not seeking any assistance, involvement, or change of venue from the new county agency. The notice must include:

- A brief written description of the services offered or provided by the previous county.
- The name, telephone number, and email address of a person in the previous county to contact for any additional information.

The original county agency must determine whether to:

- Make a CPS report, or
- Submit a Services Intake referral (with a description of services offered or provided) to the new county.
- If either a CPS report or Services Intake is made, the agency is in compliance with Wis. Stat. s. 48.57(2m).
    - This applies to many families under a court order.
- If the original county does not make a CPS report or Services Intake referral, the agency must still notify the new county of the family's relocation.
- Notification requirements include:
    - Use of the Change of County of Residence form (or an alternative form with the same information).
    - Call the new county agency and ask to speak with Access staff.
        - Inform Access staff that:
            - The family has moved to their county.
            - A Change of County of Residence form will be emailed or faxed.
    - Email or fax the form to the new county's Access unit.

This step serves as documentation for both agencies that the notification was completed. For situations involving court orders, a change in venue can be pursued once the parent or family has established residency in a new county for six months.

Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children

Wisconsin's Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) (Wis. Stat. s. 48.988) ensures children in need of out-of-home care in and from other states receive the same protections guaranteed to children placed in out-of-home care within Wisconsin. The law offers states uniform guidelines and procedures to ensure these placements promote the best interests of each child.

When a child's case is under court jurisdiction, the ICPC process is the mechanism public and private child placing agencies use to obtain a home study of a proposed placement resource in another state prior to moving the child. The ICPC also provides for supervision of a Wisconsin court order for a child's placement or residence when a family moves to another state.

The full ICPC standard can be found on page 221.

Exceptions

Exceptions

An exception occurs when the intent of the specific requirement within the entirety of the Ongoing Services Standards must be met in an alternative manner. An exception is not the same as a waiver. A waiver means that the requirement need not be followed.

Exceptions must be made only when the justification and alternative provision is documented in the record following supervisory approval. Exceptions will not be granted for requirements of state statutes, federal law, or administrative rules.

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES IN-HOME CASE TYPES

General Information

In-home child protective services (CPS) case types involve an unsafe child where impending danger threats are controlled and managed through an in-home safety plan.

Fundamental Intervention Responsibilities of the Child Welfare Professional:

- Evaluating the existing safety plan developed during initial assessment.
- Ensuring child safety through continuous assessment, oversight, and adjustment of safety plans.
- Engaging families in the planning process that identify underlying needs and directs services to address threats to child safety.
- Measuring progress related to establishing parent/guardian protective capacities and eliminating safety related issues.
- Achieving child safety.

Applicability – In-Home Child Protective Services Case Types

This standard applies when the Initial Assessment process concludes a child is unsafe, and Ongoing Services are required to control impending danger threats through an in-home safety plan.

Agencies must ensure all actions of agency staff or contracted providers comply with this standard.

Assessment and Planning Process

The assessment and planning process supports an integrated child protective services (CPS) system by building on information gathered during the initial assessment. The assessment and case plan are completed in partnership with the child and their family to empower parents/caregivers to protect and care for the child. The case plan may identify several types of goals including establishing parental protective capacities, improving the child's educational, physical, or behavioral health.

The four components of the assessment and planning process include:

1. Preparing for assessment
2. Introducing the change process
3. Determining what must change
4. Developing the plan

Please refer to Family Teaming on page 15 for further guidance in engaging the family in the case planning process.

Preparing for Assessment

Preparing for the assessment process begins prior to the transition staffing. Being familiar with information assists the child welfare professional in fully understanding impending danger threats and diminished parent or caregiver protective capacities, and supports the child welfare professional during intervention with the family. A review of information includes, but is not limited to:

- All assessments and evaluations
- Any current or pertinent historical planning documentation
- Any court related documentation, if available
- Safety Analysis and Plan

Introducing the Change Process

Throughout CPS Ongoing Services, the child welfare professional must engage the family in a change process, which ultimately results in safe case closure. Families should be actively involved in planning and implementation. Child welfare professionals must fully disclose the family's rights and responsibilities in planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Timeframe for Initial Contacts

The child welfare professional must have face-to-face contact within seven (7) working days of the transition staffing with the parents/guardians and child unless the in-home safety plan dictates more immediate contact. Within this timeframe the child welfare professional must communicate with in-home safety plan participants and providers to:

- Provide the child welfare professional's name and contact information.
- Elicit understanding regarding the reason for the safety plan.
- Clarify each individual's role in the safety plan with respect to ensuring child safety.
- Confirm continued commitment and ability to remain actively involved in meeting the expectations of the safety plan.

The initial contact with the family is to introduce the child welfare professional and explain both the changing role of the agency, and the assessment and planning process. Whenever possible, the first face-to-face contact with the family should occur in the family's home and include the entire household. In families where domestic violence has been identified or is suspected, the agency should assess whether scheduling family meetings will jeopardize the safety of a family member or any other participant, or child welfare professionals. More information can be found in the Domestic Violence Handbook for Child Welfare Professionals.

Engagement During the Change Process

The child welfare professional must engage the family and child, in a culturally sensitive and developmentally appropriate manner, around key decisions involving safety, stability, and well-being for the child. Engagement includes providing the child and family the opportunity to actively participate and influence the change process. Child welfare professionals must discuss the following:

- The differences between the Initial Assessment and Ongoing Services processes, including the roles and responsibilities of the Ongoing Services child welfare professional.
- The reason for agency involvement.
- The assessed level of intervention required to maintain child safety and the possible outcomes should the parents/guardians not cooperate with the safety plan.
- The Ongoing Services process and collaboration needed from parents/guardians.
- The status of the court process, as applicable.
- The purpose for involvement of non-household parents, relatives, like-kin, and informal supports as potential resources for the child and family. For additional information, refer to "Locating and Involving Non-Household Parents, Relatives, and Like-kin" on page 165.
- The child's possible membership or eligibility in a tribe.

For additional ICWA/WICWA information and requirements, refer to the DCF Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act Desk Resources located in Appendix 1, page 261.

Family Teaming

Family Teaming is a collaborative, culturally responsive and engagement-driven process. This process brings together the family and their supports to actively create, review and work toward goals of the Family Case Plan. Through a strengths-based lens, Family Teaming empowers families to voice concerns, request support, and take an active role in guiding the direction of their Family Case Plan and services. This approach promotes shared decision-making and accountability, builds natural supports that can sustain beyond system involvement, and also supports parents in increasing protective capacities. Regular Family Teaming should be used as a tool to monitor progress on the Family Case Plan, which essentially functions as the family's guide, while also helping define a realistic path towards achieving the plan's goals and a lasting support system for families. Ultimately, consistent and meaningful Family Teaming supports the family's ability to achieve Family Case Plan goals and safe case closure.

Bringing together the support system identified by the parents/guardian is a style of engagement critical to empowering the family to achieve goals that address the needs of the family to exit the system.

The family should identify who makes up their support network which can include natural supports such as family, like-kin, friends, community members or tribal representatives. This network will support the needs of the family during involvement with the child welfare agency as well as post safe case closure. Ideally, all identified network members are committed to the family's goals and invested in change.

The core function of Family Teaming is to have the family's support system participate in family driven discussions related to case planning. While there are prescriptive models of family teaming, it is not necessary to adhere to any formal model. Rather the guiding principle should be to meaningfully engage the family's support system with a specific focus on reviewing the Family Case Plan, making necessary updates, and assessing progress and achievement toward goals. Family team meetings should be responsive to the unique needs of the family to support collaborative planning, relationship building, and timely case closure. The frequency, cadence, and composition of family teaming will likely look different for each family.

Family Teaming

When children are served in the home, Family Teaming must begin during the assessment and planning phase of initial engagement with the family and continue while there is a Family Case Plan in place. Individual and family readiness may change over time, which necessitates ongoing efforts to engage the family in Family Teaming. The following efforts must be documented in eWiSACWIS case notes and reflected in the Family Case Plan:

- Engage the family in the case planning process by:
    - Working with the family to identify their support system which could include formal supports and/or natural supports to participate in the planning process (this can include relatives, like-kin, community members, tribal representatives).
    - Collaboratively developing the content for the Family Case Plan document. Once the content is developed, the child welfare professional will document it in the Family Case Plan via eWiSACWIS and then confirm with the family that the content reflects what was agreed upon.

Child welfare professionals must engage in the following ongoing Family Teaming activities:

- Review the progress of goals identified in the Family Case Plan with the family. Progress shall be documented in eWiSACWIS case notes; goals and services should be adjusted when Family Case Plan conditions have been achieved.
- Dialogue with the family and support network about the effectiveness of services and work together to adjust any necessary services. Keep in mind that not all services will work for each family.
- Identify, with the family and support network, progress towards change. Find ways to celebrate successes the family achieves to motivate future change and cultivate resiliency.

Determining What Must Change

An essential safety intervention responsibility at this stage is to evaluate parental protective capacities since impending danger threats are controlled by the safety plan. Information from the initial assessment provides the foundation for determining parental protective capacities. Throughout the assessment process, the child welfare professional clarifies and gathers additional information, and collaborates with parents/guardians, the child, relatives, like-kin, and informal and formal supports to gain consensus regarding the changes necessary to achieve a safe and permanent home, thereby allowing for safe case closure.

The Assessment Process with the Family

Based on the information discovered throughout the assessment process, the child welfare professional and parents/guardians will collaboratively develop a Family Case Plan that includes services necessary to create a change strategy and keep the children safely in the home.

This process includes:

Gathering and assessing information in the following areas:

- Whether a child is an Indian child in accordance with the Indian Child Welfare Act/Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA/WICWA) and what steps have been taken to notify and involve the Indian child's tribe.
- Child functioning and well-being
- Adult functioning
- Parenting practices
- Family functioning
- Determine with the family the information contained in the assessments and, as applicable, safety analysis and plan. Allow for updates to be made as necessary.

Work collaboratively with the child and family
Child welfare professionals work in partnership with the child and family to understand their circumstances, identify strengths and needs, and support meaningful change. The following areas of focus guide this collaborative process:

Identify Strengths and Needs:

- Identify family strengths, supports, and existing parent/guardian protective capacities and identify ways in which the parent/guardian can be involved in meeting the needs of their child or how their needs will otherwise be met.
- Understand what parents/guardians identify as strengths about themselves as individuals and in their caregiving role.
- Determine whether any professional evaluations (i.e. mental health, medical, and educational) are needed for the child or parents/guardians to inform the Family Case Plan.

Explore and Address Diminished Protective Capacities:

- Examine the relationship between diminished parent/guardian protective capacities and impending danger threats.
- Determine the family's perception and level of agreement with the child welfare professional regarding diminished protective capacities and impending danger threats.
- Assess if parents/guardians are ready, willing, and able to consider necessary change related to diminished protective capacities.

Plan for Change and Safety:

- Determine with the family the most logical place to begin focusing on change, setting goals and identifying potential service options.
- Confirm that impending danger threats are controlled and managed with a sufficient, feasible, and sustainable safety plan.
- Determine with the family the need for any remedial services and rehabilitation programs required under ICWA/WICWA in an effort to prevent the breakup of the Indian family.

Assessment

When working with families in-home, agencies may utilize an informal or formal assessment to inform the Family Case Plan, particularly in identifying specific services to meet parent and child's identified needs and strengths. The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool may be used for assessment purposes but the CANS is not required for families being served in-home; only the Family Case Plan is required.

Developing the Family Case Plan

When a family is opened to Ongoing Services, goals focus on enhancing parent/guardian protective capacities to eliminate impending danger threats so the parents/guardians can adequately manage child safety without intervention. The Family Case Plan maps out family involvement with child welfare and is a tool for communicating with parents/guardians and their identified support network.

The child welfare professional is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Family Case Plan and working with parents/guardians to facilitate change. Managing the plan and change strategies involves ensuring the plan targets goals associated with enhancing diminished caregiver protective capacities and achieving stability. The purpose of the plan is to identify steps toward establishing a safe environment for the child.

When a family is under both a CHIPS and JIPS jurisdiction, both the primary and secondary assignment workers shall work collaboratively on the Family Case Plan. The child welfare professional overseeing whichever jurisdiction is established first should initiate the Family Case Plan and must reassess and update the case plan when a second jurisdiction is established. If multiple agency child welfare professionals are assigned to the child, youth, and family, they must collaborate and team as necessary to create one cohesive Family Case Plan for that child, youth, and family.

Planning and Developing Goals with the Child and Family

The use of Family Teaming in the case planning process promotes a collaborative approach to developing the Family Case Plan. If a family is under both a CHIPS and JIPS jurisdiction, both the primary and secondary assignment workers shall work collaboratively on the Family Case Plan.

The priority in the planning process is to work with the family to develop goals that enhance parent/guardian protective capacities in order to reach safe case closure. This process with the family includes:

- Ask the family:
    - To identify any specific needs and strengths for the child, and parents/guardians and how the family believes those needs could be addressed and strengths built upon.
    - To identify natural supports who may assist the family in reaching culturally responsive goals and safe case closure.
- Empower the family to identify household behaviors that need to change and the behaviors that need to be demonstrated and sustained. Learn from the family what services or supports they can access to reach their goals and provide information on additional community resources.
    - Collaborate with the family support network to identify resources and change strategies to assist the family in reaching safe case closure.
- Partner with the family to create one to three behaviorally focused, mutually understood, and measurable goals related to enhancing parents'/guardians' or Indian custodians' protective capacities. Collaborate with the family to determine realistic timeframes for the achievement of goals.
- Develop the child's out-of-home care prevention plan to ensure the child remains safely living at home with their parent/guardian.
- Plan to identify, locate, and involve non-household parents, relatives, and like-kin as resources for the child. (For additional information, refer to "Locating Non-Household Parents, Relatives, and Like-kin" page 165)
- ICWA Requirements
    - When the child is an Indian child, make active efforts to prevent the breakup of the Indian family through the use of remedial services and rehabilitation programs as required in ICWA/WICWA.
    - Engage the child, family, and Indian child's tribe in the assessment and Family Case Plan development.
- Maintain Confidentiality

Child welfare professionals should be aware of confidentiality restrictions on the use of information in a case record, either on paper or in eWiSACWIS and in KIDS as reflected in applicable state and federal confidentiality laws.

When seeking information from people or resources outside the case, child welfare professionals must continue to maintain confidentiality as required by law about the identity and circumstances of the child and family with whom they are working.

Assessment and Plan Documentation

The child welfare professional must complete and document the Family Case Plan, including the child's out-of-home care prevention plan section no later than 60 days from the case transition staffing when there is a safety plan. The child's prevention plan describes the services and programs that will be provided to the child, or on their behalf, to support the in-home placement. All case assessment and plan requirements must be documented in the eWiSACWIS Family Case Plan.

After supervisory approval, the child welfare professional must obtain parent/caregiver or Indian custodian signature, in a timely manner, and a copy of the Family Case Plan must be provided to the parent/guardian and, as appropriate, tribal child welfare professionals, and child once they have reached the age of 12. If unable to obtain signatures document efforts made to obtain signatures.

The Family Case Plan must include:

- General person management and case maintenance information to ensure the case record is current (family demographics, tribal membership status, agency and legal).
- One to three behavioral focused goals (focused on enhancing caregiver protective capacities that are behaviorally stated, understandable to the family, specific and measurable).
- Services for the child and family.
- The child's out-of-home care prevention strategy (i.e. mental health, substance abuse, in-home skills development) for the child to ensure the child remains safely in home.
- Safety assessments, plans, and conclusions.

Additional Requirements When the Child is an Indian Child

The following must also be documented in the Family Case Plan when the child is an Indian child:

- Description of the active efforts made to prevent the break-up of the Indian family and efforts to engage the child, family, and Indian child's tribe in the development of the Family Case Plan.
- The name, address, and telephone number of the Indian child's parent, Indian custodian, and Indian child's tribe.
- A description of the remedial services and rehabilitation programs offered under Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(4)(d)2, in an effort to prevent the breakup of the Indian family as provided in ICWA/WICWA.

For additional ICWA/WICWA information and requirements, refer to Appendix 1: Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act Resources, page 261.

After supervisory approval, a copy of the Family Case Plan must be provided to parents/guardians, the Indian child's tribes and, as appropriate, the child.

Reaching Consensus on the Family Case Plan

At times, reaching consensus may be challenging due to where the family is at in the change process. To reach consensus on a Family Case Plan, the child welfare professional must actively engage with the family with the goal to develop a collaborative working relationship that supports plan development. Efforts should be made to engage non-household parents/guardians in case planning as well. Clear communication about goals related to enhancing parent/guardian protective capacities necessary to manage child safety is imperative to gain investment in the change process.

Proceeding without a clear understanding and consensus on goals identified in a Family Case Plan may reduce the likelihood of the family reaching safe case closure. Family Teaming and involvement of natural supports may assist in clarity and improved collaboration with the family during this process. Child welfare professionals are encouraged to consult with supervisors, colleagues, and team members to identify additional engagement strategies when necessary. Every effort should be made to address barriers to participation in the Family Case Plan development.

Evaluating the Family Case Plan

While safety assessment remains a continuous process throughout child welfare involvement with a family, the Family Case Plan must also be evaluated to ensure that it measures enhancement of caregiver protective capacities, assesses the suitability of the safety plan, and ensures a safe living arrangement for the child. The evaluation of the Family

Case Plan provides the basis for the child welfare professional to know when conditions exist that support safety, stability, and permanence.

Content of the Family Case Plan

When evaluating the Family Case Plan, the child welfare professional uses the goals in the plan as the basis for measuring progress and change related to enhancing parent/guardian protective capacities and achieving safe case closure. The child welfare professional gathers information from parents/guardians, children, family team members, and informal and formal service providers to make decisions about:

- The family's progress toward achieving change and safe case closure.
- The effectiveness of service delivery related to achieving goals.
- The sufficiency of the safety plan and whether a less intrusive CPS intervention can be implemented.

Evaluating and Updating the Family Case Plan

The child welfare professional should continuously evaluate the Family Case Plan using information gathered during monthly contacts to measure progress towards goals. The Family Case Plan must be formally evaluated and documented within six months of a case transition staffing and every 6 months thereafter. Pertinent updates should include:

- Ensuring that general person management case information in the case record is current (education, health, mental health, family demographics, and tribal membership status).
- Confirming sufficiency of the safety plan and identifying whether a less intrusive CPS intervention can be implemented.
    - If a second jurisdiction is established (i.e., JIPS), the child welfare professional should:
        - consider whether safety needs to be reassessed
        - collaborate with all assigned child welfare professionals and update the Family Case Plan
- Gathering information learned about child functioning, adult functioning, parenting practices or family functioning to reevaluate family's strengths and needs, review goal progress, and identify enhanced protective capacities.
- Consider how the parent/guardian describes the steps needed to achieve goals within the Family Case Plan while addressing the parent's concerns, and barriers.
- A review and confirmation of the effectiveness of service interventions, informal supports, or other Family Case Plan strategies related to achieving the identified goals.
- A review of the child's current out-of-home care prevention plan and assessment of identified prevention strategies.
- For an Indian child, efforts made to prevent the break-up of the Indian family and efforts to engage the child, family, and Indian child's tribe in the development of the Family Case Plan.

- Following completion of the evaluation of the Family Case Plan, review and obtain signatures from youth, parent(s), and guardian(s), in a timely manner.

Managing Safety

During service provision, it is the responsibility of the child welfare professional to oversee and manage the safety plan. Safety management requires consistent interaction with parents/guardians, family members, like-kin and people involved in the safety plan. The purpose of this contact is to ensure the safety plan is implemented as planned and that nothing hinders its effectiveness.

Safety management includes being vigilant about the need to adjust the safety plan. This responsibility includes being alert to changes in a family or individual that influence impending danger threats. Safety management needs to be flexible so that safety activities, actions, and tasks can be increased or decreased based on the status of impending danger threats and changes in parent/guardian protective capacities. Revising safety plans is a high priority to ensure only the necessary level of intrusion occurs in the family.

Effective management of safety plans includes:

- Coordinating safety interventions and guiding tasks, activities and actions.
    - Are the details of the safety plan well understood by everyone involved? Are activities occurring as planned without disruption? Are providers and participants where they are supposed to be at designated times? Are necessary resources available? Are resources implemented appropriately?
- Evaluating the provision of safety services.
    - Are safety services still working? Are participants/providers continuing to carry out their defined role in the safety plan? Is the child safe? Are services still available and accessible at the required level to have an immediate impact on child safety?
- Reassessing parent/guardians' commitment and willingness.
    - Are the parents/guardians still willing to accept the safety plan? Are they cooperative with providers? Do they understand the need for the safety plan?
- Facilitating communication.
    - Is everyone involved in the safety plan well informed about expectations, progress, barriers, etc.? Is there open communication between CPS, the family, and safety service providers? Do safety plan participants and providers keep CPS informed? Does CPS have to mediate and resolve any problems about participant roles or expectations?
- Continuing to assess safety.
    - Are impending danger threats still apparent? Are threats changing? What affects them? Are there new threats? Can intrusion be reduced? Should different services or providers be installed? Can the family assume more responsibility?
- Revising the safety plan.

- Do changes regarding impending danger threats or parent/guardian protective capacities prompt revisions to the safety plan? Do these changes require more intrusion? Do they require less intrusion? Are services and providers available and accessible to have an immediate impact?

In-Home Safety Management

The CPS professional must continuously review and evaluate the adequacy of an in-home safety plan. Information gathered from the parents/guardians, child, relatives, like-kin, and service providers are used to evaluate and confirm child safety by:

- Ensuring that the services put in place continue to control identified impending danger threats.
- Ensuring that the commitments by the family and providers remain intact.
- Determining whether previously identified impending danger threats have been eliminated or if the severity has been reduced or increased.
- Determining if new safety threats have emerged.
- The safety plan is revised and documented in eWiSACWIS when contacts, observations, and gathered information indicate positive or negative changes related to parent/guardian protective capacities or impending danger threats to child safety. New safety threats may require a new safety analysis and modifications to the safety plan.

Documentation

Information related to the requirements of safety management must be documented monthly at a minimum in a case note and if impending danger threats emerge, in the Safety Analysis and Plan in eWiSACWIS.

Contact Requirements

Establishing a relationship with the family is fundamental to developing a better understanding of the dynamics of the family that led to agency intervention and engaging the family in a change process. Accomplishing this necessitates a high level of contact by the child welfare professional to collaborate with the family in working toward reducing or eliminating impending danger threats at the earliest point possible.

The frequency of face-to-face contact is based on the needs of the family as identified in the safety or Family Case Plan. During Ongoing Services, face-to-face contact is important to continuously assess safety for the child. To achieve this, it may be necessary to occasionally conduct unannounced face-to-face contacts or, when appropriate, visits with the child should be alternated between the child's home and another community setting (e.g. daycare, school, counseling appointment). In these instances, the face-to-face contact should occur in a manner consistent with the purpose of the home visit and respectful of the child and parents/guardians involved in the contact. Transparency is fundamental to respect

and engage the family, particularly when unscheduled face-to-face contact is used. Variations of face-to-face contacts should be discussed with the family.

Effective use of child welfare professional contacts supports the family to move forward in achieving safety. Progress and change related to enhancing parent/guardian protective capacities are the essential concern. Documentation of the contact should reflect the child welfare professional's actions in working with the family, child, and providers to ensure safety.

Frequency of Face-to-Face Contact

Face-to-face contacts must focus on the safety, permanence, and well-being needs of the child and be sufficient to address the requirements of safety planning and goals of the Family Case Plan. The agency ensures that the child welfare professional (or designee) have twice per month contact with the parent/guardian and children, at a minimum, due a safety plan being in place, unless the plan indicates the need for more frequent contact.

Documentation

The child welfare professional must document both completed and attempted face-to-face contacts with parents/guardians and the child in eWiSACWIS as a case note. The note must include, at a minimum, the following information:

- Date, time, and duration of the visit.
- Participants involved.
- Location of the visit.
- Type of contact.
- Purpose and summary of the results of the contact.

In addition, at least one case note a month must include the following information:

- The status and an evaluation of impending danger threats; the sufficiency, feasibility, and sustainability of the safety plan and any needed revisions.
- A review of safety service actions and timeframes; a discussion of issues requiring resolution or clarification with safety service providers; the commitment of providers to remain involved in the safety plan; and, whether family members understand and agree with their role in the safety plan.

The progress towards meeting goals of the Family Case Plan, including information about whether family members understand their role in the change process; the parents/guardians' engagement and involvement in the change process; and any increase/enhancement in protective capacities that would mitigate identified safety threats.

Locating and Involving Non-Household Parents, Relatives, and Like-kin

Locating and involving non-household parents, relatives, and like-kin is valuable when a child remains in the family home. Diligent efforts to search for non-household parents should be ongoing for a child who remains in the home, as they have the potential to be a valuable resource throughout the child's life. Parents/guardians have specific rights regarding their child that must be protected when intervention occurs. Relatives and like-kin have the ability to be a less formal resource for the child and a permanent connection that will last beyond the child's involvement in the child welfare system. Therefore, relative searches should continue until the child welfare professional believes that the child's needs have been met or could be met by the relatives and like-kin who have been located.

Requirements

When one or both of the child's parents' whereabouts are unknown, the agency must make both continuous and diligent efforts to locate and engage the non-household parent in the case planning process when it is likely the child will be placed in out-of-home care.

In the above circumstances, if a parent/guardian continues to refuse to provide any information about a non-household parent or other relatives, the child welfare professional must consult with the agency's legal counsel to determine the appropriateness of seeking a court order to obtain the information.

For additional information, refer to "Locating Non-Household Parents, Relatives, and Like-kin" on page 165.

Child welfare professionals must continue to maintain confidentiality as required by law about the identity and circumstances of the child and family with whom they are working.

Non-household parent, relative, and like-kin searches should include, but are not limited to the following actions:

- If the parents/guardians of the child can be identified and is available, ask them to identify and provide the whereabouts of the non-household parent, relatives and like-kin connections.
- When appropriate, ask the child to identify and provide information about their relatives and like-kin connections.

As family involvement progresses, continuing efforts to search may consist of:

- Continuing to ask the parents/guardians and child about relatives and like-kin.
- Referencing Appendix 2, "Identification and Engagement Tools for Locating Non-Household Parents, Relatives and Like-kin" on page 262.
- Using tools such as a connectedness map or mobility map with the child to illicit additional names of relatives and like-kin.

- Checking the family's agency record, including eWiSACWIS, for non-household, relative, and like-kin parent identification and whereabouts.
- Checking the Department of Children and Families, Bureau of Child Support's KIDS system for identification or location of a non-custodial parent or alleged father.
- Consulting the identified Indian child's tribe for information on non-household parents and alleged fathers.
- Asking the reporter of a child abuse and neglect referral received by Access.
- Asking the school the child attends or previously attended to see if there are additional emergency contacts listed.
- Checking the CARES system records if your agency has an information sharing agreement with your local CARES agency. CARES issues Wisconsin Works (W-2), Food Share, Medicaid, and childcare benefits.
- Contacting neighbors at a last known address to see if they have current location information.
- Websites that provide criminal history information or incarceration status can be helpful to identify addresses or contact information for individuals if they have been justice-involved. The focus when using these websites for relative searches should be promoting relationships, connections, and gathering information about a child's family network and support system. A list of search websites is in Appendix 2, "Identification and Engagement Tools for Locating Non-Household Parents, Relatives, and Like-kin."

Documentation

The agency must document all continued efforts to locate and engage non-household parents, relatives, and like-kin in the eWiSACWIS case record.

Evaluating the Safety Plan

Evaluating and Revising the Safety Plan

The Safety Analysis and Plan must be evaluated in collaboration with the parents/guardians and safety service providers. The safety plan is revised and documented in eWiSACWIS when contacts, observations, and gathered information indicate positive or negative changes related to parent/guardian protective capacities or impending danger threats to child safety.

Modifications to the Safety Analysis and Plan must be approved by a supervisor and documented in eWiSACWIS.

Evaluating safety is a continuous process of tracking and adjusting. Assessing safety must be routine in all contacts with children, families, and providers.

Achieving Safety

Every child is expected to have a safe and permanent home prior to case closure.

For a child who remains in their home with an in-home safety plan, the agency ensures permanence by assisting the family to enhance parent/guardian protective capacities and eliminate or diminish threats to child safety. Additionally, while the child welfare professional assists families in making sustainable changes, the child welfare professional works with the family to establish lasting resources and a support network consisting of formal and informal supports. Once parent/guardian protective capacities are enhanced or there is an absence of threats to a child's safety, the family can safely exit the child protective services system.

Safety intervention responsibilities are not complete until all required assessments and conclusions are completed.

Prior to closure, the agency must facilitate a process to engage family members, service providers, and informal supports in developing a plan for identifying and meeting child and family needs after agency involvement has ended.

An updated safety assessment must include information concerning the absence or presence of impending danger threats.

Parent/guardian protective capacities must be sufficient to protect against safety threats that continue to exist or might emerge. The parent/guardian must understand their role and act effectively in their protective capacity.

Closure

Planning for Safe Closure

The agency child welfare professional must ensure that the transition to closure is communicated to everyone involved.

Safe closure is achieved by:

- Preparing the child and family throughout the CPS process.
- Assessing any current or ongoing needs.
- Developing a process for the transition that is in the best interests of the child, considering the child's emotional, behavioral, and psychological needs.

The child welfare professional uses the following criteria to determine if a safe home exists:

- Parent/guardian have made sufficient progress in addressing case plan goals (enhanced protective capacities).
- Formal or informal supports are available and accessible to the family, as needed, after CPS is no longer involved with the family.

Prior to closure, the child welfare professional must have face-to-face contact with family members and the family team, if involved, to:

- Support the family in determining how the family's needs will be met after agency involvement ends.
- Inform the family of the date that ongoing child protective services will end.

Safety at Case Closure

CPS must determine that the family's home is safe at closure. Making a determination of safety includes:

- A formal safety assessment of impending danger threats.
- Reassessing parent/guardian protective capacities.

Documentation

Closure and the termination of all plans (family interaction, safety, family case plan) must be documented in the eWiSACWIS case record and approved by a supervisor or their designee within 30 working days from the date the case closure decision was made by the supervisor and child welfare professional. Documentation must include:

- A reassessment of child safety.
- The rationale for the decision to close.
- A description of the closure process with the family and service providers, including the family's plan for meeting future service needs.

Additional requirements when a family will no longer accept services:

- A reassessment of child safety.
- A description of agency efforts to continue to provide services. If the safety assessment indicates a child in the family is not safe, this must include efforts to request a petition to the court to order services.
- The reason for closure.
- A copy of a letter to the parent/guardian indicating what actions the agency has taken or will take and other resources available to the family.

When a child is an Indian child, a letter must be sent to the Indian child's tribe indicating the family's case has been closed, and a copy of the letter must be maintained in the family's record.

Early Dismissal of Dispositional Order

It is the responsibility of the child welfare professional to initiate additional court actions throughout the case process unless the family is receiving in-home services voluntarily. When a determination is made that a family is no longer in need of court ordered CPS services, a request must be submitted to the court for early dismissal of the dispositional order. A dismissal order must be signed by the judge before a family can be closed by the agency.

A family may not be closed if there is an active CHIPS order. Any decision regarding early dismissal or case closure shall be made in consultation with the agency's legal counsel.

Case Closure Orders under Wis. Stat. ss. 48.355(4g) and 938.355(4g)

Chapter 48 or 938 court orders can allow the juvenile court to enter or modify a family court order and terminate the juvenile court order. The juvenile court only has the authority to enter or modify the family court order after the dispositional order is entered and if the child is or will be placed with a parent via the orders. The juvenile court may determine paternity, legal custody, periods of physical placement, visitation rights, or child support and parental obligation for health care expenses. Subsequent modifications to the court order would occur in family court.

CHILD WELFARE IN-HOME CASE TYPES

General Information

Information from an Initial Assessment or the child welfare assessment process guides decision-making about whether an agency will open a family for Ongoing Services. When a child is safe, but the agency determines that the child requires specific services and formal ongoing child welfare case management by the agency, the agency may open a child welfare case. When a decision is made to serve the family in this situation, this standard applies.

Child welfare cases provide support and services to a family. The child welfare professional focuses on assessing the family's strengths and needs, connecting the family to resources and services, and attaining safe case closure. The primary focus of agency intervention is the provision of child and family support and services rather than safety intervention focused on enhancement of parent/guardian protective capacities. These families may be court ordered or voluntary.

Safety intervention for in-home child welfare case types focuses on confirming the child remains safe and protected from abuse and neglect. Although child safety is not the reason for agency intervention, it is important to understand there may be times when family dynamics and functioning change resulting in an unsafe child. At this point, the family would transition to a child protective services case type and cannot be served under this standard.

Applicability

This standard applies when an Initial Assessment or a child welfare assessment concludes that a child is safe, and the parent/guardian is unable or needs assistance to care for or provide necessary treatment or services for the child. The agency may provide Ongoing Services for the following reasons:

- A family needs child welfare services.
- An agency and family agree to the provision of in-home services.

This standard cannot be used when the agency determines a child is unsafe. The agency must use the Child Protective Services Out-of-Home Case Types standards (page 33) when there is an impending danger threat and insufficient caregiver protective capacities to protect a child from threats. Additionally, if the agency becomes aware of alleged maltreatment or present or impeding danger threats to child safety, immediate action to control for child safety must be taken, including a report to Access, if warranted.

Agencies must ensure all actions of agency staff or contracted providers comply with this standard.

Ongoing case management for in-home child welfare case types address family needs by providing services, supports, and treatment or by linking the family with community services.

The goal of intervention is to increase the likelihood that the child will continue to remain in the home. Agency involvement is purposeful, and outcome focused. Goals should be identified and agreed upon by both the child welfare professional and family and discussion about closure should begin at the first contact.

All Requirements

Requirements

Family Case Plan

Each family formally served must have a Family Case Plan developed in accordance with the CPS In-Home standards, except for the standards related to safety planning, which do not apply. Please refer to page 18 for requirements of a Family Case Plan. This includes:

- Planning and developing goals with the Child and Family
- Case assessment
- Plan documentation in the Family Case Plan
- Additional requirements when the child is an Indian child
- Content in evaluating the Family Case Plan
- Evaluating and updating the Family Case Plan
- Required timelines for document completion
- Obtaining required signatures following supervisor approval

The use of Family Teaming can promote a collaborative approach to developing the Family Case Plan.

Documentation
Requirements of the in-home child welfare case type must be documented in the Family Case Plan in the family eWiSACWIS record and approved by a supervisor or their designee.

Documentation of Face-to-Face Contacts

The child welfare professional or designee must document both completed and attempted face-to-face contacts with parents/guardians and the child in eWiSACWIS as a case note. The note must include, at a minimum, the following information:

- The date, time, and duration of the visit or attempted visit.
- The participant(s) involved.
- The location of the visit.
- The type of contact.
- The purpose and summary of the results of the contact including:
    - Review and evaluate the child's safety to ensure conditions have not changed in the household that would make the child unsafe.
    - Review progress in the Family case plan (including how the parent/guardian(s) is involved in the process).

- Understanding of the Family Case Plan (parent knows what is expected in terms of following through with their part of the Family Case Plan).

Early Dismissal of Dispositional Order

When there is a CHIPS court order, the child welfare professional is responsible for initiating additional court actions throughout involvement with the family. When a determination is made that a family is no longer in need of court-ordered services, a request must be submitted to the court for early dismissal of the dispositional order and signed by the judge before a family can be closed by the agency.

A request to file for early dismissal shall be done in consultation with the agency's legal counsel.

Case Closure

Closure for in-home child welfare case types is appropriate when there is no court order and child welfare services are no longer needed, the family declines further intervention, or the family is not engaged in services, provided there is no court order.

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES OUT-OF-HOME CASE TYPES

General Information

Out-of-home CPS case types involve an unsafe child where impending danger threats are controlled through an out-of-home placement.

Fundamental Intervention Responsibilities of the Child Welfare Professional:

- Evaluating the existing safety plan developed during initial assessment/investigation.
- Managing child safety through continuous assessment, oversight, and adjustment of safety plans that ensure child safety and are the least intrusive to the family.
- Engaging the family in the planning process that identifies underlying needs, which directs services to address threats to child safety.
- Measuring progress related to enhancing parent/guardian protective capacities and eliminating safety related issues.
- Achieving timely permanence.

Applicability – Out-of-Home Child Protective Services Case Types

This standard applies when the Initial Assessment process concludes that a child is unsafe and ongoing services are needed to control impending danger threats through an out-of-home placement.

Agencies must ensure all actions of agency staff or contracted providers comply with this standard.

The Assessment and Planning Process

This assessment and planning process adheres to the requirements set forth in the Federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) for addressing threats to child safety, permanence, and well-being in plans. The process supports an integrated child protective services system by building on information gathered during the Initial Assessment. The assessment and plan are an intervention service completed in partnership with a child and the family to empower parents/guardians in protecting and caring for their child in the future without agency involvement. The plan may identify several types of goals including enhancing parent/guardian protective capacities, improving child educational, physical, or behavioral health needs, and achieving permanence. More importantly, plans include long-term planning for the family and providers.

The four distinct components of the assessment and planning process include:

1. Preparing for assessment
2. Introducing the change process
3. Determining what must change
4. Developing the Permanency Plan

Preparing for Assessment

Preparing for the assessment process begins prior to the transition staffing. Being familiar with information assists the child welfare professional in fully understanding impending danger threats and diminished parent/guardian protective capacities and supports the child welfare professional during intervention with the family. A review of information includes, but is not limited to:

- All assessments and evaluations.
- Any current or pertinent historical planning documentation.
- Any court related documentation, if available.
- Safety Analysis and Plan.
- Confirming Safe Environments documentation.

Introducing the Change Process

Throughout involvement with the family, the child welfare professional engages the family in a change process that ultimately leads to safe case closure. This means the family will have the opportunity to reflect on their experience with the agency and ask questions to understand what to expect next in the process.

Timeframe for Initial Contacts

The child welfare professional must have face-to-face contact within seven (7) working days of the transition staffing with the parent/guardian and child, unless a safety plan dictates more immediate contact. Within this timeframe the child welfare professional must communicate with safety plan participants and providers to:

- Provide the child welfare professional's name and contact information.
- Elicit understanding regarding the reason for the safety plan.
- Clarify everyone's role in the safety plan with respect to ensuring child safety.
- Confirm the initial Family Interaction Plan is working.
- Confirm continued commitment and ability to remain actively involved in meeting the expectations of the safety plan.

The initial contact with the family is to introduce the child welfare professional, explain the changing role of the agency, and explain the assessment and planning process. Whenever possible, the first face-to-face contact with the family should occur in the family's home and include the entire household. In families where domestic violence has been identified or is suspected, the agency should assess whether scheduling family meetings will jeopardize the safety of a family member or any other participant including agency staff.

Family Interaction During Ongoing Services

When a child is in out-of-home care, family interaction is an opportunity to maintain, establish, and promote parent-child and sibling relationships and should occur as frequently as possible. It is also an opportunity for the parent/guardian to evaluate their own parenting capacities and gain knowledge of new practices and views about parenting.

Requirements for the Family Interaction Plan

The agency is responsible for ensuring initial face-to-face family interaction occurs within five (5) working days of the child's placement in out-of-home care.

The agency shall, no later than 60 calendar days after placement, establish and document a Family Interaction Plan that outlines the anticipated interaction for the child with parents/guardians, siblings, and other identified participants.

Frequency

Facilitating face-to-face family interaction is the responsibility of the agency and must occur weekly, at a minimum.

When siblings are not placed together, sibling face-to-face interaction must occur monthly, at a minimum. Additionally, a child shall have other family interaction (e.g., telephone calls, letters, etc.) with their parent/guardian weekly.

Additional Requirements

- Family interaction can only be prohibited by the agency if a court finds continued contact is not in child's best interests.
- Family interaction can be decreased or suspended if there is evidence that the contact is contrary to the safety of the child and this information is documented in the record.
- Family interaction cannot be used as a punishment, reward, or threat for a child.
- The agency cannot restrict or suspend family interaction as a means to control or punish a parent/guardian for failure to work with the agency or community providers or to comply with conditions of the case or Permanency Plan.
- The out-of-home care provider cannot prohibit family interaction.

Documentation
The Family Interaction Plan and content must be documented in the eWiSACWIS Family Interaction section.

For additional information, refer to page 158, "Family Interaction When a Child is in Out-of-Home Care."

Engagement During the Change Process

When a child is in out-of-home care, engagement and assessment should enhance the family's understanding of the impact of placement on the child and the need for timely permanence.

Engagement Process Requirements

The child welfare professional begins to discuss permanence with the child and family prior to filing the initial Permanency Plan. These discussions must incorporate the following topics:

- Full disclosure of the parents'/guardians' rights and responsibilities throughout agency involvement and court processes with an emphasis on the temporary state of out-of-home care and the emotional and developmental impact of out-of-home care on a child.
- The value of maintaining family interaction.
- The purpose for involvement of the non-household parent, relatives, like-kin, and informal supports as resources for the child and family. For additional information, refer to page 165, "Locating Non-Household Parents, Relatives, and Like-kin."
- A full disclosure review of ASFA timelines and possible outcomes.
- The role of an out-of-home care provider.
    - Including, but not limited to reasonable and prudent parenting decisions to ensure the child has regular opportunities to engage in age and developmentally appropriate activities.
- If applicable, the need for compliance with active efforts for eligible Indian children as defined in ICWA/WICWA. This includes:
    - Requesting the tribal agency to assist in evaluating the case, inviting representatives of the Indian child's tribe to participate in custody proceedings at the earliest point, notifying and consulting extended family members to provide structure and support to the child and parent/guardian.
    - Providing family interaction.
    - Offering and employing all available family preservation strategies.
    - Offering and actively assisting the family in accessing community resources.
    - Monitoring progress and participation in services provided.
    - Seeking alternative ways of addressing identified needs when services are unavailable.

For additional ICWA/WICWA information and requirements, refer to Appendix 1: Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act Resources on page 261.

Determining What Must Change

An important safety intervention responsibility is the evaluation of parent/guardian protective capacities since impending danger threats are controlled by the safety plan. Information from the initial assessment lays the foundation for considering parent/guardian protective capacities that are enhanced and those that are diminished. Throughout the assessment process, the child welfare professional clarifies and gathers additional information and collaborates with parent/guardians, relatives, like-kin, informal and formal supports to understand and gain consensus about the changes necessary to achieve a safe and permanent home.

The Assessment Process

Based on information discovered throughout the assessment process, the child welfare professional and parents/guardians continually discuss the change strategy which will result in a safe household.

This process includes:

- Gathering and assessing information in the following areas:
  - Whether a child has Indian heritage in accordance with the Indian Child Act/WI Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA/WICWA) and if steps have been taken to notify and involve the Indian child's tribe.
  - Child functioning and well-being
  - Adult functioning
  - Parenting practices
  - Family functioning
  - Current service provision
  - Individuals the child and family identify as supports and resources
  - Social activities

- Sharing information with the child and family to:
  - Identify family strengths, supports, and existing parent/guardian protective capacities that contribute to child safety. Understand what the parent/guardian identify as strengths about themselves as individuals, and in their caregiving role.
  - Examine the relationship between diminished parent/guardian protective capacities and impending danger threats.
  - Determine the family's perception and level of agreement with the child welfare professional regarding diminished protective capacities and impending danger threats.
  - Assess if the parent/guardian is ready, willing, and able to consider necessary change related to diminished protective capacities.
  - Identify the needs and strengths of the child and parent/guardian and identify ways in which the parent/guardian can be involved in meeting the needs of their child, or how the needs will otherwise be met.
  - Determine whether any professional evaluations are needed for the child or parent/guardian to inform service needs.
  - Determine with the family the most logical place to begin focusing on change, setting goals and identifying potential service options.
  - Confirm impending danger threats are controlled and managed with a sufficient, feasible, and sustainable safety plan.
  - Ensure the child has opportunities to engage in age and developmentally appropriate activities following the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.
  - If applicable, determine with the family the need for any remedial services and rehabilitation programs required under Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(4)(d)2, in an effort to prevent the breakup of the Indian family.

- Gathering and assessing information about the functioning of the out-of-home care provider in relation to the specific child placed in their care through the CANS tool under the "Current Caregiver" in the following areas:
  - Supervision
  - Problem Solving
  - Involvement with the child's care
  - Parenting knowledge
  - Empathy with the child
  - Organization
  - Social resources
  - Physical health, mental health, substance use, or other possible disability
  - Family stress
  - Cultural congruence

- The child welfare professional must use information from the assessment of the child, the child's family, and the child's out-of-home care provider to:
  - Evaluate the match between the knowledge, skills, and abilities of an out-of-home care provider and the needs and strengths of the child.

- Assist in the development of services and supports needed for a specific child and the out-of-home care provider to promote the stability of the placement.

Developing the Permanency Plan

When a family is opened in Ongoing Services, goals focus on enhancing parent/guardian protective capacities to eliminate impending danger threats so the family can adequately manage child safety without intervention. The Permanency Plan serves as a tool for communicating with the parent/guardian, child, their family members, like-kin, court parties, and other individuals involved in providing supports and services to the family.

The child welfare professional is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Permanency Plan and working with parents/guardians to facilitate change and identify steps toward establishing a safe and permanent home. Managing the Permanency Plan and change strategies involves ensuring the plan targets goals associated with enhancing diminished caregiver protective capacities and achieving permanence.

Planning and Developing Goals with the Child and Family

The team must determine the order in which diminished parent/guardian protective capacities are addressed in the plan. If the child is 14 years of age or over and has been in out-of-home care for six months, the Permanency Plan must be developed in consultation with the child and two other individuals selected by the child who are not the child's child welfare professional or out-of-home care provider. The agency may decide, based upon good cause, that a person identified by the child may not act in the best interest of the youth and therefore ask the youth to select an alternative person.

The planning process includes:

- Identifying behaviors needing change and the behaviors to be demonstrated and sustained to maintain safety without agency involvement.
- Developing behaviorally stated, measurable goals related to enhancing parent/guardian protective capacities that are phrased in the family's own terminology.
- Confirming specific needs and strengths for the child and parent/guardian and how those needs will be addressed.
- Identifying supports and change strategies to assist the family in achieving stability and safe case closure.
- Ensure the child has opportunities to engage in age and developmentally appropriate activities following the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.
- Identifying services and activities that are acceptable, accessible, and appropriately matched to what must change.
- Ensuring goals establish a sufficient behavioral benchmark for evaluating change including determining permanence goals, need for concurrent goals, and establishing a plan to achieve permanence for the child.
- Child welfare professionals must also identify, locate, and involve non-household parents and relatives as resources for permanency options for children. For additional information, refer to "Locating Non-Household Parents, Relatives, and Like-kin," page 165.
- Child welfare professionals must also use, if applicable, planning to ensure continued active efforts as defined in ICWA/WICWA for an eligible Indian child.

Assessment and Permanency Plan Documentation

All assessment and plan requirements must be documented no later than 60 days from the date of removal in the eWiSACWIS Permanency Plan. Within the same 60-day timeline the Permanency Plan must receive supervisory approval, a copy of the plan must be filed with the court and be provided to parents/guardians, the Indian child's tribe(s), and the child if 12 and older.

The following requirements must be documented in the Permanency Plan:

- General person management information to ensure record is current.
- Child functioning, adult functioning, parent functioning, parenting practices, and family functioning information.
- Criteria based goals (focused on diminished caregiver protective capacities that are behaviorally stated, understandable to the family, specific, and measurable).
- Services for the child and family.
- Safety assessments, plans, and conclusions.
- Removal information and circumstances including reasonable efforts to prevent removal.
- For an Indian child, active efforts made to prevent the break-up of the Indian family and efforts to engage the tribal child welfare professional in the assessment and development of the plan.
- Placement information, location and placement history.
- Efforts made to comply with the Indian Child Welfare Act/Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA/WICWA) placement preferences under Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(7) for Indian children.
- The results of the CANS tool.
- Determination of appropriateness of placement in a facility certified as a Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) as required in the Out-of-Home Care Placement in Settings Certified as QRTP policy, when applicable.
- Permanence goals with supporting information.
- The child's health summary.
- The child's educational summary.
- The child's ongoing opportunities to engage in age or developmentally appropriate activities following the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.
- The Family Interaction Plan (For additional information, refer to page 158 "Family Interaction When a Child is in Out-of-Home Care").
- For an Indian child, active efforts made to provide unsupervised family interaction in the most natural setting that can ensure the Indian child's safety, as appropriate to the goals of the Indian child's Permanency Plan, including arrangements for transportation and other assistance to enable family members to participate in that interaction.
- Compliance with notice requirements under Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(4)(a).
- Independent living services, when applicable.

Considerations for Expectant or Parenting Youth Who Are Placed in Out-of-Home Care

Expecting or parenting youth is defined as any child under age 21 who is placed in out-of-home care and is expecting a child or currently parenting a child. This includes both mothers and fathers.

For all expectant or parenting youth who are placed in out-of-home care, a Permanency Plan must:

- Include a list of the services to be provided to, or on behalf of, the youth to ensure that the youth is prepared and able to be a parent.
- Describe the child's out-of-home care prevention strategy for any child born to the expecting or parenting youth in out-of-home care.

Additional Requirements When the Child is an Indian Child

The following must also be documented in the Permanency Plan when the child is an Indian child:

- The name, address, and telephone number of the Indian child's parent, Indian custodian, and Indian child's tribe.
- A description of the active efforts offered under Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(4)(g). To provide remedial services and rehabilitation programs in an effort to prevent the breakup of the Indian family.
- A statement as to whether the Indian child's placement is in compliance with the order of placement preferences under Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(7)(b) or, if applicable, Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(7)(c) and, if the placement is not in compliance with that order, a statement as to whether there is good cause, as described in Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(7)(e), for departing from that order.

For additional ICWA/WICWA information and requirements, refer to the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act Resources in Appendix 1, page 261.

Reaching Consensus on the Permanency Plan

If agreement or consensus cannot be reached with the family at the conclusion of the planning process, the child welfare professional develops Permanency Plan goals and services to have the most impact on enhancing parent/guardian protective capacities. The supervisor and child and family team members must be consulted in developing goals.

The child welfare professional then informs the parents/guardians of the Permanency Plan decisions, as well as of the agency's continuing responsibility for child safety. Additionally, the child welfare professional must inform the parent/caregiver of the consequences of not cooperating with the Permanency Plan.

The child welfare professional should make every effort to engage non-household parents/guardians in case planning and update the Permanency Plan to reflect the non-household parent/guardian's perspective. For more information on the requirements when revising the Permanency Plan, see page 60.

Managing Safety During Ongoing Services

The essential safety intervention responsibility during service provision is oversight of the safety plan. Safety management requires consistent interaction with the child, parent/guardian, family members, and people involved in the safety plan. The purpose of this contact is to ensure the safety plan is being implemented as planned and that nothing hinders its effectiveness.

Safety management requires vigilance regarding changes in a household or the presence of individuals that influence impending danger threats. Safety management activities are subject to change or adjustment based on parent/guardian actions. Safety management ensures safety activities, actions, and tasks are increased or decreased based on the status of impending danger threats and changes in parent/guardian protective capacities. Revising safety plans is a high priority to ensure child safety.

Effective management of safety plans include:

- Coordinating safety interventions and guiding tasks, activities, and actions.
    - Are the details of the safety plan well understood by everyone involved? Are activities occurring as planned without disruption? Are providers and participants where they are supposed to be at designated times? Are necessary resources available? Are resources implemented appropriately?
- Evaluating the provision of safety services.
    - Are safety services effective? Are participants/providers fulfilling their defined role in the safety plan? Is the child safe? Are services available and accessible at the required level to have an immediate impact on child safety?
- Reassessing parent/guardian commitment and willingness.
    - Is the parent/caregiver willing to accept the safety plan? Are they cooperative with providers? Do they understand the reason for safety plan implementation?
- Facilitating communication.
    - Is everyone involved in the safety plan well informed about expectations, progress, barriers, etc.? Is there open communication between the child welfare professional, the family, and safety service providers? Do safety plan participants and providers keep the child welfare professional informed? Does the child welfare professional have to mediate and resolve any problems about participant roles or expectations?
- Continuing to assess safety
    - Are impending danger threats still apparent? Are threats changing? What affects them? Are there new threats? Can intrusion be reduced? Should different services or providers be installed? Can the family assume more responsibility?
- Revising safety plan.

- Do changes regarding impending danger threats or parent/guardian protective capacities prompt revisions to the safety plan? Do these changes require more intrusion? Do they require less intrusion? Are services and providers available and accessible to have an immediate impact?

Safety Plan Requirements

The child welfare professional must continuously review and evaluate the appropriateness of using an out-of-home placement to control for a child's safety. The safety plan is revised and documented in eWiSACWIS when contacts, observations, and gathered information indicate positive or negative changes related to parent/guardian protective capacities or impending danger threats to child safety. Information gathered from the parent/provider, child, and out-of-home care provider is used to:

- Assess if impending danger threats in the parental home are in effect.
- Determine whether conditions have changed or can be controlled with the provision of services to allow the child to return home with a sufficient, feasible, and sustainable in-home safety plan.

Documentation

Information related to the requirements of safety management must be documented monthly at a minimum in a case note and if impending danger threats emerge, in the Safety Analysis and Plan in eWiSACWIS.

Confirming a Safe Environment when Children are Placed in Out-of-Home Care

A child welfare professional places a child in out-of-home care when threats to child safety cannot be controlled in the child's home or a child requires either specific services or sanctions that cannot be met in the child's home or community. The child welfare professional is responsible, prior to placing a child, to assess and confirm the placement setting is safe for the child. This obligation exists for all placement settings.

Assessing for a safe environment is distinctly different from licensing the placement home. Licensing occurs bi-annually and focuses on specific requirements for the provider and environment rather than the safety of a specific child in the placement. Therefore, assessing and confirming a safe environment in placement settings occurs every time a new placement is considered.

Applicability

This procedure applies when a child is placed in an unlicensed home[2], licensed home, group home, or residential care center.

This procedure does not apply when a child is on a trial reunification, is missing from out-of-home care, or is placed in the following settings:

- Voluntary kinship care home
- Juvenile correctional institution
- Shelter care facility
- Adult correctional facility
- Secure detention facility
- Hospital
- Supervised independent living placement

[2] Unlicensed home as used throughout these Standards includes relatives and like-kin that are not licensed.

Confirming Safe Environments at the Initiation of a Child's Placement in an Unlicensed Home

Prior to placement, the child welfare professional or designee must:

- Conduct a home visit to assess and evaluate the safety of the placement setting and assist the out-of-home care provider in obtaining provisions needed for the care of the child. This includes discussing expectations and clarifying the role of the out-of-home care provider and providing information on any issues related to the care of the child.
- Complete a check of law enforcement records or conduct a CCAP check on all individuals seventeen years of age and older residing in the identified placement home.
- Conduct a reverse address Sex Offender Registry check.
- Conduct a check of eWiSACWIS records on all individuals seventeen (17) years of age and older residing in the identified placement home.

If a home visit cannot be made prior to placement the child welfare professional or designee must have verbal contact at the time the child is placed to assess and evaluate the safety of the placement setting and assist the out-of-home care provider in obtaining provisions needed for the care of the child. In this circumstance, an initial home visit must occur within 24 hours (one (1) working day) of the child's placement.

During the first encounter with a potential out-of-home care provider, the child welfare professional or designee gathers information to identify and understand placement danger threats. During initial and subsequent home visits, the child welfare professional interviews and observes household members and collects data from other sources to make determinations about placement danger threats and the appropriateness of the placement.

Within five (5) working days following the initial home visit, the child welfare professional or designee must:

- Conduct a subsequent home visit (a second weekend cannot pass prior to the subsequent home visit).
- Continue to assess and evaluate safety in the placement setting.
- Confirm with the out-of-home care provider expectations and their role in the protective plan, as applicable.
- Discuss any concerns and/or needs related to the care of the child.

Additionally, the child welfare professional or designee must:

- Consider placement danger threats at first encounter and on an ongoing basis with out-of-home care providers to determine the safety of the placement home (See Placement Danger Threats, Appendix 3 page 263. If a placement danger threat is confirmed, the child welfare professional must locate and transition the child to a new placement immediately.
- Assess the out-of-home care provider's motivation to provide care for the child, view of the child, and an understanding of the need for the child to be placed in out-of-home care.

- Assess the child's reaction to the placement home and the out-of-home care provider.

All potential out-of-home care providers or other household members must be included in the assessment.

After the determination is made that the placement setting is safe for the child, the child welfare professional should inform the out-of-home care provider about programs that can help support the family like kinship care or foster care licensing.

Confirming Safe Environments at the Initiation of a Child's Placement in a Licensed Foster Home

Prior to placement the child welfare professional or designee must have verbal contact with the out-of-home care provider to assess and evaluate safety in the placement setting. The child welfare professional or designee must discuss expectations and clarify the role of the out-of-home care provider and provide information on any issues related to the care of the child.

Within 24 hours (one (1) working day) of placement the child welfare professional or designee must:

- Conduct a CCAP check on all individuals seventeen years of age and older residing in the identified placement home.
- Conduct a reverse address Sex Offender Registry check.
- Conduct a check of eWiSACWIS records on all individuals seventeen years of age and older residing in the identified placement home.
- Assist the out-of-home care provider in setting up whatever provisions are needed for the care of the child.

A home visit must be made within three (3) working days, not to exceed five (5) calendar days of the initial placement. The purpose of the home visit is to assess and evaluate the safety of the placement setting and assist the out-of-home care provider in obtaining provisions needed for the care of the child. A second weekend may not pass prior to the initial home visit with the licensed provider.

If a foster home has a Level 3 to 5 certification and has not had placement of a foster child for 3 or more months and the licensing agency, supervising agency, or placing agency has not seen the foster parent in the foster home during that time, the licensing agency, supervising agency, or placing agency shall have an in-person contact with the foster parent in the foster home before a foster child is placed in the home or within 24 hours after the foster child's placement in the foster home.

During the first encounter with an out-of-home care provider, the child welfare professional or designee gathers information to identify and understand placement danger threats. During the initial and subsequent home visits and monthly face-to-face contacts, the child welfare professional meets with the out-of-home care provider and collects data from other sources to make a determination about placement danger threats and the appropriateness of the placement.

Within seven (7) working days following the initial home visit the child welfare professional or designee must:

- Conduct an additional home visit to assess and evaluate for a safe environment in the placement setting.
- Confirm the out-of-home care provider's expectations and their role in the protective plan.
- Discuss any issues related to the care of the child as well as continue to assist the out-of-home care provider in setting up whatever provisions are needed for the care of the child.

Additionally, the child welfare professional or designee must:

- Consider placement danger threats at first encounter and on an ongoing basis with out-of-home care providers to determine the safety of the home. If a placement danger threat(s) is confirmed, the child welfare professional must immediately pursue an alternative placement for the child.
- Assess the foster parent's ability to provide care for the child, view of the child; and an understanding of the need for the child to be placed in out-of-home care.
- Assess the child's reaction to the foster home and the foster parent

All potential foster parents and other household members in a care giving role must be included in the assessment. "Household member" means any person living in a foster home, whether they are/are not related to the foster parent as defined in Wis. Admin. Code. Ch. DCF 56.

When initiating a placement of the child in foster care, the child welfare professional should make face-to-face contact with the foster parent.

Assessing for a safe environment in a foster home is a shared responsibility between the licensing worker and the placing agency child welfare professional. Both child welfare professionals should work together and share information accordingly to ensure the child is safe in the placement setting.

Placement Danger Threats and Placement Decisions

Placement danger threats indicate the placement is an unsafe environment for the child (Appendix 3, page 263).

- When a placement danger threat is confirmed at the first encounter with the out-of-home care provider, the child welfare professional must immediately pursue an alternative placement for the child.
- When a placement danger threat is confirmed for a child currently in placement, the child welfare professional must immediately begin the process of transitioning the child to an alternative placement.
- When a placement danger threat is confirmed for a specific child, the child welfare professional must immediately assess the safety of any other child in the home.

To accomplish this, the child welfare professional collaborates with any other child welfare professional with a child placed in the home as well as the foster care coordinator assigned to the out-of-home care provider. If a determination is made that the placement home is unsafe, the child welfare professional for each child must immediately transition the child to an alternative placement.

At times, the court may continue a placement despite a confirmed placement danger threat. In these situations, a plan should be made to ensure a safe environment for the child and should be recorded in the Confirming Safe Environments document in eWiSACWIS and the child's Permanency Plan.

Use of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment

The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment process and tool is used to:

- Identify the needs and strengths of the child.
- Determine the ability of the out-of-home care provider to meet the child's needs.
- Evaluate the stability of the placement.

Current Out-of-Home Care Provider Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Rating of "3"

The child welfare professional uses the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool to assist in identifying a child's needs and strengths to meet their needs and make the best possible match with a foster home. This assessment process also identifies the current out-of-home care provider's needs to support them in providing care for the child placed in their home.

- When the child welfare professional rates any area a "3" on the CANS tool for the "Current Caregiver," the child welfare professional must reassess placement danger threats for the child.

Confirming Safe Environments in Group Homes or Residential Care Centers

One of the primary purposes of a group home or residential care center placement is to address the unique needs of children who require more intensive services than a family setting can provide. These placement settings offer specialized services in a structured environment for children and youth with special developmental, therapeutic, physical, or emotional needs. Services and supervision are provided by staff employed by the group home or residential care center. Therefore, evaluating safety of the environment in these settings is different from in foster homes where specific caregivers are licensed to provide care.

Requirements

Prior to placement, the child welfare professional or designee must evaluate the safety of the group home or residential care center by:

- Ensuring the facility has the capacity to meet the child's needs based on their CANS score.
- Making a determination with the facility representative that the behaviors of other children, youth, or adults in the placement setting do not present a concern for the child's safety.
- Addressing any additional needs to ensure the child is safe in the placement setting. Examples include additional or special training for agency staff, rearranging the living environment, etc.

At a minimum, the child welfare professional or designee must evaluate and confirm the safety of the environment in the group home or residential care center every six (6) months while a child remains in this placement setting. The child welfare professional or designee must:

- Confirm the facility has the continued capacity to meet the child's needs based on the current CANS score.
- Evaluate changes in the child's CANS assessment to determine if this has any implications for the current facility to meet the child's needs or the stability of the placement.
- Confirm with the facility representative that the behaviors of other children, youth, or adults in the placement setting do not present a concern for the child's safety.
- Evaluate the child's adjustment to and views about the current placement.

When a safety concern is identified for the placed child that involves or may impact the safety of other children in the placement setting, the child welfare professional must address it by reporting the information to the appropriate authority (e.g., CPS, child welfare licensing, law enforcement, etc.).

Risk Management in All Placement Settings

At times, the behavior of other children in the placement setting (e.g. birth or adoptive children of the out-of-home care providers, other children placed in the home, children receiving child day care services, etc.) or conditions of the physical environment may present risk to the child.

The child welfare professional or designee should assess and evaluate the behaviors of other children within the home to determine the needs of the child and to assist the out-of-home care provider in meeting identified needs.

Risk Management Planning

The child welfare professional or designee collaborates with other child welfare professionals or facility staff to understand the behaviors of other children in the placement setting. The following behaviors must be considered to determine if there is a risk to the child:

- Aggressive behaviors - especially children known to have a history of violence.
- Sexually abusive behaviors, including children within the placement setting who have harmed other children physically or sexually.
- Other needs, including support for mental health, substance abuse recovery, or risk related behaviors.

When risk is identified, a risk management plan must be created to mitigate the risk and ensure the environment is safe for the child. Considerations for a risk management plan include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Additional or special training for out-of-home care providers.
- Additional contact by agency or other providers.
- Re-arranging the living environment (changing sleeping arrangements, moving children to other units in an RCC, etc.).

Documentation

The child welfare professional must use the "Confirming Safe Environments" template in eWiSACWIS to guide and document decision-making related to assessing, evaluating, and confirming safety in all unlicensed and licensed out-of-home placements, and in all group home and residential placements. Information regarding a safe environment must be documented in the family eWiSACWIS record and approved by a supervisor or their designee fourteen (14) calendar days from the date the placement was made.

Contact Requirements

Establishing a relationship with the family is fundamental to developing a better understanding of the family dynamics leading to agency intervention and engaging the family in the change process. Accomplishing this necessitates a high level of contact by the child welfare professional to collaborate with the family to eliminate impending danger threats and achieve permanence.

Face-to-face contacts focus on the assessment of safety, permanence, and well-being needs of the child and family, and must be sufficient to address the requirements of the safety plan and goals of the Permanency Plan. The child welfare agency ensures that the child and parents/guardians (excluding out-of-home care providers) have monthly face-to-face contact with the child welfare professional or designee unless the safety plan or licensing requirements require more frequent contact.

Frequency of Face-to-Face Contact

The frequency of face-to-face contact is based on the needs of the family as identified in the safety or Permanency Plan. While a child is in out-of-home care, face-to-face contact is important to continuously assess safety and achieve permanence. It may be necessary to conduct unannounced or unscheduled face-to-face contact or, when appropriate, visits with the child should be alternated between the placement location and another community setting. Face-to-face contact should occur in a manner consistent with the purpose of the home visit and is respectful of the child and parents/guardians involved. Full disclosure regarding announced and unannounced contacts should be discussed at the onset of agency involvement.

Contact with Parents/Guardians

When a child is placed in out-of-home care, the child welfare professional or designee must have a minimum of monthly face-to-face contact with the child's parents/guardians.

Documentation

The child welfare professional must document both completed and attempted face-to-face contacts with parents/guardians and the child in eWiSACWIS as a case note. The note must include, at a minimum, the following information:

- Date, time, and duration of the visit.
- Participants involved.
- Location of the visit.
- Type of contact.
- Purpose and summary of the results of the contact.

In addition, at least one (1) case note per month must include the following information:

- The status of impending danger threats (see Safety Intervention Standards for more information on impending danger threats); the sufficiency, feasibility, and sustainability of the safety plan; and, any needed revisions including an evaluation of impending danger threats; a review of safety service actions and timeframes; a discussion of any issues to be resolved or clarified with safety service providers; the commitment of providers to remain involved in the plan; and whether family members understand and agree with their role in the safety plan.
- The progress towards meeting goals of the Permanency Plan, including information about whether family members understand the reason for behavioral change and their role in the change process; the parent/guardian's engagement and involvement in the change process; and any increase/enhancement in protective capacities that would mitigate identified threats.

Effective use of child welfare professional contacts supports the work that is done monthly to move the family forward in achieving a safe and permanent home. Progress and change related to enhancing parent/guardian protective capacities is the essential concern along with achieving timely permanence for the child. Documentation of contact

must reflect the child welfare professional's actions in supporting the family, child, and providers to achieve timely permanence and safety for the child.

Contacts with the Child

Private, face-to-face contact with a child in out-of-home care is essential because it provides opportunities for the child to openly discuss adjustment to the placement setting and express thoughts and feelings about their out-of-home care experience. It also provides the child welfare professional with opportunities to confirm the safety of the placement setting.

Unlicensed and Level 1 or 2 Foster Home Placements:

- The child welfare professional or designees must have at least one face-to-face contact with the child per month.
- More than 50% of these contacts must occur in the child's out-of-home placement.
    - The visits in the out-of-home placement must occur at least every other month.

Level 3 or 4 Foster Home Placement:

- The child welfare professional or designee must have at least one face-to-face contact with the child every other week.
- At least one contact per month must occur in the child's out-of-home placement.

When a child is placed more than 60 miles from their parent/guardian, the assigned agency's child welfare professional may reduce face-to-face contact to quarterly, if another agency or facility staff (e.g. licensing worker, residential staff, treatment foster care worker) maintains monthly face-to-face contact.

If courtesy supervision is requested from another county or DMCW and that agency provides monthly face-to-face contact, the requesting agency is not required to complete face-to-face contact.

Documentation

The child welfare professional or designee must document both completed and attempted face-to-face contacts with the child in eWiSACWIS as a case note within 20 working days after contact or attempted contact.

The note must include, at a minimum, the following information:

- Date, time, and duration of the visit.
- Participants involved.
- Location of the visit.
- Type of contact.
- Purpose and summary of the results of the contact.

In addition, at least one note per month must include the below information:

- **Safety**: This includes the ongoing assessment of child safety and, if applicable, community or a child's behavioral risk(s), including risk to self and risk to others. Include whether or not the child has had an opportunity to engage in private communications with the child welfare professional regarding the out-of-home placement and any other concerns. For parenting youth in out-of-home care, this section should include a statement regarding the safety of that youth's child(ren).

- **Permanency**: This includes a discussion of tracking progress on achieving outcomes, adjustment of strategies/intervention(s) when needed, transition planning, family interaction, life skills development, and for youth aged 14 or older, independent living needs and goals

- **Status of child's well-being**: A description of the child's physical health, learning and development (educational program attendance, progress, and IEP), mental health needs (emotional development and behavioral functioning), and the child's ongoing opportunities to engage in age or developmentally appropriate activities. Describe how the child is adjusting to the current out-of-home placement~~,~~ educational setting, and to service providers.

Contacts with Out-of-Home Care Provider

At a minimum the child welfare professional must have monthly face-to-face contact with the out-of-home care provider.

Contact with the out-of-home care provider focuses on the safety, permanence, and well-being of the child. This includes:

- Evaluating the compatibility of the child with the out-of-home provider and other household members.
- Evaluating the ability of the out-of-home care provider to meet the needs of the child in a safe manner.
- Evaluating the experiences the child has had to regularly engage in age or developmentally appropriate activities following the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.
- Discussing any additional support needed by the out-of-home care provider to safely maintain any child living with the out-of-home provider.

Documentation

The Ongoing Services child welfare professional or designee must document contacts with the out-of-home care provider in eWiSACWIS as a case note.

Locating & Involving Non-Household Parents, Relatives, and Like-kin

Requirements

When a child is placed in out-of-home care and one or both of the child's parent's/guardian's whereabouts are unknown to the agency, the agency must make continuous efforts to locate and engage them in the planning process. Continued efforts to locate and engage non-household parents, caregivers, and relatives must occur throughout agency involvement with the family.

Documentation

The agency must document all continued efforts to locate and engage non-household parents, and relatives in a note in the family's eWiSACWIS record.

For additional information, refer to "Locating Non-Household Parents, Relatives, and Like-kin," page 165.

Non-household parent, relative, and like-kin searches should include, but are not limited to the following actions:

- If the parents/guardians of the child can be identified and is available, ask them to identify and provide the whereabouts of the non-household parent, relatives and like-kin connections.
- When appropriate, ask the child to identify and provide information about their non-household parent, relatives and like-kin connections.

As family involvement progresses continuing efforts to search may consist of:

- Continue to ask the parents/guardians and child about relatives and like-kin.
- Reference Appendix 2, "Identification and Engagement Tools for Locating Non-Household Parents, Relatives and Like-kin" on page 262.
- Use tools such as a connectedness map or mobility map with the child to illicit additional names of relatives and like-kin.
- Check the family's agency record, including eWiSACWIS, for non-household parent, relative, and like-kin identification and whereabouts.
- Check the Department of Children and Families, Bureau of Child Support's KIDS system for identification or location of a non-custodial parent or alleged father.
- Consult the Indian child's tribe for information on non-custodial parents and alleged fathers.
- Ask the reporter of a child abuse and neglect referral received by Access.
- Ask the school the child attends or previously attended to see the emergency contacts listed.
- Check the CARES system records, if your agency has an information sharing agreement with your local CARES agency. (CARES issues Wisconsin Works (W-2), Food Share, Medicaid, and Child Care benefits)
- Contact neighbors at a last known address to see if they have current location information.

- Utilize CCAP (Consolidated Court Automation Project) at: http://wcca.wicourts.gov/index.xsl
- Websites that provide criminal history information or incarceration status can be helpful to identify addresses or contact information for individuals if they have been justice-involved. The focus when using these websites for relative searches should be promoting relationships, connections, and gathering information about a child's family network and support system. A list of search websites is located in Appendix 2, "Identification and Engagement Tools for Locating Non-Household Parents, Relatives, and Like-kin."

Children Missing from Out-of-Home Care

Requirements

When the whereabouts of a child placed in an out-of-home care setting is unknown, the safety and well-being of that child cannot be ensured, and they are vulnerable to and at risk of additional emotional and physical trauma (e.g., sexual exploitation, sex trafficking, drug abuse, or criminal activity). Thus, diligent measures to locate the child, communicate with critical individuals and agencies involved with the child, and plan for the child's safe return must be made

For additional information, refer to page 188, "Children Missing from Out-of-Home Care."

When a child is considered missing from out-of-home care, the case shall not be closed solely due to the child's missing status. Any decision to close a case with an open court order for a child who has not yet attained 18 years of age, or who has attained 18 years of age with an open court order, should be done in consultation with the agency's legal counsel.

Evaluating the Permanency Plan

Three main intervention responsibilities exist when evaluating the Permanency Plan. First, child welfare professionals must measure enhancement of parent/guardian protective capacities. Decisions about whether to pursue reunification or another permanence goal within ASFA timeframes depends on existence of parent/guardian progress toward resuming their protective parental role. Documentation should reflect the family's progress towards established goals, as well as how service providers are actively supporting the family's growth and needs. Second, the child welfare professional must determine the suitability of a plan, including determining whether intrusiveness of the plan and intensity of services should be adjusted while also considering whether caregiver responsibility and involvement must be increased or decreased. Finally, the child welfare professional focuses on the importance of a safe and permanent living arrangement for the child. The results of Permanency Plan evaluations document whether conditions exist that support safety and permanence.

Family engagement is necessary to measure and achieve case progress. It is best practice for child welfare professionals to involve the family and natural supports in decision-making and ensure full disclosure is maintained with families throughout the process. Engagement strategies build mutually beneficial partnerships that build and sustain the family's interests in, and commitment to, the Permanency Plan. Engagement is necessary for effective decision-making regarding establishing or changing a permanence goal, evaluating progress, and planning transitions.

To measure and evaluate progress, child welfare professionals are responsible for quality face-to-face contact as well as other forms of contact with the child, parent/guardian, and informal and formal service providers. Regular and consistent contact between the child welfare professional and family is necessary to continue to build a working partnership and develop strong relationships focused on safety and permanence.

When evaluating the Permanency Plan, the child welfare professional uses the goals in the Permanency Plan as the basis for measuring progress and change related to enhancing parent/guardian protective capacities and achieving permanence. The child welfare professional gathers information from parent/guardian, child, family team members, and informal and formal service providers to make decisions about:

- The family's progress toward achieving change and permanence.
- The effectiveness of service delivery related to achieving goals.
- The sufficiency of the safety plan and whether a less intrusive intervention can be implemented.

Content in Evaluating the Permanency Plan

The content of the Permanency Plan evaluation must include:

- Updated general person management information to ensure the record is up to date.
- A current assessment of impending danger threats, the sufficiency, feasibility, and sustainability of the safety plan, and any needed revisions.
- For an Indian child, the efforts made to engage the tribal child welfare professional in the evaluation of the Permanency Plan.
- An evaluation of the out-of-home care prevention plan for any child born to an expectant or parenting youth and any updates, as necessary.
- If the child born to a parenting youth is an Indian child, the active efforts made to prevent the break-up of the Indian family.
- A review of progress in enhancing parent/guardian protective capacities as demonstrated by specific, observable, measurable behavioral changes.
- Updated information related to the parent/guardian's readiness for change and their participation in Permanency Plan services and activities; (identifying and understanding where a parent/guardian is in terms of their acknowledgement/acceptance of problems and willingness to change).
- A review and confirmation of the effectiveness of providers, informal supports, services or other plan strategies.
- A current assessment of child functioning and well-being (education, health, mental health, and, when applicable, independent living plan).

- A review of the child's participation in regular opportunities to engage in age and developmentally appropriate activities following the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.
- Any additional needed changes to the plan.
- A review of progress in locating and engaging non-household parents, and other relatives.
- An evaluation and confirmation of the continued safety, stability, and appropriateness of the placement setting.
- A review of and continued determination of the appropriateness of placement in a facility certified as a Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP), when applicable.

Additional Requirements When a Child is an Indian Child

The Permanency Plan evaluation must ensure compliance with active efforts as defined by ICWA/WICWA. This includes documentation of the agency's efforts in the following areas:

- Involving the tribal agency in evaluation.
- Including the Indian child's tribe in custody proceedings at the earliest point.
- Notifying and consulting extended family members to provide structure and support to the child and parent/guardian.
- Providing family interaction, which includes sibling visitation if not placed together.
- Offering and employing all available family preservation strategies.
- Offering and actively assisting the family in accessing community resources.
- Monitoring progress and client participation in services provided.
- Seeking alternative ways of addressing identified needs when services do not exist or are not available to the family.

The Permanency Plan evaluation must also ensure that the Indian child's placement complies with the order of placement preferences under Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(7)(b) or, if applicable, Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(7)(c). If the placement is not in compliance with the order of placement preferences, a statement as to whether there is good cause, as described in Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(7)(e), for departing from that order, must be a part of the evaluation process.

Revising the Permanency Plan

Revising the Permanency Plan

The Permanency Plan must be revised and documented in eWiSACWIS when an evaluation indicates or reveals:

- Family conditions or dynamics related to protective capacities or impending danger threats change to allow for a more or less restrictive plan.
- More information is learned about child functioning, adult functioning, parenting practices or family functioning that necessitates a change to the plan to assist the family in making the needed behavioral changes.
- A change on the CANS assessment identifies additional service needs for the child.
- A change on the CANS assessment identifies that another placement type is more appropriate to meet the needs of the child, and the current placement is too restrictive.
- The court orders a disposition not consistent with the child's Permanency Plan.
- An administrative review panel makes a recommendation to change the existing Permanency Plan and court order.
- When the permanency goal for the child is changed.
- An expecting youth placed in out-of-home care becomes a parenting youth.

The agency must revise the Permanency Plan so that it is consistent with any of the above circumstances and file it with the court, though a court hearing would not be required. These court-ordered changes are considered a part of the dispositional order and thus included in the Permanency Plan. A copy of each revised plan that is filed with the court must be provided to the child's parent/guardian, to the child or the child's counsel, (i.e. guardian ad litem or public defender), and to the agency's legal counsel.

Subsequent Permanency Plan

Subsequent Permanency Plans must be reviewed, updated, and provided to all parties, as required in Wis. Stat. ss. 48.38(5)(d), (5m)(d), 938.38(5)(d) & (5m)(d), five (5) days prior to the next permanency review or hearing.

The subsequent Permanency Plan must include information about the child and parent/guardian's progress from the previous six months and goals for the next six months.

Timeframe and Documentation

As part of evaluating the Permanency Plan, the child welfare professional must formally evaluate and document the Permanency Plan no later than six (6) months from the date of the last Permanency Plan.

Subsequent reviews of the Permanency Plan must be completed within six (6) months of the last permanency hearing or review. The results of the permanency hearing or review shall be documented on the eWiSACWIS Permanency Review/Hearing Page.

Requirements must be documented on the Permanency Plan in the eWiSACWIS record and approved by a supervisor or designee.

Evaluating progress of goals established in written agreements is a continual process of tracking and adjusting by the child welfare professional. To understand changes and needs of the family, the child welfare professional uses information obtained from monthly contacts with the child, parent/guardian, out-of-home care provider, collateral contacts, and the child and family team.

Evaluating the Safety Plan

Evaluating safety is a continuous process of tracking and adjusting throughout the change process. Assessing safety should be routine in all contacts with the child, family, out-of-home care and service providers.

Evaluating and Revising the Safety Plan

The Safety Analysis and Plan must be evaluated in collaboration with the parent/guardian and safety service providers. The safety plan is revised and documented in eWiSACWIS when contacts, observations, and gathered information indicate changes related to parent/guardian protective capacities or impending danger threats.

When a child is placed in out-of-home care, information gathered from the parent/guardian, child and out-of-home care provider is used to:

- Assess if impending danger threats in the parental home are active.
- Determine whether conditions have changed or can be controlled with services to allow the child to return home with a sufficient, feasible, and sustainable in-home safety plan.

Modifications to the Safety Analysis and Plan must be approved by a supervisor and documented in eWiSACWIS.

Reconfirming Safe Environments When Children are Placed in Out-of-Home Care

Reconfirming Safe Environments of Unlicensed and Licensed Homes

While the child resides in out-of-home care, the child welfare professional must, at a minimum, evaluate and confirm the safety of a specific placement every six months or at the review of the Permanency Plan, whichever comes first.

The child welfare professional or designee must:

- Conduct a CCAP records check on all individuals seventeen years of age and older residing in the identified placement home.
- Conduct a reverse address Sex Offender Registry check and a CPS records check on any individual seventeen years of age and older that has moved into the identified placement home since the previous confirmation or reconfirmation of safety in the placement environment.

Additionally, the child welfare professional or designee must:

- Have face-to-face contact with out-of-home care provider(s) to judge the safety of the placement home by assessing placement danger threats (See Appendix 3, page 263). If a placement danger threat(s) is confirmed, the child welfare professional must immediately begin the process of transitioning the child to an alternative placement.
- Assess the out-of-home care provider's ability to meet the combined needs of the child and any other individuals requiring care in the home.
- Evaluate changes in the child's most recent CANS assessment to determine if there are implications regarding the current out-of-home care provider's ability to meet the child's needs or the stability of the placement.
- Evaluate changes in the current out-of-home care provider's CANS assessment to determine if there are implications regarding the provider's ability to meet the child's needs or the stability of the placement.
- Evaluate the child's adjustment to and attitude about the current placement as well as the child's overall integration into the placement family.
- Evaluate the current out-of-home care provider regarding the provider's ability to support the permanency goal for the child, establish a relationship with the identified permanent placement for the child, and establish a relationship with the child welfare professional/agency.

Agencies may designate the background check requirements to other individuals based on local agency policy. It is the responsibility of the child welfare professional or designee to utilize the background information to confirm safety in the placement environment for the child(ren).

Additional Situations When Reconfirming a Safe Environment is Required

The child welfare professional or designee must review and, if necessary, document changes to the Confirming Safe Environments in an unlicensed or licensed out-of-home placement at each of the following points in the case:

- When conditions in the placement home that might affect a child's safety change.
- When the physical address of the placement changes.
- When an expecting youth placed in out-of-home care becomes a parent.
- When a report of alleged maltreatment is received; or
- When there is concern of a possible placement danger threat.

Placement Danger Threats and Placement Decisions

Placement danger threats indicate the placement may be an unsafe environment for the child.

- When a placement danger threat is confirmed for a specific child, the child welfare professional must immediately assess the safety of all children placed in the home. To accomplish this, the child welfare professional collaborates with other child welfare professionals that have children placed in the home as well as the foster care coordinator that licensed the home. If a determination is made that the placement home is an unsafe environment for other children in the home, the child welfare professional for each child must immediately begin the process of transitioning the child to an alternative placement.

At times the court may continue a placement despite a confirmed placement danger threat. In these situations, a plan should be made to ensure a safe environment for the child and be recorded in the Confirming Safe Environments document in eWiSACWIS.

Current Caregiver CANS Rating of "3"

The child welfare professional uses the CANS tool to assist in identifying a child's needs and strengths to meet their needs and make the best possible match with a placement home. This assessment process also identifies the current caregiver's needs to support them in providing care for the child placed in the home.

- When the child welfare professional rates any area a "3" on the CANS tool for the "Current Caregiver," the child welfare professional must reassess placement danger threats for the child.
- If a placement danger threat(s) is confirmed, the child welfare professional must immediately begin the process of transitioning the child to an alternative placement.
- When a placement danger threat is identified for a specific child, the child welfare professional must assess the safety of all children placed in the home. If a determination is made that this is an unsafe environment for other children in the home, the child welfare professional must immediately begin the process of transitioning the child(ren) to an alternative placement.

Documentation

The child welfare professional must use the "Reconfirming Safe Environments" page in eWiSACWIS to guide and document decision-making related to assessing, evaluating, and confirming safety in all unlicensed homes, licensed homes, group homes, and residential care center placements. Information regarding a safe environment must be documented in the eWiSACWIS record and approved by a supervisor or designee.

ACHIEVING SAFETY AND PERMANENCE

Permanence Determination and Achievement

Every child must have a safe and permanent home prior to closure.

Permanence

The prompt and decisive actions that are made to maintain a child safely in their own home or to permanently place them in a safe alternate family setting can have a lasting impact on the quality of a child's permanent relationships, cultural identity, and sense of self.

It is important to develop a partnership with the family to understand the specific conditions required before permanence can be achieved. These conditions should be related to the goals specified in the Permanency Plan and court order. Planning for permanence also includes establishing lifelong connections for the child.

Permanency Planning

Permanency planning requirements continue until permanence is achieved for a child or the child ages out of care. Permanence should bring physical, legal, and emotional safety and security within the context of a family relationship and allow lifelong relationships with a variety of caring adults. Permanence can be achieved in a variety of ways. The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) recognizes the following permanence goals:

- Reunification
- Guardianship
- Adoption
- Placement with a Fit and Willing Relative
- Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangements (OPPLA) (i.e., sustaining care or long-term foster care)

Reunification is the desired permanence goal. However, there are times when reunification may not be appropriate or cannot occur. For these children, it is important to consider other permanence goals.

If reunification cannot be achieved with the child and their parent, a permanence goal of guardianship or placement with a fit and willing relative would allow for children to remain connected with their family without permanently severing ties between children and their biological and/or legal family.

A permanence goal of adoption may be appropriate if reunification cannot be achieved with the parent/guardian and there is no other relative or like-kin available to assume guardianship of the child.

In each situation, for OPPLA to be the appropriate goal, one or more of these basic sets of circumstances must be present:

- The child is 16 years of age or older
- The child cannot be safely reunited with their birth family.
- Recruitment of a guardian or an adoptive family has not been successful.
- The agency has been unable to place the child with a fit and willing relative.
- There is an identified appropriate planned permanent living arrangement that the child wishes to elect.
- A decision has been made at the time the goal is selected that reunification, guardianship, or adoption are incompatible with the youth's age, special needs, or complex circumstances at the time.
- The child is being provided an opportunity to be a part of the decisions related to their permanency.

For children with a goal of "Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement" (OPPLA), continued planning efforts to achieve the goals of reunification, guardianship, adoption, or permanent placement with a fit and willing relative are required.

In all cases choosing the most appropriate goal(s) for a child involves considerations of the child, the family, the Indian child's tribe, the relationships of the child with others and the progress of the Permanency Plan.

Permanence has been reached when the court order (e.g., Child in Need of Protection or Services case (CHIPS)/Juvenile in Need of Protection or Services (JIPS)/Temporary Physical Custody (TPC) has been terminated or dismissed.

Agencies have the responsibility to ensure the family is aware of resources and supports necessary to sustain the child on their own, whether permanency is achieved through reunification, guardianship or adoption.

Concurrent Planning

Concurrent planning is a process of working on one permanence goal while at the same time establishing and implementing an alternative permanence goal that involves simultaneous activities to move a child more quickly to permanence, pursuant to Wis. Stat. s. 48.355(2b). It involves a mix of meaningful family engagement, targeted case planning, and legal strategies aimed at achieving timely permanence. Concurrent planning must include the following core components:

- Assessment/Determination
- Full disclosure
- Family search and engagement
- Teaming
- Family interaction
- Clear timelines
- Transparency
- Collaboration with agency and community partners

Assessing the Need for Concurrent Planning

Assessing the need for concurrent planning involves early assessment of the conditions that led to the child's placement into out-of-home care, the strengths of the family, and the likelihood of reunification within 12 to 15 months that is culturally respectful and based on the family's history and current functioning. The assessment is based on a review of factors that make timely reunification more or less likely. This allows the child welfare professional and child and family team to make determinations about the family's capacity to benefit from reunification services and the need for alternative planning. By no means should the presence of such conditions be construed to mean reasonable efforts to reunify the child are not required, unless they meet the statutory criteria for instances in which reasonable efforts are not required as stated in Wis. Stat. ss. 48.38(4m) and 938.38(4m).

Determination of Appropriateness for Concurrent Planning

When one of the following circumstances exists, a concurrent permanence goal and plan must be established for the child. Certain factors can delay or decrease the likelihood of reunification. Child welfare professionals must consider the following indicators:

- The child has been the victim of more than one form of abuse.
- There have been three or more CPS interventions for serious separate incidents, indicating a chronic pattern of abuse, severe neglect, or there is a pattern of intergenerational abuse with a lack of historical change in family dynamics.
- A parent/guardian has a history of substance abuse or is chemically dependent and/or has a history of treatment failures or the child was drug-exposed at the time of birth.
- The child has been abandoned with friends, relatives, out-of-home care providers, hospital, or after being placed in care, parents/guardians do not visit on their own accord. Parents/guardians disappear or appear rarely.
- A parent/guardian is intellectually impaired or has shown significant deficits in care for the child and has no support system of relatives able to share parenting.
- Parent/guardian has a pattern of at least one year of documented history of domestic violence between caretakers and they refuse to separate.
- A parent's/guardian's rights to another child have been involuntarily terminated or the parent has asked to relinquish the child on more than one occasion.
- A parent/guardian has significant, protracted, and untreated mental health issues.
- The child or sibling(s) have been placed in out-of-home care or with relatives/like-kin for periods of over six months duration or have had repeated placements with CPS intervention and previous attempts at reunification have failed.
- A parent's/guardian's only visible support system is a drug culture, with no significant effort to change over time.
- A parent/guardian has repeatedly and with premeditation harmed a child or the child experienced extreme physical or sexual abuse by a parent/guardian, or the parent/guardian has allowed someone else to abuse the child.
- A parent/guardian has previously killed or seriously harmed another child.

The above list shall not be considered the only instances when a concurrent plan may be established.

The establishment of a concurrent plan must be documented in the child's eWiSACWIS Permanency Plan.

Concurrent planning involves the practice of engaging a parent(s) in a discussion about all the permanence options, including the steps necessary for reunification, and the possibility of a voluntary or involuntary Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) if reunification goals are not accomplished within specified time limits. Effective concurrent planning ensures that the parent recognizes that they impact outcomes for their child through their actions.

Family Teaming is a critical component of concurrent planning practice. Concurrent planning and Family Teaming are approaches that happen at the same time. Family teams support the concurrent planning process by providing a format to share knowledge, planning, and decision making with the family and providers regarding goals, timelines, and options for permanence.

Full Disclosure

Full disclosure means the parent/guardian is provided information, both verbally and in writing related to agency involvement and permanence. Full disclosure includes:

- Explaining that out-of-home care is temporary, and the importance of establishing permanence.
- Providing information about the parent/guardian's rights and responsibilities, including: the need to share information about the child's needs, a search for and consideration of relatives and like-kin who may be able to care for the child, participation in the planning process and the involvement of the court system.
- Discussing the support services available to help the child's parents.
- Providing information about the goals of concurrent planning, time frames and permanence options. The child welfare professional must explain to the parent/guardian that developmental and emotional harm can result from a child being placed in out-of-home care and the urgency to establish permanence.
- Informing the parent/guardian about the consequences of not following through with the Permanency Plan.

Achieving Permanence

Reasonable Efforts and Active Efforts

Reasonable Efforts to Achieve Permanence

Child welfare agencies are required to provide reasonable efforts, or active efforts in the case of an Indian child, to achieve permanence for a child in out-of-home care.

Considerations for reasonable efforts may include:

- Providing family interaction.
- Offering of services consistent with the Permanency Plan goals.
- Providing case management services through an assigned child welfare professional.

Active Efforts to Prevent the Breakup of the Indian Child's Family and/or Reunify

If the child is an Indian child, the child welfare agencies are required to provide active efforts to prevent the breakup of the Indian child's family. If the Indian child is removed from their family, child welfare agencies are required to provide active efforts to reunify the family. Active efforts as defined by ICWA/WICWA requires an ongoing, vigorous, and concerted level of case work that must include:

- Engaging the tribal child welfare professional in any evaluation and case plan development.
- Comprehensively assessing the family and explore in-home safety options.
- Identifying the tribal child welfare professional at the earliest point possible. Actively seek their advice and invite them to participate in all aspects of the proceedings.
- Notifying and consulting extended family members to provide structure and support to the Indian child, parents/guardians, and Indian custodian.
- Providing natural and unsupervised family interaction.
- Utilizing all family preservation strategies and seeking the assistance of tribal child welfare professionals to determine if the strategies are culturally appropriate.
- Actively assisting the family in accessing community resources.
- Monitoring progress and aiding the family's participation in services.
- Considering alternative ways of addressing the needs of the Indian Child's family.

Permanency Goals

For each permanency option there are specific criteria that need to be considered for appropriateness when choosing that goal and identifiable progress to consider the child to have obtained permanence.

Reunification represents a specific event within ongoing case management. It is possible to reunify after the parent/caregiver has made progress related to issues associated with impending danger threats and parent/guardian protective capacities. The essential question is, “Can the child be kept safe within the home if they are returned home?” The answer to this question is based on the determination that there has been sufficient change related to parent/guardian behavior or change in circumstances which justify returning the child home. The safety assessment results will assist the child welfare professional in determining if reunification can occur with or without an in-home safety plan.

Trial Reunification

Child welfare professionals shall consider the use of trial reunification to provide a structured approach to progress towards reunification with the child’s parent/guardian. When an in-home safety plan can be implemented, a trial reunification may be appropriate.

Wis. Stat. s. 48.358(1)(a) states, “‘trial reunification’ means a period of 7 consecutive days or longer, but not exceeding 150 days, during which a child who is placed in an out-of-home placement under Wis. Stat. s. 48.355 or Wis. Stat. s. 48.357 resides in the home of a relative of the child from which the child was removed or in the home of either of the child’s parents for the purpose of determining the appropriateness of changing the placement of the child to that home.”

Note: Open cases with dispositions of Trial Reunification at age 18 or older qualify for independent living (IL) services.

For additional information, refer to page 174, “Trial Reunification” and Wis. Stat. s. 48.358 or Wis. Stat. s. 938.358.

Reunification Criteria and Process

Reunification is defined as a child returning to the child's parents or the home from which they were removed.

Prior to the decision to reunify, the child welfare professional must re-assess safety. Reunification can occur when the safety assessment and analysis of impending danger threats indicates one of the following:

- Child safety can be controlled through an in-home safety plan.
- Parent/guardian protective capacities are sufficiently enhanced to manage threats to child safety.
- It is in the child's best interest to reunify.

When reunification occurs with a non-household parent, the agency shall continue to work with the non-household parent to obtain a family court order that supports custody/placement with that parent. The agency shall not close the family's case until a family court order is in place that supports the reunification arrangement.

Prior to reunification for all case types the:

- Child welfare professionals must consult with their supervisor, or designee.
- Agency must ensure court approval.
- Child welfare professionals must develop a plan that addresses how changes in family dynamics will be managed.

Documentation Requirement in the Permanency Plan for Choosing the Goal of Reunification

When reunification is selected as the goal the following information must be documented to support and justify this decision:

- The conditions, if any, upon which the child will be returned safely to their home, including any changes required to the parent's/guardian's conduct, the child's conduct, or the nature of the home, must be documented in the plan.
- Agency efforts to achieve this goal.

Reunification does not equal case closure. When threats to child safety can be controlled through an in-home safety plan, trial reunification, or both, the child should be returned home.

Once the child is reunified, the child welfare professional will continue to work with the parent/guardian on behavioral changes that will result in sufficient protective capacities to protect the child from the identified impending danger threats and ensure safety and permanence.

Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)

The federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), 42 USC 675(5)(E) and 45 C.F.R. s. 1356.21(i), specifies that a TPR petition must be filed for a child who has been in out-of-home care for 15 of the last 22 months, unless certain exceptions apply (see below). The timeframes do not consider whether an adoptive resource has been located for the child.

For specific statutory requirements, refer to Wis. Stat. s. 48.417.

Documentation Requirement

When an agency does not file a TPR petition within the ASFA timelines, one or more compelling reasons must be documented in the eWISACWIS document Permanency Plan ASFA Addendum.

ASFA Exceptions to Filing a TPR Petition:

- Child is placed with a fit and willing relative.
- Compelling reason(s) why termination of parental rights is not in the child's best interest.
- Reasonable efforts to safely return the child to their home have not been made.
- Grounds for involuntary TPR do not exist.

Adoption Criteria and Process

Adoption is intended to provide legal permanence for a child. Any decision to pursue an adoption should minimally include the following:

- The proposed adoptive resource demonstrates protective capacities, stability, nurturing care, and the ability to provide a lifelong commitment and relationship with the child.

- The child welfare professional has explained to the proposed adoptive resource the eligibility of the child for continued financial assistance through Adoption Assistance and for continued Medical Assistance through Title XIX for the child.

When adoption is identified as the permanence goal for a child in out-of-home care the following steps need to be completed by the child welfare professional:

- Make a referral to the assigned public adoption agency using form Adoption Readiness and Referral (DCF-F-CFS2370-E).
- Participate in case collaboration with the public adoption agency if indicated in Part II of the Adoption Readiness and Referral.
- Complete the Public Adoption Case Transition Checklist (DCF-F-5056-E) within 30 days of TPR disposition. It is recommended that the checklist be started as early as TPR filing.

Adoption may occur when all three of the following conditions are met:

- The child is legally free for adoption
- There is an identified and approved adoptive resource.
- The court finalizes the adoption in a court hearing.

Documentation Requirement in the Permanency Plan for Choosing the Goal of Adoption

If adoption is the goal, the plan must include the following to support that decision:

- The rationale for choosing the goal of adoption.
- The efforts of the agency to achieve the goal of adoption.

Note: A child who is adopted after age 16 is eligible for independent living services via the contracted Transition Resource Agencies (TRAs) starting at age 18. The child welfare professional should inform the child and their family of their IL eligibility and collaborate with the TRA as they would for other IL-eligible youth transitioning from care.

Guardianship Criteria and Process

Guardianship is a long-term permanency option for children when reunification cannot occur. Guardianship transfers the duty and authority to make important legal decisions for the child to an individual without severing the child's legal relationship with their parents and other family members.

Guardianship can be transferred pursuant to Wis. Stat. ss. 48.977, 48.9795 or under a substantially similar tribal court order. The child welfare professional assesses the relationship between the child and their proposed guardian(s) and confirms that the proposed guardian(s) is willing and able to care for the child long-term. This includes maintaining the parent's right to reasonable visitation with their child after permanence is achieved. The child welfare professional should consult with the child, their parents, and the proposed guardian(s) to discuss the supports and services available to them under guardianship.

Subsidized Guardianship

Subsidized guardianship supports the legal permanence option of guardianship and provides financial support to the guardian to offset the costs of caring for the child after permanency is achieved. Pursuant to Wis. Stat. s. 48.623 and Wis. Admin. Code s. DCF 55., the child and their prospective guardian(s) must meet specific eligibility criteria prior to the appointment of guardian. This program only applies to guardianships established under Wis. Stat. s. 48.977 or under a substantially similar tribal court order. The prospective guardian enters into a subsidized guardianship agreement with the child welfare agency prior to the guardianship being established. After guardianship is established under Wis. Stat. s. 48.977 or under a substantially similar tribal court order, the underlying court order placing the child or continuing the placement of the child outside their home must be dismissed or terminated.

Note: A child entering Wis. Stat. s. 48.977 guardianship, Wis. Stat. s. 48.9795 guardianship, or guardianship under substantially similar tribal law on or after their 16th birthday following time in court-ordered OHC is eligible for independent living (IL) services via the contracted Transition Resource Agencies (TRAs) starting at age 18. The child welfare professional should inform the child and guardian of their IL eligibility and collaborate with the TRA as they would for other IL-eligible youth transitioning from care.

- A prospective child must meet the following eligibility criteria: Child has been removed from their home under:
    - A voluntary placement agreement under Wis. Stat. s. 48.63 or a substantially similar tribal law of a tribe located in Wisconsin, or
    - A Wisconsin court order or a substantially similar tribal court order containing a finding that continued placement of the child in their home would be contrary to the welfare of the child.
- Child has been placed in the prospective guardian's home for at least six consecutive months before guardianship is established.

    - If the child is an Indian child and subject to the jurisdiction of a circuit court, placement preferences under Wis. Stat. s. 48.028 (7)(b) or, if applicable, Wis. Stat. s. 48.028 (7)(c) must be followed, unless the court found good cause, as described in Wis. Stat. s. 48.028 (7) (e), for departing from that order.
- Reunification or adoption/customary adoption are determined to not be in the child's best interest.
- If 14 years old or older, the child has been consulted regarding the guardianship arrangement.
- Child has a strong attachment to the caregiver.

The prospective guardian must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Prospective guardian is a relative or fictive kin to the child.
    - Fictive kin is defined as a person who had a significant relationship with the child or child's family before the child's placement in out-of-home care, OR
    - A person who developed a significant relationship with the child or the child's family during the child's placement in out-of-home care and all the following apply:
        - The person is a foster parent who has had a relationship with the child for at least two years.
        - The child is 14 years of age or older.
        - The child has been placed in out-of-home care for 15 out of the last 22 months.
        - The agency or court determines that placement with a fit and willing relative is not in the child's best interest.
- Prospective guardian is a licensed foster parent for at least six (6) consecutive months before guardianship is established.
- Prospective guardian has a strong commitment to permanently care for the child long term.

For more information about Subsidized Guardianship go to: https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/sg.

Documentation Requirement in the Permanency Plan for Choosing the Goal of Guardianship

If guardianship is the goal, the plan must include the following to support that decision:

- The rationale for choosing the goal of guardianship.
- Indicate whether the child's parent(s)/guardian(s) agree with the goal.
- Describe what efforts have not been made by the family to enhance any diminished protective capacities associated with the identified impending danger threat(s).

- Articulate what efforts have been made by the agency to connect the family to all necessary services to address the identified impending danger threat(s) and achieve the chosen goal.
- Identify if the child is with an out-of-home provider that will become guardian.
- Identify if an eligibility determination has been made for subsidized guardianship.

Guardianships can be terminated if a parent or guardian petitions the court to have the guardianship terminated. Prior to terminating a guardianship pursuant to Wis. Stat. ch. 48, the court should notify the child welfare agency of any petition to terminate the guardianship. If a guardianship is terminated, another person may be appointed as a successor guardian in accordance with Wis. Stat. s. 48.9795(8) or Wis. Stat. s. 48.977623 and 48.977(5m).

Permanence is not considered achieved if the agency is unable to achieve safe case closure, keeps the out-of-home care placement open to continue to make foster care payments, or the court continues the out-of-home care placement. In this case all permanency planning requirements are still in effect, including family interaction planning.

Permanent Placement with a Fit and Willing Relative

Permanent placement with a fit and willing relative may occur when:

- The relative demonstrates to the agency the capacity and ability to work with the child's parent(s)/guardian(s) to manage conflict and obtain the necessary consent to maintain the child's health and well-being needs.
- The relative must also demonstrate the ability, capacity, and commitment to provide long-term for the child's safety, permanence, and well-being needs.
- The relative must meet placement criteria for a relative as defined by Wis. Stat. s. 48.02(15).
- The child welfare professional has explained the supports and services available to the relative under other more permanent options such as guardianship or adoption.

Documentation Requirements in the Child's Permanency Plan

If placement with a fit and willing relative is the goal, the plan must include the following to support the decision:

- The rationale for choosing the goal of permanent placement with a fit and willing relative.
- The efforts of the agency to achieve permanent placement with a fit and willing relative.

Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangements

Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (OPPLA) is the least preferred option for a child and lacks legal permanence for the child. OPPLA, which includes long-term foster care and sustaining care, is an arrangement that is planned and intended to establish permanency for a child through a supportive relationship with a significant adult that will endure over time, minimally until the child reaches the age of 18 years old. OPPLA can only be a permanency goal for children age 16 and over. OPPLA is not intended to be used as a short-term option or intended for a temporary placement arrangement and should not be confused with independent living services.

This goal may only be used when there is a finding by the court that the other four goals are not in the child's best interests.

The child welfare professional must continue the following efforts:

- Continue diligent efforts to locate and engage non-household parents and relatives as resources for the child.
- Locate and identify relationships or significant connections that may have been missed or that may be developing, i.e., teachers, medical caregivers, volunteers, etc. to see if a permanent resource can be made.
- Talk to the child about the important people in their lives, who they look up to and who they feel they can count on to "be there" for them.
- Exploration of the child's relationships as they develop and change over time.
- For relationships that have been identified, evaluate and screen, support and nurture such relationships through interaction, information sharing, and activities that build on the foundation that has been established.
- Continue intensive and ongoing efforts to return the child to the child's home or to place the child for adoption, with a guardian, or with a fit and willing relative. This should include searches of social media.
- Continue to ensure the child has regular, ongoing opportunities to engage in age or developmentally appropriate activities and to ensure that the child's out-of-home care provider is applying the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard to decisions concerning the child's participation in those activities.

Documentation Requirements

The following must be documented in the child's Permanency Plan in eWiSACWIS:

- The rationale for choosing the goal of OPPLA.
- The continued efforts of the agency to achieve the other permanence options for the child, unless there is a Sustaining Care Contract (Wis. Stat. s. 48.428) with the out-of-home care provider.
- The intensive, ongoing, and unsuccessful efforts made by the agency to return the child home or place the child for adoption, with a guardian, or with a fit and willing relative, including through efforts that utilize technology, such as social media, to find the child's biological or adoptive family members.

The following must be documented on the permanency review or hearing results template in eWiSACWIS:

- Confirmation that the court or administrative body discussed with the child their desired permanency outcome.
- A finding by the court or administrative body that OPPLA is the best permanency plan for the child.

Transitioning a Child to Permanence

Requirements

The agency must assist and prepare the child for the transition to permanence. Transition preparation must identify and address long-term needs consistent with the child's age and development. The child welfare professional shall ensure that the transition is known and agreed to with others involved in implementing the transition to permanence.

A child's readiness to proceed with permanence is aided by conscientious preparation by child welfare professionals before, during, and after transitions to:

- Prepare the child and family.
- Assess any current or ongoing needs.
- Develop a process for the transition that is in the best interests of the child considering their emotional, behavioral, and psychological needs.

Child welfare professionals must assess the steps taken earlier to prepare the child and permanent caregiver(s) to determine any additional and on-going services needed to plan for the child's safety, emotional readiness, and overall functioning, and the family's readiness to provide permanent care.

When multiple children of the same family are involved in achieving permanence, the plans to transition to permanence should be child-specific with efforts made to prevent re-entry. For reunification, consideration should be given to the timing of each child's reunification and the parent(s)/guardian(s) capacity to manage the reintegration of each family member into the family unit and each child's specific needs for transitioning. The use of trial reunification may also be warranted.

Safety and permanence are achieved within a family relationship that offers safe, and committed parenting, unconditional love and lifelong support, and legal family membership status.

Child welfare professionals need to recognize that older adolescents are in a crucial transition phase toward self-sufficiency. Therefore, healthy relationships and supportive individuals, including foster parents, friends and other adults in the community are extremely important to youth exiting out-of-home care, as well as opportunities to practice life-skills;

mechanisms for assuring the involvement in decisions affecting their lives; assuring youth's familiarity with community resources and the establishment of transitional living resources. Lifelong connections to caring adults are paramount to the success of older youth exiting out-of-home care.

Independent Living Planning

Independent Living Planning, Service Documentation, and Document Provision

If an individual is 14 years of age or older and has been in out-of-home care for at least six months, the youth becomes eligible for independent living (IL) supports and services. At that time, an independent living plan is required to specify the programs and services that will be, or are being, provided to assist the youth in developing life-skills while in care and preparing their transition from out-of-home care to stability and self-sufficiency as a young adult. The child welfare professional must develop this plan with the youth, informed both by an independent living skill assessment of the youth (e.g. Daniel Memorial or Casey Life Skills Assessment) and the youth's input; IL shall then be integrated into the child's permanency and safety planning.

The child welfare professional shall use the eWiSACWIS independent living case note type to detail IL supports, services, and other work done for and with IL-eligible youth in care. They must also document all independent living services provided to the young person in the Services tab on the youth's IL page; this is required even if they also reference an IL service in a case note. The professional shall make service entries on the IL page on a regular basis to accurately reflect what IL supports and services the youth receives, when they receive them, and who or what entity provides the service to them. Many independent living services are single and finite, meaning they may be specific to one day or one activity. The child welfare professional shall log all services while a youth is IL-eligible and in care, update them as needed, and record an end date when the service is done or complete. Additional information about service documentation is available via https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/knowledgeweb/training/il-service-categories.

So long as the youth remains in a qualifying out-of-home care placement, their child welfare agency's child welfare professional and/or Child Welfare Agency IL Coordinator is responsible for coordinating IL supports and services and fulfilling independent living assessment, plan, supports and services, and documentation requirements.

The Permanency Plan must be developed in consultation with the youth and two other individuals selected by the youth who are not the youth's child welfare professional or foster parent. The agency may reject a person selected by the youth if the agency has good cause to believe that the person would not act in the best interests of the youth. The Permanency Plan must include all of the following:

- The anticipated age at which the youth will discharge from out-of-home care.
- The anticipated amount of time available in which to prepare the child for the transition from out-of-home care to stability and self-sufficiency as a young adult.

- The anticipated location and living situation of the child following discharge from out-of-home care.
- The date the child received the Guide for Youth in Out-of-Home Care Placements in Wisconsin, which describes the rights of the child with respect to education, health, visitation, and participation in court proceedings.
- Current and previous IL supports or services provided to the youth to prepare them for the transition from out-of-home care to stability and self-sufficiency as a young adult. This includes the timeframe(s) during which the agency provides the IL supports and services.
    - IL and services include. but are not limited to:
        - Housing, with emphasis on securing safe, stable, and sustainable housing, in addition to learning about home maintenance and healthy living situations with others
        - Employment, including learning about job and career options, soft and hard skill development, and opportunities for increased earnings
        - Income and finances, including how to budget and make bill payments, financial literacy, savings and aid, and the importance of credit
        - Education, including access to academic supports like tutoring, high school completion, and learning about or enrolling in postsecondary education, certification program, or vocational training
        - Health and well-being, including physical and mental wellness, sexual education, family planning, and healthy friendships/relationships
        - Transportation, with emphasis on safe and reliable transportation options
        - Mentoring and support network, including fostering prosocial activities and relationships, fostering cultural connections, and affirming a youth's gender identity, gender expression, and/or sexual orientation
        - Cultural competency and connections, including learning about and fostering connections with community, ancestry/lineage, customs, and more
        - Knowledge of community resources and supports, including how to access them

The child welfare professional, young person, and young person's supportive adults should revisit and, as applicable, update the IL plan and assessment every six months, reflecting on the youth's progress towards IL goals, any new/emerging needs, and any approaching developmental milestones.

Child welfare agencies may use an IL assessment tool and an IL plan of their choosing. Child welfare agencies are welcome to use DCF's Independent Living Plan template (DCF-F-CFS2256-E) or to use and/or develop their own IL planning template.

If the youth is age 14 or older, the agency must provide the youth with a copy of each credit report run on the youth's behalf or a letter from the agency verifying a credit check was conducted and contained no evidence of credit abuse. The agency shall provide this annually. If there are any "hits" in the credit report, the agency shall make efforts to amend these issues.

If a youth has been in care for six (6) months or longer and reaches the age of majority, the agency responsible for providing services to the youth must ensure the child is in possession of the following:

- Original certified birth certificate,
- State identification card or driver's license,
- Social Security card, and,
- Health insurance information, including nay cards needed to access medical care.

The agency must update and provide the following to the youth 90 days prior to the youth's 18th birthday:

- Copy of the youth's health care records.

These documents must be provided to the youth 90 days prior to when the youth reaches age 18. If the youth remains in out-of-home care after age 18, the agency must continue to update these documents and provide them to the youth 90 days prior to the termination of the court order or Voluntary Transition to Independent Living Agreement. This must be documented on the child's Permanency Plan.

Resources and guidance related to independent living are available at https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/il (under "Resources, Training, & Reports").

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)

NYTD is a federal initiative to collect service information about and survey responses directly from youth with out-of-home care experience as an adolescent. DCF submits both service and survey information to the federal government twice a year.

NYTD Services
DCF and its independent living partners are required to document and track independent living service information in eWiSACWIS on an ongoing basis, and DCF submits this service information twice a year as part of its NYTD federal reporting. This includes service information for youth who received at least one IL service in the given reporting period, regardless of whether they also completed a NYTD survey (see below) during that reporting period. See the Independent Living Planning sections on pages 81 and 133 for more guidance about documenting IL services in eWiSACWIS.

NYTD Survey
Survey results are used to inform national and state policies. The NYTD survey asks youth questions about their financial self-sufficiency, any experience with homelessness; educational attainment; employment status; connection to family and supportive adults; high-risk behavior; access to health care, insurance, and other benefits; and more.

The child welfare professional or designee is required to ensure that a youth in an out-of-home care placement who is eligible to complete the NYTD survey does so. This includes youth in supervised independent living and/or extended out-of-home care. At no time should anyone other than the identified youth complete the survey. However, the youth can and should receive any necessary assistance to help them complete the survey.

DCF's NYTD website (https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/ys/nytd) provides background information about NYTD, including youth eligibility, FAQs, tip sheets to help child welfare professionals and other supportive adults discuss NYTD with youth, and more resources.

Youth at age 17

Any youth in out-of-home care on their 17th birthday or any of the 45 days that follow is a part of the baseline population for the NYTD outcomes survey process.

Youth in the baseline population must complete their survey within 45 days of their 17th birthday.

While DCF and the UW Survey Center (UWSC) play a primary role in the management, outreach and survey completion functions, county agencies also have a role in the youth successfully completing the survey, as outlined below. Youth may be more able and willing to complete the survey with the support and encouragement of their child welfare professional.

The process is as follows:

- On or near the youth's 17th birthday, UWSC mails an initial letter to the youth containing a customized web link and passcode to access the web-based survey. UWSC includes a $5 bill in the initial letter as a token of appreciation for the youth's time.
- At the same time, UWSC sends the youth's child welfare professional an e-mail with the same web link. An eWiSACWIS tickler will notify child welfare professionals that the NYTD Outcomes Survey for the 17-year-old must be completed within 45 days after the youth's 17th birthday. Upon receiving the e-mail, child welfare professionals should contact the youth to make sure the youth received UWSC's letter and the $5 bill. If the youth did not receive the letter, or if the youth requires additional encouragement, child welfare professionals can send the youth the link in their e-mail, which provides direct access to the survey.

NOTE: If the youth has internet access, the youth is encouraged to take the survey right away. If the youth does not have internet access and/or needs assistance, the child welfare professional should arrange a time with the youth to take the survey.

- In addition to the initial letter to the youth, UWSC will send additional reminder letters; UWSC will suspend this effort once the youth completes the survey, if the youth informs UWSC that they do not plan to complete the survey, or when 45 days have passed since the youth's 17th birthday, whichever comes first.

- If a youth does not complete the survey after repeated letters, UWSC staff attempt to survey the youth via telephone.
- In addition to direct outreach to the youth, UWSC will also continue outreach to the identified child welfare professionals and other collateral contacts in the youth's life.
- Once the youth completes the survey within the 45-day timeframe, UWSC sends the youth $20. Except in extenuating circumstances, youth who complete the survey late (outside of the 45-day timeframe) will not receive the $20.

Survey results, when authorized by the youth, will be downloaded onto the youth's IL page in eWiSACWIS.

To ensure information is collected in a timely manner, it is recommended that workers arrange their monthly visit to take place immediately following the youth's 17th birthday to provide opportunity for the youth to complete and submit the survey within the required 45 days.

In addition to understanding the NYTD process and assisting qualifying youth as appropriate, child welfare professionals can improve the success of DCF and UWSC's outreach to youth by keeping youth contact information current in eWiSACWIS. This includes while they are in out-of-home care and in anticipation of their exit from care. Because youth are asked to complete NYTD again at ages 19 and 21, it is crucial to have correct and current contact information. This information must be entered on the Contacts Tab on the IL page in eWiSACWIS.

Youth at Ages 19 and 21

Each youth who completes the NYTD survey as part of the baseline population at age 17 becomes part of the follow-up populations at ages 19 and 21. Those who participated in the data collection at age 17, but not 19 for a reason other than being deceased, remain a part of the follow-up population at age 21. These youth must complete the survey within the federal reporting period in which a youth's 19th and 21st birthdate falls. While youth eligible to complete the survey at age 17 must do so within 45 days of their 17th birthday, youth eligible at age 19 or 21 do so within the 6-month window in which their birthday falls. For example, a youth who participated at age 17, whose 19th or 21st birthday falls between the reporting period of October 1st through March 31st, must complete the survey anytime between October and March. Likewise, a youth whose 19th or 21st birthday falls between April 1st and September 31st must complete the survey between April and September.

Even though many youth discharge from of out-of-home prior to being 19 or 21, the child welfare professional still has a role to play. For 19- and 21-year-olds still in care, the child welfare professional can encourage the youth to complete the survey and assist them as needed. For those 19- and 21-year-olds no longer in care but for whom the child welfare professional still has contact information or with whom the child welfare professional is still in touch, the child welfare professional can play a crucial role in encouraging the young person to complete the NYTD survey.

The process is as follows:

- For 19-year-olds and 21-year-olds, UWSC mails an initial letter at the beginning of the federal reporting period. For example, if a youth's birthday falls between October 1st and March 31st, UWSC will send the youth a letter on or near October 1st. The initial letter will contain a customized web link and passcode to access the web-based survey. UWSC includes a $5 bill in the initial letter as a token of appreciation for the youth's time.

NOTE: In order to assist the UWSC with its outreach efforts, child welfare professionals should update contact information in eWiSACWIS for youth due to discharge from care prior to their discharge and again if/when they learn of additional contact information.

- UWSC sends frequent reminder letters to the youth until the survey is completed.
- If a youth does not complete the survey after repeated letters, UWSC staff attempt to survey the youth via telephone.
- In addition to direct outreach to the youth, UWSC will also continue outreach to the identified child welfare professionals and other collateral contacts in the youth's life.
- Once the youth completes the survey within the 45-day timeframe, UWSC sends the youth $20. Except in extenuating circumstances, youth who complete the survey late (outside of the 45-day timeframe) will not receive $20.

As with the NYTD survey at age 17, survey results for 19- and 21-year-olds, when authorized by the youth, will download onto the youth's IL page in eWiSACWIS.

Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan

If a youth is 17.5 or older while in out-of-home care, the focus of a youth's independent living plan changes from one of life-skills development while in out-of-home care to transitioning from care as a self-sufficient young adult. The child welfare professional must create an Independent Living Transition to Discharge (ILTD) plan for each youth who will discharge from care on or after turning 18. The ILTD must be started no later than when the youth turns 17.5 and be finalized no later than 90 prior to the youth's 18th birthday.

For more guidance, consult the ILTD Writing Guide and ILTD Desk Guide.

The ILTD is required even if a youth is missing from care at 17.5 or later; the child welfare professional and other supportive adults should do their best to complete the plan on the youth's behalf and engage the young person in discussion and plan development when they are no longer missing from care.

The ILTD is also required even if the youth remains in care after age 18. It should be started no later than 17.5 and updated on a regular basis to reflect the evolution of the youth's independent living needs and goals and transition planning, leading up the

termination of their court order or Voluntary Transition to Independent Living Agreement. This applies to youth in extended care.

The child welfare professional shall work with the young person to define the youth's wants, needs, and goals following discharge and identify any services, resources, programs, and/or persons that will support the youth during discharge and beyond. The child welfare professional, in partnership with others on the youth's discharge planning team, must help the youth be familiar with and, as appropriate, connect with the individuals, agencies, and service providers who will help them leading up to and following discharge prior to the youth's discharge from out-of-home care.

Appropriate supports and services should complement the youth's efforts to achieve self-sufficiency both prior to and upon discharge. The ILTD, completed via the ILTD tab on the youth's IL page in eWiSACWIS, must be detailed and kept current to ensure that goals and tasks reflect the youth's wants, needs, and goals, and identified resources, helpers, and timeframes are specific, realistic, and relevant to the need. It includes numerous opportunities for the youth to provide direct input for their plan. .
ILTD areas of focus are many of the ones relevant throughout a youth's IL eligibility while in care, revisited in the context of the youth approaching discharge. These areas of focus include, but are not limited to:

- Youth concurrent planning, such as when a youth will discharge to adult services
- Youth eligibility for extended out-of-home care
- Youth knowledge of community resources, supports, and benefits, including eligibility and how to access them
- Housing, with emphasis on securing safe, stable, and sustainable housing, in addition to learning about home maintenance and healthy living situations with others
- Employment, including learning about job and career options, soft and hard skill development, and opportunities for increased earnings
- Income and finances, including how to budget and make bill payments, financial literacy, savings and aid, and the importance of credit
- Education, including access to academic supports like tutoring, high school completion, and learning about or enrolling in postsecondary education, certification program, or vocational training
- Health and well-being, including physical and mental wellness, sexual education, family planning, and healthy friendships/relationships
- Transportation, with emphasis on safe and reliable transportation options
- Community and support network, including fostering prosocial activities and relationships, fostering cultural connections, and affirming a youth's gender identity, gender expression, and/or sexual orientation

In addition to completing the ILTD with the youth and others in their support network, the child welfare professional must also provide required documents to the young person prior to discharge. Once provided, they should check these off on the IL page>Referral tab; that list then pre-fills to the ILTD print out. The required documents are:

- Original certified birth certificate (federally required);

- State identification card or driver's license (federally required);
- Social Security card (federally required);
- Health insurance information, including any cards needed to access medical care (federally required);
- Education records
- Documentation of immigration, citizenship, or naturalization, if appropriate
- Death certificate if parent is deceased
- Proof of tribal registration and membership, if appropriate
- Copy of ILTD plan
- Selective Service card, if appropriate
- Annual credit report and efforts made by the agency to amend any inaccuracies

Other important documents include:

- Placement history, if appropriate
- Copy of permanency plan, if appropriate
- Change of address card
- Employment information

While the child welfare professional is responsible for coordinating and facilitating ILTD meetings and conversations, and documenting and completing the ILTD tab in eWiSACWIS, they shall collaborate with the youth and other participants in the youth's discharge planning. The child welfare professional shall encourage the youth to lead their ILTD planning. Supportive adults, as identified by the youth, should be part of the planning process.

Even if an ILTD is not completed for youth adopted or in Wis. Stat. s. 48.977 guardianship, Wis. Stat. s. 48.9597 guardianship, or guardianship under substantially similar tribal law on or after their 16th birthday following time in court-ordered out-of-home care, the child welfare professional and/or IL Coordinator shall make the youth aware of their IL eligibility prior to case closure and inform the TRA of the youth's eligibility as well.

See also page 195, "Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan"; page 271, "Appendix 4: Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan (Additional Information)"; and the ILTD Writing Guide and ILTD Desk Guide for more guidance.

Also note that a previous ILTD training video is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0DNPd6lojA&feature=youtu.be. Though referencing an older version of the ILTD, the video still includes good practice considerations.

Case Closure

Safety intervention responsibilities are incomplete until certain assessments and conclusions are reached. A case should not be recommended for case closure if a child is not safe.

Prior to case closure, the agency should arrange and facilitate a process to engage family members, service providers, and informal supports in developing a plan for identifying and meeting child and family needs after agency involvement has ended.

The first safety intervention responsibility at case closure is safety assessment. The assessment must include information concerning the absence or presence of impending danger threats.

The second responsibility is concerned with assessing parent/guardian protective capacities. The parent/guardian's protective capacities should be sufficient to protect against threats that continue to exist or might emerge. The parent/guardian should fully embrace and act effectively in their protective role.

The final safety intervention responsibility is to review the need for a "safety net" followed by establishing one as appropriate. A safety net refers to arrangements, connections, and supports within the family network or community that can be created, facilitated, and reinforced that reassure the caregiver, provide resources, and assistance.

To assist a family in achieving sustainable change and, ultimately, safe case closure, the child welfare professional must apply safety and permanency related concepts and criteria as part of their intervention responsibilities. This includes:

- Continually reassessing impending danger threats; evaluating and confirming the sufficiency, feasibility, and sustainability of safety plans and when necessary, making immediate adjustments to ensure safety interventions are the most appropriate and least intrusive for the family.
- Engaging parents/guardians and children in the assessment and planning process to:
    - Identify behavioral change strategies that address impending danger threats by enhancing parent/guardian protective capacities.
    - Identify lasting and permanent connections for the child and family.
- Evaluating progress related to the parent/guardian establishing and maintaining a safe and permanent home for their children.

Other reasons a case may close include when a child reaches the age of majority or a court refuses to extend an order. Please see page 81 and page 133, Independent Living Planning, regarding the requirements when a child reaches the age of majority.

The child welfare professional must work with the family to ensure informal or formal supports are in place prior to case closure. These supports include arrangements and

connections within the family network or community that can be created, facilitated, or reinforced to provide the parent/guardian resources and assistance once CPS involvement ends.

Planning for Safe Case Closure

The agency child welfare professional must ensure the transition to case closure is communicated to others involved with the case.

Stability and safe case closure is achieved by:

- Preparing the child and family.
- Assessing any current or ongoing needs.
- Developing a process for the transition in the best interests of the child considering their emotional, behavioral, and psychological needs.

The child welfare professional uses the following criteria to determine if a safe home exists and permanence has been achieved:

- Parents/guardians have made sufficient progress in addressing case goals (enhanced protective capacities).
- Formal or informal supports are available and accessible to the family, as needed, after the case is closed with the agency.

A case may not be closed if there is an active CHIPS order.

Prior to case closure, the child welfare professional must have face-to-face contact with family members and the family team, if involved, to:

- Support the family in determining how their needs will be met after agency involvement ends.

Inform the family of the date that ongoing child protective services will end.

Safety at Case Closure

Safety intervention at case closure relates to confirming impending danger threats exist and that sufficient protective capacities exist to protect the child from impending danger threats.

The CPS responsibilities in determination that a safe home exists include both:

- A formal safety assessment confirms the absence of impending danger threats.
- Parent/guardian protective capacities are sufficient.

Documentation

Case closure information must be documented in the family eWiSACWIS case record and approved by a supervisor or designee within 30 calendar days from the date the case closure decision was made by the supervisor and child welfare professional. Documentation at planned case closure must include:

- A reassessment of child safety.
- The rationale for the decision to close the case.
- A description of the closure process with the family and service providers, including the family's plan for meeting future service needs.

Early Dismissal of Dispositional Order

The CPS child welfare professional is responsible for initiating, as appropriate, additional court actions.

When a determination is made that a family is no longer in need of court ordered CPS services, a request must be submitted to the court for early dismissal of the dispositional order and signed by the judge before a case with court jurisdiction can be closed by the agency.

Case Closure Orders under Wis. Stat. ss. 48.355(4g) & 938.355(4g)

Case closure court orders can allow the juvenile court to enter or modify a family court order and terminate the juvenile court order. The juvenile court only has the authority to enter or modify the family court order after the dispositional order is entered and if the child is or will be placed with a parent via the orders. The juvenile court may determine paternity, legal custody, periods of physical placement, visitation rights, or child support and parental obligation for health care expenses. Subsequent modifications to the court order would occur in family court.

Any decision that is made shall be done in consultation with the agency's legal counsel.

CHILD WELFARE OUT-OF-HOME CARE CASES

Information from an initial assessment, a child welfare assessment, or the juvenile court intake process guides decision-making about whether an agency will open a case for ongoing services. When children are safe, but the agency determines that a child requires either specific services or sanctions in the community or in a placement setting, the agency opens a child welfare case. Agencies are not required to open these cases unless a child needs an out-of-home placement, but if a decision is made to serve the family, this standard applies.

Child welfare cases involve providing support and services to a family. The child welfare professional focuses on assessing the family for strengths and needs, managing safety of placement setting, achieving permanence and well-being, and attaining safe case closure. The primary focus of agency intervention is the provision of child and family support and services rather than safety intervention focused on enhancement of protective capacities. These cases may be court ordered or voluntary. These cases include Youth Justice (YJ) and Juveniles in Need of Protection or Services (JIPS) cases.

Safety intervention for child welfare cases, whether in-home or out-of-home, focuses on confirming that children remain safe and protected from abuse and neglect. Although child safety is not the reason for agency intervention, it is important to understand there may be times when family dynamics and functioning change, resulting in an unsafe child. At this point, a case becomes a child protective services case and cannot be served under this standard.

Applicability

This standard applies when:

- A child is in need of an out-of-home placement.
- A family is in need of child welfare services.
- A case transitions from the state to the county where permanence is not achieved after a termination of parental rights (TPR).

This standard cannot be used when the agency determines a child to be unsafe. Additionally, if during monitoring of the family's case the agency becomes aware of alleged maltreatment or present or impeding danger threats to child safety, immediate action to control for child safety must be taken, including a report to Access, if warranted. Agencies must ensure that all actions of either the agency or contracted provider staff comply with this standard.

Examples of child welfare cases can include but are not limited to: children with disabilities and their families are unable to meet their treatment needs without agency assistance; children with challenging behaviors or mental health needs and their families are unable to meet their treatment needs without agency assistance; children whose case has been returned to the county from the state adoption program; and family court transfers of jurisdiction.

This section applies to all child welfare cases where a child is in an out-of-home care setting, including those placed through via a CHIPS, JIPS or delinquency order. The intent of case management for out-of-home care child welfare cases is to support families in achieving permanence.

Although child safety is not the reason for agency involvement, the focus of whether the child is safe in their placement is a critical agency responsibility when children are in out-of-home care. When children are in out-of-home care, agencies remain responsible to confirm whether a child is safe at the time of placement, as well as reconfirm to ensure the placement remains safe through case closure.

No matter the reason for agency involvement, it is critical for children to have permanence and stability in their living situations including continuity of family relationships and connections. The prompt and decisive actions that are made to maintain a child safely in their own home or to permanently place them in a safe alternate family setting can have a lasting impact on the quality of a child's permanent relationships, cultural identity, and sense of self.

Timeframe for Initial Contact

Child Welfare Cases (CHIPS, JIPS, and YJ)

Within seven (7) working days of an approved case transition staffing, the child welfare professional must have face-to-face contact with parents/guardians and child. Within this timeframe, the child welfare professional must communicate with case participants and providers to:

- Provide the child welfare professional's name and contact information.
- Elicit their understanding regarding the reason for their involvement.
- Confirm the initial Family Interaction Plan is working.
- Confirm their continued commitment and ability to remain actively involved in the Permanency Plan.

Family Interaction Plan

When children are in home out-of-home care, family interaction is an opportunity to maintain, establish, and promote parent-child and sibling relationships. It is also an opportunity for parents/guardians to evaluate their own parenting practices and gain knowledge of new practices and views about parenting. The initial Family Interaction Plan is implemented until a more thorough understanding of family dynamics is understood by the child welfare professional.

Family Interaction Plan

Child Welfare Cases (CHIPS only)

Basic Requirements

The agency or its designee is responsible for assuring the initial face-to-face family interaction contact occurs within five (5) working days of the child's placement in out-of-home care.

The agency shall, no later than 60 calendar days after placement, establish and document a Family Interaction Plan that outlines the anticipated interaction for the child with their parents/guardians, siblings, and other identified participants.

Frequency

Face-to-face family interaction is the responsibility of the agency and must occur weekly, at a minimum.

When siblings are not placed together, sibling face-to-face interaction must occur monthly, at minimum.

Additional Requirements

- Children must have other family interaction (e.g., telephone calls, letters, etc.) with their parents/guardians and siblings as much as possible.
- Family interaction can only be prohibited by the agency if a court finds that continued contact is not in child's best interests.
- Family interaction can be decreased or suspended if there is evidence that the contact is contrary to the safety of the child and this information is documented in the case record.
- Family interaction cannot be used as a punishment, reward, or threat for a child.
- The agency cannot restrict or suspend family interaction as a means to control or punish a parent/guardian for failure to work with agency or community providers or to comply with conditions of the case or Permanency Plan.
- The out-of-home care provider cannot prohibit family interaction.

Documentation

The Family Interaction Plan and content must be documented in the eWiSACWIS case record and Permanency Plan.

Case Planning

Case Planning (CHIPS, JIPS, and Youth Justice)

The child welfare professional begins to discuss permanence with families prior to filing the initial Permanency Plan. These discussions with the child and family must incorporate the following topics:

- The roles and responsibilities of both the child welfare professional and family.
- The reason for agency involvement.
- A review of family's permanence goal, the court process, ASFA timelines, and possible outcomes or consequences.
- The parents'/guardians' rights and responsibilities throughout the Ongoing Services and court processes with an emphasis on the temporary state of out-of-home care and the emotional and developmental impact of out-of-home care on children.
- The value of maintaining family interaction.
- The purpose of the non-household parent, relatives, and informal supports as resources for the child and family (see page 165 "Locating Non-Household Parents, Relatives, and Like-kin").
- The role of out-of-home care provider.
    - Including, but not limited to reasonable and prudent parenting decisions to ensure the child has regular opportunities to engage in age and developmentally appropriate activities.
- The need for compliance with active efforts for eligible Indian children as defined in ICWA/WICWA. This includes:
    - Requesting the tribal agency to assist in evaluating the case.
    - Inviting representatives of Indian child's tribe to participate in custody proceedings at the earliest point.
    - Notifying and consulting extended family members to provide structure and support to the child and parents/guardians.
    - Providing family interaction.
    - Offering and employing all available family preservation strategies.
    - Offering and actively assisting families in accessing community resources.
    - Monitoring progress and participation in services provided.
    - Seeking alternative ways of addressing identified needs when services are not available to the family.

ICWA/WICWA also applies to certain JIPS cases under Wis. Stat. s. 938.13. Specifically, WICWA applies to juvenile custody proceedings for youth who are uncontrollable (Wis. Stat. s. 938.13(4)), habitually truant (Wis. Stat. s. 938.13(6)), school dropouts (Wis. Stat. s. 938.13(6m)), or habitual runaways (Wis. Stat. s. 938.13(7)).

For additional ICWA/WICWA information and requirements, refer to the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act Resources, Appendix 1, page 261.

The family and the out-of-home care provider should be encouraged to collaborate to meet the needs of the child and to support one another. This can be accomplished through shared parenting, teaming, and joint decision making about the child.

Determining Change

Information from initial assessment, child welfare assessment, or juvenile court intake process lays the foundation for considering what must change for the child to be reunified. Throughout the Ongoing Services process, the child welfare professional clarifies and gathers additional information and works with the family to understand and gain consensus about the changes necessary for a safe and permanent home allowing for case closure.

Identifying With the Family Necessary Changes (CHIPS, JIPS, & Youth Justice)

Based on the information discovered throughout the assessment process, the child welfare professional and parents/guardians and child, as age and developmentally appropriate, continue with purposeful discussions about a change strategy that will result in a Permanency Plan as required in Wis. Stat. ss. 48.38 and 938.38.

This process includes using the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool to:

- Gather and assess information in the following areas:
  - Child functioning and well-being (school/childcare setting, learning and development, medical/dental/mental health needs).
  - Physical/emotional/behavioral functioning, familial relationships, social skills, impact of trauma on the child, risk behavior, strengths, the effects of the culture of the child and family on service provision.
  - Adult functioning (physical/emotional/behavioral functioning, parenting practices).
  - Family functioning (current service provision, individuals the child and family identifies as supports and resources, social activities).

- Share information with the family in order to:
  - Identify family strengths, supports, and existing parenting capacities.
  - Understand what parents/guardians identify as strengths about themselves as individuals and in their caregiving role.
  - Identify the needs of children and parents/guardians and identify ways in which parents/guardians can be involved in meeting the needs of their children.
  - Determine whether any professional evaluations (i.e. mental health; medical; educational) are indicated for the child or parents/guardians to inform Permanency Plan treatment services.
  - Determine with the family the most logical place to begin focusing on change, setting goals, and identifying potential service options.

Developing the Permanency Plan

The Permanency Plan serves as an organizer of case activity and a tool for communicating with parents/guardians, children, their family members, court parties, and other individuals involved in providing supports and services to the family. The child welfare professional is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Permanency Plan and working with parents/guardians to facilitate change. Managing the Permanency Plan and change strategies primarily involves assuring that the Permanency Plan is targeting goals associated with enhancing stability and achieving permanence. Ultimately, the purpose of the Permanency Plan is to identify steps toward establishing a safe and permanent home. Objectives to meet the goals in the Permanency Plan should be measurable and consistent with any existing court orders.

Planning and Developing Goals with the Family (CHIPS, JIPS, and Youth Justice)

This process with the family includes:

- Identifying the behaviors that need to change, be demonstrated, and sustained.
- Developing behaviorally stated, measurable goals related to support of the family and stability of the child that are phrased in the family's own terminology.
- Confirming any specific needs the children may have, including any community safety needs and how any identified needs will be addressed.
- Ensuring the child has opportunities to engage in age and developmentally appropriate activities following the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.
- Identifying supports and change strategies to assist the family in achieving permanence and safe case closure (i.e., long-term view).
- Identifying services and activities that are acceptable, accessible, and appropriately matched with what must change.
- Assuring goals establish a sufficient behavioral benchmark for evaluating change.
- Determining permanence goals as required and establishing a plan to achieve permanence for the child. Permanence options are reunification, transfer of guardianship, adoption, placement with a fit and willing relative, or other planned permanent living arrangement.
- Planning to identify, locate, and involve non-household parents and relatives as resources for permanency options for children (see page 165, "Locating Non-Household Parents, Relatives, and Like-kin").
- Planning to ensure continued active efforts as defined in ICWA/WICWA for eligible Indian children.

The Assessment Process with the Out-of-Home Provider

The child welfare professional will gather and assess information using the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool about the functioning of the out-of-home provider in relation to the specific child placed in their care in the following areas:

- Supervision
- Problem solving
- Involvement with the child's care
- Parenting knowledge
- Empathy with the child
- Organization
- Social resources
- Physical health, mental health, substance use, or possible other disability
- Family stress
- Cultural congruence

The placing agency shall use information from the assessment of the child, the child's family, and the child's out-of-home care provider to:

- Communicate information about the needs and strengths of the child and their family.
- Assist with determining the child's service needs and developing the Permanency Plan.
- Determine a level of need for the child.
- Inform decisions regarding a placement at a level of care that is appropriate to meet the child's level of need.
- Evaluate the match between the knowledge, skills and abilities of an out-of-home care provider and the needs and strengths of the child.
- Assist in the development of services and supports needed for a specific child and out-of-home care provider to promote the stability of the placement.
- Provide a mental health screen to all children entering out-of-home care.
- Determine any supplemental payments under Wis. Admin Code. Ch. DCF 56.23(2).

Assessment and Permanency Plan Documentation

All assessment and Permanency Plan requirements must be documented in the family record in eWiSACWIS on the Permanency Plan form and include:

- General person management information to ensure the record is up to date (family demographics, tribal membership status, agency and legal).
- Child functioning, adult functioning, parent functioning and parenting practices, and family functioning information.
- Criteria based goals that are behaviorally stated, understandable to the family, specific and measurable.
- Services for the child and family.

- Removal information and circumstances including reasonable efforts to prevent removal.
- For an Indian child, active efforts made to prevent the break-up of the Indian family and efforts to engage the tribal child welfare professional in the development of the plan.
- Placement information, location and placement history.
- Efforts made to comply with the Indian Child Welfare Act/Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA/WICWA) placement preferences under Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(7) for Indian children.
- The results of the CANS tool.
- Determination of appropriateness of placement in a facility certified as a Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP), when applicable.
- Permanence goals with supporting information.
- The child's health summary.
- The child's educational summary.
- The child's ongoing opportunities to engage in age or developmentally appropriate activities following reasonable and prudent parenting.
- The Family Interaction Plan.
- For an Indian child, active efforts made to provide natural and unsupervised family interaction in the most natural setting that can ensure the Indian child's safety, as appropriate to the goals of the Indian child's Permanency Plan, including arrangements for transportation and other assistance to enable family members to participate in that interaction.
- For an Indian child, Compliance with Notice requirements under Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(4)(a).
- Independent living services, when applicable.

Additional Requirements When a Child is an Indian Child

The following must also be documented in the case plan when the child is an Indian child:

- The name, address, and telephone number of the Indian child's parent/guardian and Indian child's tribe.
- A description of the remedial services and rehabilitation programs offered under Wisconsin statutes §. 48.028(4)(2). in an effort to prevent the breakup of the Indian family.
- A statement as to whether the Indian child's placement is in compliance with the order of placement preferences under Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(7)(b) or, if applicable, Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(7)(c) and, if the placement is not in compliance with that order, a statement as to whether there is good cause, as described in Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(7)(e), for departing from that order.

For additional ICWA/WICWA information and requirements, refer to Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act Resources, Appendix 1, page 261.

Timeframe

The child welfare professionals must complete and document the Permanency Plan no later than 60 days from the day the child was placed in out-of-home care.

After supervisory approval, a copy of the Permanency Plan must be filed with the court and provided to parents/guardians, Indian child's tribe and, as appropriate, children.

Considerations for Expectant or Parenting Youth Who Are Placed in Out-of-Home Care

Expecting or parenting youth is defined as any child under age 21 who is placed in out-of-home care and is expecting a child or currently parenting a child. This includes both mothers and fathers.

For all expectant or parenting youth who are placed in out-of-home care, a Permanency Plan must:

- Include a list of the services to be provided to or on behalf of the youth to ensure that the youth is prepared (in the case of a pregnant youth) or able (in the case of a parenting youth) to be a parent.
- Describe the out-of-home care prevention strategy for any child born to the expecting or parenting youth in out-of-home care.
- If the child born to the expecting or parenting youth is an Indian child, describe the active efforts made to prevent the break-up of the Indian family.

Confirming a Safe Environment When Children are Placed in Out-of-Home Care

A child welfare professional places a child in out-of-home care when:

- Threats to child safety cannot be controlled in the home, or
- A child requires specific services to address their needs that cannot be met in the child's home or community.

Prior to placing a child, the child welfare professional is responsible for assessing and confirming the placement is safe for the child. This obligation exists for all placement settings whether the care is provided by family members, friends, neighbors, or licensed providers.

Assessing for a safe environment is distinctly different from licensing the placement home. Licensing occurs at least every two years and focuses on specific requirements for the provider and environment rather than the safety of a specific child in the placement. Assessing and confirming a safe environment in placement settings is required every time a new placement is considered and throughout the placement.

Applicability

This procedure applies when a child is placed in an unlicensed home, licensed home, group home, or residential care center.

This procedure does not apply when a child is on a trial reunification, is missing from out-of-home care, or is placed in any of the following settings:

- Voluntary kinship care home
- Juvenile correctional facility
- Shelter care facility
- Adult correctional facility
- Secure detention facility
- Hospital
- Supervised Independent Living placement

Confirming Safe Environments at the Initiation of a Child's Placement in an Unlicensed Home

Prior to placement, the child welfare professional or designee must:

- Conduct a home visit to assess and evaluate the safety of the placement setting and assist the caregiver in obtaining provisions needed for the care of the child. This includes discussing expectations and clarifying the role of the out-of-home care provider and providing information on issues related to the care of the child.
- Complete a check of law enforcement records or conduct a CCAP check on all individuals seventeen years of age and older residing in the identified placement home.
- Conduct a reverse address Sex Offender Registry check.
- Conduct a check of eWiSACWIS records on all individuals seventeen years of age and older residing in the identified placement home.

If a home visit cannot be made prior to placement, the child welfare professional or designee must have verbal contact at the time the child is placed to assess and evaluate the safety of the placement setting and assist the caregiver in obtaining provisions needed for the care of the child. In this circumstance, an initial home visit must occur within 24 hours of the child's placement.

During the first encounter with an out-of-home care provider (considered for placement) the child welfare professional or designee gathers information to identify and understand placement danger threats (see Appendix 3, page 263). During initial and subsequent home visits, the child welfare professional interviews and observes household members and collects data from other sources to make determinations about placement danger threats and the appropriateness of the placement.

Within five (5) working days following the initial home visit, the child welfare professional or designee must:

- Conduct a subsequent home visit (a second weekend cannot pass prior to the subsequent home visit),
- Continue to assess and evaluate safety in the placement setting,
- Confirm with the out-of-home care provider expectations and their role in the protective plan, as applicable.
- Discuss any issues related to the care of the child.

Additionally, the child welfare professional or designee must:

- Consider placement danger threats at the first encounter and on an ongoing basis out-of-home to determine the safety of the placement home. If a placement danger threat(s) is confirmed, the child welfare professional must locate and transition the child to a new placement immediately.
- Assess the out-of-home care provider's motivation to provide care for the child, view of the child, and understands the need for the child to be placed in out-of-home care.
- Assess the child's reaction to the placement home.

All potential out-of-home care providers or other household members must be included in the assessment.

The child welfare professional should analyze information from all available sources to help evaluate the environment of the placement home and subsequently decide if the child can be placed in the home safely. To assist with this decision, the child welfare professional may consider the criteria pursuant to Wis. Admin. Code. Ch. DCF 12.06, in determining if a charge or conviction substantially relates to caring for children.

If a child is safe from immediate harm in an unlicensed placement home, the child welfare professional continues to collect information from the out-of-home care provider through additional contacts to confirm a safe placement. This assessment includes the out-of-home care provider's ability to care for the longer-term needs, emotional development, and well-being of the child.

Confirming Safe Environments at the Initiation of a Child's Placement in a Licensed Foster Home

Prior to placement, the child welfare professional or designee must have verbal contact with the out-of-home care provider to assess and evaluate safety in the placement environment. The child welfare professional or designee must discuss expectations and clarify the role of the out-of-home care provider and provide information on any issues related to the care of the child.

Within 24 hours of placement the child welfare professional or designee must:

- Conduct a CCAP check on all individuals seventeen years of age and older residing in the identified placement home.
- Conduct a reverse address Sex Offender Registry check.
- Conduct a check of eWiSACWIS records on all individuals seventeen years of age and older residing in the identified placement home.
- Assist the caregiver in setting up whatever provisions are needed for the care of the child.

A home visit must be made within three (3) working days, not to exceed five (5) calendar days. The purpose of the home visit is to assess and evaluate the safety of the placement setting and assist the caregiver in obtaining provisions needed for the care of the child. A second weekend may not pass prior to the initial home visit with a licensed provider.

During the first encounter with an out-of-home care provider, the child welfare professional or designee gathers information to identify and understand placement danger threats. During the initial and subsequent home visits and face-to-face monthly contacts, the child welfare professional interviews and observes household members and collects data from other sources to make a determination about placement danger threats and the appropriateness of the placement.

Within seven (7) working days following the initial home visit, the child welfare professional or designee must:

- Conduct a home visit to assess and evaluate for a safe environment in the placement setting.
- Confirm with the out-of-home care provider expectations and their role in the protective plan.
- Discuss any issues related to the care of the child as well as continue to assist the out-of-home care provider in setting up whatever provisions are needed for the care of the child.

Additionally, the child welfare professional or designee must:

- Consider placement danger threats at the first encounter and on an ongoing basis with out-of-home care providers to determine the safety of the placement home. If a placement danger threat(s) is confirmed, the child welfare professional must locate and transition the child to a new placement home immediately.
- Assess the out-of-home care provider's:
    1. Ability to provide care for the child.
    2. View of the child.
    3. When a relationship currently exists between the out-of-home care provider and the child, an understanding of the need for the child to be placed in out-of-home care.
- Assess the child's reaction to the placement home and the out-of-home care provider in cases where a relationship currently exists between the out-of-home care provider and the child.

All potential out-of-home care providers and other household members who may be in a caregiving role must be included in the assessment. "Household member" means any person living in a foster home.

Early face-to-face contact with the out-of-home care provider assists the child in transitioning to the foster home and supports the provider with caring for the child. If a child is safe from immediate harm in the out-of-home care placement, the child welfare professional continues to collect information from the out-of-home care provider through continued contact to confirm a safe placement. This assessment includes the out-of-home care provider's ability to care for the child's long-term needs, emotional development, and well-being.

Assessing for a safe environment in a foster home is a shared responsibility between the licensing child welfare professional and the placing agency child welfare professional. Both child welfare professionals should work together and share information to ensure the child is safe in the placement setting.

Placement Danger Threats and Placement Decisions

Placement danger threats (see Appendix 3, page 263) indicate the unlicensed or out-of-home placement is an unsafe environment for the child.

- When a placement danger threat is confirmed at the first encounter with the out-of-home care provider, the child welfare professional must immediately pursue an alternative placement for the child.
- When a placement danger threat is confirmed for a child currently in placement, the child welfare professional must immediately begin the process of transitioning the child to an alternative placement.
- When a placement danger threat is confirmed for a specific child, the child welfare professional must immediately assess the safety of all children in the home. To accomplish this, the child welfare professional collaborates with other child welfare professionals with children placed in the home, as well as the foster care coordinator. If a determination is made that the placement home is unsafe, the child welfare professional for each child must immediately transition the child to an alternative placement.

At times, the court may continue a placement despite a confirmed placement danger threat. In these situations, a plan should be made to ensure a safe environment for the child and should be recorded in the "Confirming Safe Environments" document in eWiSACWIS and the child's Permanency Plan.

Use of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths Assessment

The Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment process and tool is used to:

- Identify the needs and strengths of the child.
- Determine the ability of the provider to meet the child's needs.
- Evaluate the stability of the placement.

Current Caregiver CANS Rating of "3"

The child welfare professional uses the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment process and tool to assist in identifying a child's needs and strengths to meet their needs and make the best possible match with a placement home. This assessment process also identifies the current caregiver's needs to support them in providing care for the child placed in the home.

- When the child welfare professional rates any area a "3" on the CANS tool for the "Current Caregiver," the child welfare professional must reassess placement danger threats for the child.
- If a placement danger threat(s) is confirmed, the child welfare professional must immediately transition the child to an alternative placement.
- When a placement danger threat is identified for a specific child, the child welfare professional must assess the safety of all children placed in the home. If an unsafe determination is made for other children in the home, the child welfare

professional must immediately transition the child(ren) to an alternative placement.

Confirming Safe Environments in Group Homes or Residential Care Centers

One of the primary purposes of a group or residential care placement is to address the unique needs of children who require more intensive services than a family setting can provide. These placement settings offer specialized services in a structured environment for children and youth with special developmental, therapeutic, physical, or emotional needs. Services and supervision are provided by staff employed by the group or residential care setting. Therefore, evaluating safety of the environment in these settings is different than in family settings.

Confirming Safe Environments in Group Homes or Residential Care Centers

Prior to placement, the child welfare professional or designee must evaluate the safety of the group home or residential care center by:

- Ensuring the facility has the capacity to meet the child's needs based on their CANS score.
- Making a determination with the facility representative that the behaviors of other children, youth, or adults in the placement setting do not present a concern for the child's safety.
- Addressing any additional needs to ensure the child is safe in the placement setting. Examples include additional or special training for agency staff, rearranging the living environment, etc.

At a minimum, the child welfare professional or designee must evaluate and confirm the safety of the environment in the group home or residential care center every six (6) months while a child remains in this setting. The child welfare professional or designee must:

- Confirm the facility has the continued capacity to meet the child's needs based on the current CANS score.
- Evaluate changes in the child's CANS assessment to determine if this has any implications for the current facility to meet the child's needs or the stability of the placement.
- Confirm with the facility representative that the behaviors of other children, youth, or adults in the placement setting do not present a concern for the child's safety.
- Evaluate the child's adjustment to and views about the current placement.

When a safety concern is identified for the placed child that involves or may impact the safety of other children in the placement setting, the worker must address it by reporting the information to the appropriate authority (e.g., CPS, Child Welfare licensing, law enforcement, etc.).

Documentation

The child welfare professional must use the "Confirming Safe Environments" template in eWiSACWIS to guide and document decision-making related to assessing, evaluating, and confirming safety in all unlicensed and licensed placements, and in all group home and residential placements. Information regarding a safe environment must be documented in the family eWiSACWIS record and approved by a supervisor or their designee fourteen (14) calendar days from the date the placement was made.

Risk Management in All Placement Setting Types

At times, the behaviors of other minors in the placement setting out or conditions of the physical environment may present risk to the child.

The child welfare professional or designee should assess and evaluate the behaviors of other minors within the home to determine the needs of the child and to assist the out-of-home care provider in meeting identified needs.

Risk Management Planning

The child welfare professional or designee collaborates with other child welfare professionals or facility staff to understand the behaviors of other children in the placement setting. The following behaviors must be considered to determine if there is a risk to the child:

- Aggressive behaviors - especially children known to have a history of violence.
- Sexually abusive behaviors, including children within the placement setting who victimize other children physically or sexually.
- Other behavioral concerns, including mental health, AODA, or other concerning behaviors such as fire setting, etc.

When there is an identified risk, a risk management plan must be created to mitigate the risk and ensure the environment is safe for the child. Considerations for a risk management plan include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Additional or special training for out-of-home care providers.
- Additional contact by agency or other providers.
- Re-arranging the living environment (changing sleeping arrangements, moving children to other units in an RCC, etc.).

The "Confirming Safe Environments" template in eWiSACWIS must be used to guide and document risk management.

Contact Requirements

Fundamental to engaging the family in a change process is establishing a relationship and developing a more thorough understanding of the dynamics that led to agency intervention.

Accomplishing this necessitates a high level of contact by the child welfare professional to collaborate with the family in working toward reducing or eliminating safety threats and reaching permanence at the earliest point possible.

Frequency of Contacts

Face-to-face contacts must be focused on the safety, permanence, and well-being needs of the child and must be sufficient to address the requirements of goals of the plan. The agency must ensure that child(ren) and parents/guardians have monthly face-to-face contact with a child welfare professional) unless the plan requires more frequent contact.

Documentation

The child welfare professional or designee must document both completed and attempted face-to-face contacts with parents/guardians, children, and the out-of-home care provider in eWiSACWIS as a case note.

The note must include, at a minimum, the following information describing the face-to-face contact:

- Date, time, and duration of the visit.
- Participants involved.
- Location of the visit.
- Type of contact.
- Purpose and summary of the results of the contact that includes:
    - Progress towards meeting goals of the plan and
    - Family's understanding of the plan.

Contact with Parents/Guardians

When a child is placed in out-of-home care, the child welfare professional or designee must have at a minimum, monthly face-to-face contact with parents/guardians.

Contact with the Child

Private face-to-face contact with children and youth in out-of-home care is important because it provides opportunities for them to openly discuss their adjustment to the placement setting and express their thoughts and feelings about their out-of-home care experience. It also provides the child welfare professional with opportunities to confirm the safety of the placement setting. If the licensing agency, placing agency, and supervisory agency are different agencies, those agencies shall determine a contact plan.

The licensing agency, supervising agency, or placing agency shall have contact with the foster child at least once a month in-person. More than 50% of the face-to-face contacts must be in the child's/youth's out-of-home placement, occurring no less than every other month.

When the child resides in a placement more than 60 miles from their residence, face-to face contact may be quarterly by the assigned child welfare professional if the placement facility or another agency or contract worker (licensing worker, residential staff, treatment foster care worker, etc.) maintains at least monthly face-to-face contact with the child.

When a child is assessed at a level of need of 3 or 4 on the CANS assessment and is placed with an out-of-home care provider with a certification of 3 or higher, the licensing agency, supervising agency, or placing agency must have at least one in-person contact every other week with the child.

A licensing agency, placing agency, or supervising agency representative, other than the foster parent, shall have in-person contact with a foster child placed in a Level 5 foster home at least every other week. At least one contact per month shall be in the foster home.

For additional information, refer to page 183, "Child Welfare Professional Face-to-Face Contact Requirements."

Additional information regarding contact requirements with the child can be found in Wis. Admin. Code. DCF 56.185.

Documentation

The Ongoing Services child welfare professional or designee must document both completed and attempted face-to-face contacts with the child in eWiSACWIS as a case note. The note must include, at a minimum, the following information:

- Date, time, and duration of the visit.
- Participants involved.
- Location of the visit.
- Type of contact.
- Purpose and summary of the results of the contact.

In addition, at least one note a month must include the following information (continues on next page):

Safety

This includes the ongoing assessment of safety of the child and, if applicable, community or a child's behavioral risk(s), including risk to self and risk to others. Describe how the child is adjusting to the current living arrangement and educational setting. Include whether the child has had an opportunity to engage in private communications with the child welfare professional regarding the out-of-home placement and any other concerns. For parenting youth in out-of-home care, this section should include a statement regarding the safety of that youth's child(ren).

Permanency

This includes a discussion of tracking progress on achieving outcomes; adjustment of strategies/intervention(s) when needed, transition planning, family interaction, life skills development and independent living needs and goals for youth aged 14 or older.

Status of Child's Well-Being

This includes a description of the child's physical health, learning and development, mental health needs (emotional development and behavioral functioning), and the child's ongoing opportunities to engage in age or developmentally appropriate activities following the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.

The above listed information must be documented in eWiSACWIS within 20 business days after face-to-face contact with the child occurred, regardless of whether the visits were conducted by the child welfare professional or their designee.

Contact with the Out-of-Home Care Provider

The child welfare professional or designee must have, at a minimum, monthly contact with the foster parent of a level 1 or 2 foster home. The contact may be in person, by phone, or by an interactive electronic format.

The licensing agency, supervising agency, or placing agency shall have contact with a Level 3 or 4 foster parent at least 2 in-person contacts per month. At least one of these contacts shall be in the foster home.

Contact with the out-of-home care provider focuses on the safety, permanence, and well-being of the child. This includes:

- Evaluating the compatibility of the child with the out-of-home care provider and other household members.
- Evaluating the ability of the out-of-home care provider to meet the needs of the child in a safe manner.
- Evaluating the experiences the child has had to regularly engage in age or developmentally appropriate activities following the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.
- Discussing any additional support needed by the out-of-home care provider to safely maintain any child living with the out-of-home provider.

Documentation

The child welfare professional or designee must document contacts with the out-of-home care provider in eWiSACWIS as a case note.

Locating & Involving Non-Household Parents, Relatives, and Like-kin

Requirements

When a child is placed in out-of-home care and one or both of the child's parents/guardians whereabouts are unknown to the agency, the agency must make continuous efforts to locate and engage them in the planning process. Continued efforts to locate and engage non-household parents, caregivers, and relatives must occur throughout agency involvement with the family.

Documentation

The agency must document all continued efforts to locate and engage non-household parents, and relatives in a note in the family's eWiSACWIS record.

For additional information, refer to "Locating Non-Household Parents, Relatives, and Like-kin," page 165.

Locating and involving non-household parents, relatives, and like-kin is also valuable when a child remains in the family home under a child in need of protective services (CHIPS) order or on a voluntary basis. Extended family and parents/guardians can be a positive support or resource for a family well beyond the agency's involvement with the family.

Children Missing from Out-of-Home Care

Requirements

When the whereabouts of children placed in out-of-home care are unknown, the safety and well-being of those children cannot be ensured. When children are missing from care, they are vulnerable to and at risk of additional emotional and physical trauma. Thus, measures to locate the child, communicate with critical individuals and agencies involved with the child, and plan for the child's safe return must be made by the agency.

When a child is considered missing from out-of-home care, the case should not be closed for the reason, "the child is missing from care".

Note: Open cases with dispositions of Missing from Care at age 18 or older still qualify for independent living services.

For additional information, refer to page 188, "Children Missing from Out-of-Home Care."

Permanency Plan Evaluation

Evaluating progress is a continual process of tracking and adjusting by the child welfare professional along with the child, family, and team, if applicable. To understand changes and needs of the family, the child welfare professional uses information obtained from monthly contacts with children, parents/guardians, out-of-home care providers, collateral contacts, and the family team.

The Permanency Plan Evaluation uses the goals in the plan as the basis for measuring progress and change related to establishing safety and achieving permanence. The child welfare professional gathers information from parents/guardians, children, family team members, and providers to make decisions about:

- The family's progress toward achieving change and permanence.
- The effectiveness of service delivery related to achieving goals.

Permanency Plan Evaluation Content

The content of the Permanency Plan evaluation must include:

- Updated general person management information to ensure the record is up to date (family demographics, tribal membership status, agency and legal).
- Current assessment of parent/guardian and family functioning.
- Current assessment of child functioning and well-being; (education, health, mental health, and, when applicable, independent living plan).

- For an Indian child, the efforts made to engage the tribal child welfare professional in the evaluation of the Permanency Plan.
- A review of the child's participation in regular opportunities to engage in age and developmentally appropriate activities following the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.
- An evaluation of the out-of-home care prevention plan for any child born to an expectant or parenting youth and any updates, as necessary.
- If the child born to the expecting or parenting youth is an Indian child, describe the active efforts made to prevent the break-up of the Indian family.
- Updated information related to the parent/guardian readiness for change and their participation in Permanency Plan services and activities (identifying and understanding where a parent/guardian is in terms of their acknowledgement/acceptance of problems and willingness to change).
- Review and confirmation of the effectiveness of providers, informal supports, services, or other plan strategies.
- Review of progress in locating and engaging non-household parents, and -relatives.
- Additional needed changes to the plan.
- Evaluation and confirmation of the continued safety, stability, and appropriateness of the placement setting.
- A review of and continued determination of the appropriateness of placement in a facility certified as a Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP), when applicable.

When the Child is an Indian Child

The Permanency Plan must ensure the need for compliance with active efforts for eligible Indian children as defined by the Indian Child Welfare Act/Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA/WICWA). This includes documentation of the Agency's efforts in the following areas:

- Requesting the tribal agency to assist in evaluating the case.
- Including representatives of the Indian child's tribe in custody proceedings at the earliest point.
- Notifying and consulting extended family members to provide structure and support to the child and parents/guardians.
- Providing family interaction.
- Offering and employing all available family preservation strategies.
- Offering and actively assisting families in accessing community resources.
- Monitoring progress and participation in services provided.
- Seeking alternative ways of addressing identified needs when services are not available to the family.

The Permanency Plan Evaluation must also ensure the Indian child's placement is in compliance with the order of placement preferences under Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(7)(b) or, if applicable, Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(7)(c). If the placement is not in compliance with that order, a statement as to whether there is good cause, as described in Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(7)(e), for departing from that order must be part of the evaluation process.

For additional ICWA/WICWA information and requirements, refer to the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act Resources, Appendix 1, page 261.

Evaluating progress of goals established in written agreements is a continual process of tracking and adjusting by the child welfare professional along with the child, family, and team. To understand changes and needs of the family, the child welfare professional uses information obtained from monthly contacts with children, parents/guardians, out-of-home care providers, collateral contacts, and the family team.

Evaluating and Revising the Permanency Plan

The Permanency Plan must be revised and documented in eWiSACWIS when an evaluation indicates or reveals:

- More information is learned about child functioning, adult functioning, parenting practices or family functioning that necessitates a change to the case plan to assist the family to make the needed behavioral changes.
- A change on the CANS assessment identifies a change in service needs for the child, or another placement type is more appropriate to meet the needs of the child based on a change on the CANS assessment (e.g. from a residential care center to foster care).
- The court orders a disposition that is not consistent with the child's Permanency Plan.
- An administrative review panel makes a recommendation to change the existing Permanency Plan and court order.
- The permanence goal for the child is changed.
- An expecting youth placed in out-of-home care becomes a parent.

The agency must revise a Permanency Plan so that it is consistent with any of the above circumstances and file it with the court, though a court hearing would not be required. These court-ordered changes are considered a part of the dispositional order and thus included in the Permanency Plan. A copy of each revised plan that is filed with the court must be provided to the child's parent/guardian, to the child or the child's counsel, (i.e. guardian ad litem or public defender), and to the agency's legal counsel.

Currently the timeframe for filing a revised Permanency Plans is not stated in statute; however, best practice indicates that a request for a revision should be submitted to the agency's legal counsel within 30 days after the event that instigated the need for the revision.

Subsequent Permanency Plan

Subsequent Permanency Plans must be reviewed, updated, and provided to all parties in the case at least 5 days prior to the next permanency review or hearing.

The subsequent Permanency Plan must include information about the child and parents'/caregivers' progress from the previous six months and goals for the next six months.

Timeframe and Documentation

As part of evaluating the Permanency Plan, the child welfare professional must formally evaluate and document the Permanency Plan:

- No later than six (6) months from the date of the last Permanency Plan when the child is placed in out-of-home care.
- Subsequent reviews of the Permanency Plan must be completed within six (6) months of the last permanency review or hearing.

Requirements must be documented on the Permanency Plan in the family eWiSACWIS case record and approved by a supervisor or her/his designee.

Reconfirming Safe Environments

Reconfirming Safe Environments of Unlicensed Homes and Licensed Homes

While the child resides in out-of-home care, the child welfare professional must, at a minimum, evaluate and confirm the safety of a specific placement every six (6) months or at the review of the permanency plan, whichever comes first.

The child welfare professional, designee, or other individual identified by agency policy (e.g. foster care coordinator, paraprofessional staff, etc.) must:

- Conduct a CCAP records check on all individuals seventeen years of age and older residing in the identified placement home.
- Conduct a reverse address Sex Offender Registry check and a CPS records check on any individual seventeen years of age and older that has moved into the placement home since the previous confirmation or reconfirmation of safety in the placement environment.

Additionally, the child welfare professional or designee must:

- Have face-to-face contact with out-of-home care providers to judge the safety of the placement home by assessing placement danger threats. If a placement danger threat is confirmed, the child welfare professional must locate another placement home for the child.
- Assess the out-of-home care provider's ability to meet the combined needs of all the children and any other individuals requiring care in the home.
- Evaluate changes in the child's CANS assessment to determine if there are implications regarding the current out-of-home care provider's ability to meet the child's needs or the stability of the placement.
- Evaluate changes in the current out-of-home care provider's CANS assessment to determine if there are implications regarding provider's ability to meet the child's needs or the stability of the placement.
- Evaluate the child's adjustment to and attitude about the current placement as well as the child's overall integration into the placement family.
- Evaluate the current out-of-home care provider regarding the provider's ability to support the permanence goal for the child; relationship with the identified permanent placement for the child (unless the current out-of-home care provider is also the identified permanent placement) and relationship with the child welfare professional/agency.

At times the court may continue a placement despite a confirmed placement danger threat. In these situations, a plan should be made to ensure a safe environment for the child and recorded in the Confirming Safe Environments document in eWiSACWIS and the child's Permanency Plan.

Current Caregiver CANS Rating of "3"

The child welfare professional uses the CANS tool to assist in identifying a child's needs and strengths to meet their needs and make the best possible match with a placement home. This assessment process also identifies the current caregiver's needs to support them in providing care for the child placed in the home.

- When the child welfare professional rates any area a "3" on the CANS tool for the "Current Caregiver", the child welfare professional must reassess placement danger threats for the child.
- If a placement danger threat is confirmed, the child welfare professional must immediately begin the process of transitioning the child to an alternative placement.
- When a placement danger threat is identified for a specific child, the child welfare professional must assess the safety of all children placed in the home. If a determination is made that this is an unsafe environment for other children in the home, the child welfare professional must immediately begin the process of transitioning the child(ren) to an alternative placement.

Placement Danger Threats and Placement Decisions

Placement danger threats (see Appendix 3, page 263 "Placement Danger Threats") indicate that the unlicensed or foster care placement is an unsafe environment for the child.

When a placement danger threat is confirmed for a specific child, the child welfare professional must immediately assess the safety of all children placed in the home. To accomplish this, the child welfare professional collaborates with other child welfare professionals that have children placed in the home as well as the foster care coordinator. If a determination is made that the placement home is an unsafe environment for other children in the home, the child welfare professional for each child must immediately begin the process of transitioning the child to an alternative placement.

Documentation

The child welfare professional must use the "Reconfirming Safe Environments" template in eWiSACWIS to guide and document decision-making related to assessing, evaluating, and confirming safety in all unlicensed and licensed placements and in all group home and residential care centers. Information regarding a safe environment must be documented in the family eWiSACWIS record and approved by a supervisor or their designee.

Safety and permanence are applicable for all children involved with the child protective service system no matter the circumstances or type of case. Every child is expected to have a safe and permanent home prior to closure. When working with families the agency is responsible for permanence by ensuring a safe home for children that remain with the parents/guardians, are reunified with their parents/guardians, or are placed in an alternative permanent living situation.

Permanence Determination and Achievement

Permanence

The prompt and decisive actions that are made to maintain a child safely in their own home or to permanently place them in a safe alternate family setting can have a lasting impact on the quality of a child's permanent relationships, cultural identity, and sense of self.

Effective practice requires that planning for a child's permanence begin with the end in mind. It is important to develop a partnership with the family in understanding the specific conditions required before child permanence can be achieved. These conditions should be related to the goals specified in the Permanency Plan or court order. It should be clear to the child and family when the permanency planning process is completed. Planning for permanence includes establishing lifelong connections for the child. Case consultation can assist agency staff in evaluating whether a particular goal is appropriate and how to address barriers in achieving permanence.

Permanency Planning

Permanency planning requirements continue until permanence is achieved for a child or the child reaches the age of majority and ages out of care. Permanence should bring physical, legal, and emotional safety and security within the context of a family relationship and allow lifelong relationships with a variety of caring adults. Permanence can be achieved in a variety of ways.

The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) recognizes the following permanence goals:

- Reunification
- Guardianship
- Adoption
- Placement with a Fit and Willing Relative
- Other Permanent Living Arrangements (OPPLA) (i.e., sustaining care or long-term foster care)

For children with a goal of "Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement" (OPPLA) continued planning efforts to achieve the goals of reunification, transfer of guardianship, adoption, or permanent placement with a fit and willing relative are required.

Reunification is the desired permanence goal. However, there are times when reunification may not be appropriate or cannot occur. For these children, it is important to consider other permanence goals.

If reunification cannot be achieved with the child and their parent, a permanence goal of guardianship or placement with a fit and willing relative, would allow for children to remain connected with their family without permanently severing ties between children and their biological and/or legal family.

A permanence goal of adoption may be appropriate if reunification cannot be achieved with the parent/guardian and there is no other relative or like-kin available to assume guardianship of the child.

In each case one or more of these basic sets of circumstances apply:

- The child is 16 years of age or older
- The child cannot be safely reunited with their birth family.
- Recruitment of a guardian or an adoptive family have not been successful.
- The agency has been unable to place the child with a fit and willing relative.
- There is an identified appropriate planned permanent living arrangement in which the child wishes to continue living.
- At the time the goal is selected, the decision has been made that reunification, guardianship or adoption is incompatible with a youth's age, special need or complex circumstances at the time.
- The youth is being provided an opportunity to be a part of the decisions related to their permanency.

In all cases choosing the most appropriate goal(s) for a child involves considerations of the child, the family, the Indian child's tribe, and the relationships of the child with others and the progress of the Permanency Plan.

Permanence has been reached when the court order (e.g., Child in Need of Protection or Services case (CHIPS)/Juvenile in Need of Protection or Services (JIPS)/Temporary Physical Custody (TPC) has been terminated or dismissed.

Agencies have the responsibility to ensure the family is aware of resources and supports necessary to sustain the child on their own, whether permanence is achieved through reunification, guardianship or adoption.

Concurrent Planning

Concurrent planning is the process of working on one permanence goal while at the same time establishing and implementing an alternative permanence goal that involves simultaneous activities to move a child more quickly to permanence, pursuant to Wis. Stat. s. 48.355(2b). It involves a mix of meaningful family engagement, targeted case practice, and legal strategies aimed at achieving timely permanence. Concurrent planning must include the following core components:

- Assessment/Determination
- Full Disclosure
- Family Search and Engagement
- Teaming
- Family Interaction
- Clear Timelines
- Transparency
- Collaboration with Community Partners

Assessing the Need for Concurrent Planning

Assessing the need for concurrent planning involves early assessment of the conditions that led to the child's placement into out-of-home care, the strengths of the family, and the likelihood of reunification within 12 to 15 months, that is culturally respectful and based on the family's history and current functioning. The assessment is based on a review of factors that make timely reunification more or less likely. This allows the child welfare professional and child's team to make determinations about the family's capacity to benefit from reunification services and the need for alternative planning. By no means should the presence of such conditions be construed to mean reasonable efforts to reunify the child are not required, unless they meet the statutory criteria, for instances where reasonable efforts are not required as stated in Wis. Stat. ss. 48.38(4m) and 938.38(4m).

Determination of Appropriateness for Concurrent Planning

Certain indications can delay or decrease the likelihood of reunification. When one of the following circumstances exists, a concurrent permanence goal and plan must be established for a child:

- The child has been the victim of more than one form of abuse.
- There have been three or more CPS interventions for serious separate incidents, indicating a chronic pattern of abuse or severe neglect or there is a pattern of intergenerational abuse with a lack of historical change in family dynamics.
- A parent/guardian has a history of substance abuse or is chemically dependent and/or has a history of treatment failures or the child was drug-exposed at the time of birth.
- The child has been abandoned with friends, relatives, out-of-home care providers, at the hospital, or after being placed in care, parents/guardians do not visit on their own accord. Parents disappear or appear rarely.
- A parent/guardian is intellectually impaired or has shown significant deficits in care for the child and has no support system of relatives able to share parenting.
- Parents/guardians have a pattern of at least one year of documented history of domestic violence between caretakers and they refuse to separate.
- A parent's rights to another child have been involuntarily terminated or the parent has asked to relinquish the child on more than one occasion.
- A parent/guardian has significant, protracted, and untreated mental health issues.
- The child or siblings have been placed in out-of-home care or with relatives for periods of over six months duration or have had repeated placements with CPS intervention and previous attempts at reunification have failed.
- A parents/guardian’s only visible support system is a drug culture, with no significant effort to change over time.
- A parent/guardian has repeatedly, and with premeditation, harmed a child or the child experienced extreme physical or sexual abuse by a parent, or the parent/guardians has allowed someone else to abuse the child.
- A parent/guardian has previously killed or seriously harmed another child.

The above list shall not be considered the only instances when a concurrent plan is established. The establishment of a concurrent plan must be documented in the child’s eWiSACWIS Permanency Plan.

Concurrent planning involves the practice of engaging parents/guardians in a discussion about all the permanence options, including the steps necessary for reunification, the possibility of a voluntary termination of parental rights (TPR) or transfer of guardianship, and the likelihood of an involuntary TPR if reunification goals are not accomplished within specified time limits. Effective concurrent planning ensures that the parents/guardians recognize that they impact outcomes for their child through their actions.

Family Teaming is a critical component of concurrent planning practice. Concurrent planning and Family Teaming are approaches that happen at the same time. Family teams support the concurrent planning process by providing a format to share knowledge,

planning, and decision making with the family and providers regarding goals, timelines, and options for permanence.

Full Disclosure

Full disclosure involves the child welfare professional providing information, both verbally and in writing, to the parents/guardians so that they fully understand the need for timely permanence for their child full disclosure includes the child welfare professional:

- Explaining that out-of-home care is temporary, and it is better for children to be cared for by their parents/guardians and/or others who know and love them.
- Providing information about the parents' rights and responsibilities, including: the need to share information about the child's needs, a search for and consideration of relatives who may be able to care for the child, participation in the case planning process and the involvement of the court system.
- Discussing the support services available to help the parents/guardians.
- Providing information about the goals of concurrent planning, time frames, and permanency options. The child welfare professional must explain to the parents/guardians that developmental and emotional harm can result from a child placed in out-of-home care and the urgency to establish permanence.
- Explaining the timelines for permanency required through the Adoptions and Safe Families Act of 1997.

Achieving Permanence

Reasonable and Active Efforts

Reasonable Efforts to Achieve Permanence

Child welfare agencies are required to provide reasonable efforts, or active efforts in the case of an Indian child, to achieve permanence for a child in out-of-home care.

Considerations for reasonable efforts may include:

- Providing family interaction.
- Offering of services consistent with the Permanency Plan goals.
- Providing case management services through an assigned child welfare professional.

Active Efforts to Prevent the Breakup of the Indian Child's Family and/or Reunify

If the child is an Indian child, the child welfare agencies are required to provide active efforts to prevent the breakup of the Indian child's family. If the Indian child is removed from their family, child welfare agencies are required to provide active efforts to reunify the family. Active efforts as defined by ICWA/WICWA requires an ongoing, vigorous, and concerted level of case work that must include:

- Engaging the tribal child welfare professional in any evaluation and case plan development.
- Comprehensively assess the family and explore in-home safety options.
- Identifying the tribal child welfare professional at the earliest point possible. Actively seek their advice and invite them to participate in all aspects of the proceeding.
- Notifying and consulting extended family members to provide structure and support to the Indian child, parents/guardians and Indian custodian.
- Providing natural and unsupervised family interaction.
- Utilizing all family preservation strategies and seek the assistance of tribal child welfare professionals to determine if the strategies are culturally appropriate.
- Actively assisting the family in accessing community resources.
- Monitoring progress and aiding the family's participation in services.

Considering alternative ways of addressing the needs of the Indian child's family was provided.

Permanency Goals

Reunification represents a specific event within ongoing services. It is possible to reunify after parents/guardians have made progress related to issues associated with safety threats and parent/guardian protective capacities. The essential question is, "Can the child be kept safe within the home if they are returned home?" The answer to this question is based on the determination that there has been sufficient change related to parent/guardian's behavior or adjustment or change in circumstances associated with conditions for return which justify returning the child home. The safety assessment results will assist the child welfare professional in determining if reunification can occur with or without an in-home safety plan.

Trial Reunification

Child welfare professionals shall consider the use of trial reunification to provide a structured approach to work towards reunification with the child's parents/guardians or home of removal.

When sufficient progress has been made to ameliorate the reasons for removal, and it is in the child's or Indian child's best interest, a trial reunification may be appropriate.

Note: Open cases with dispositions of Trial Reunification at age 18 or older still qualify for independent living (IL) services.

For additional information, refer to page 174 "Trial Reunification" and Wis. Stat. ss. 48.358 or 938.358.

Reunification Criteria and Process

Reunification is defined as a child returning to the child's parents'/guardians' or the home from which they were removed.

For child welfare cases the decision to reunify shall be based on whether sufficient progress has been made on goals of the Permanency Plan, and it is in the child's best interests.

When reunification is with a non-household parent, the agency shall continue to work with the non-household parent to obtain a family court order that supports custody/placement with that parent. The agency shall not close the family's case until a family court order is in place that supports the reunification arrangement.

Prior to reunification for all case types:

- The child welfare professional must consult with their supervisor, or designee.
- The agency must ensure court approval, and
- The child welfare professional must develop a plan that addresses how changes in family dynamics will be managed.

Documentation Requirement in the Permanency Plan for Choosing the Goal of Reunification

When reunification is selected as the goal, the following information must be documented to support and justify this decision:

- The conditions, if any, upon which the child will be returned safely to their home, including any changes required to the parents/guardian's conduct, the child's conduct, or the nature of the home must be documented in the plan.
- Agency efforts to achieve this goal.

Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)

The federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), 42 USC 675(5)(E) and 45 C.F.R. s. 1356.21(i), specifies that a TPR petition must be filed for a child who has been in out-of-home care for 15 of the last 22 months, unless certain exceptions apply (see below). The timeframes do not consider whether or not an adoptive resource has been located for the child.

For specific statutory requirements, refer to Wis. Stat. s. 48.417.

Documentation Requirement

When an agency does not file a TPR petition within the ASFA timelines, one or more compelling reasons must be documented in the eWISACWIS document Permanency Plan ASFA Addendum.

ASFA Exceptions to Filing a TPR Petition:

- Child is placed with a fit and willing relative.
- Compelling reason(s) why termination of parental rights is not in the child's best interest.
- Reasonable efforts to safely return the child to their home have not been made.
- Grounds for involuntary TPR do not exist.

Adoption Criteria and Process

Adoption is intended to provide legal permanence for a child. Any decision to pursue an adoption should minimally include the following:

- The proposed adoptive resource demonstrates protective capacities, stability, nurturing care, and the ability to provide a lifelong commitment and relationship with the child.

- The child welfare professional has explained to the proposed adoptive resource the eligibility of the child for continued financial assistance through Adoption Assistance and for continued Medical Assistance through Title XIX for the child.

When adoption is identified as the permanence goal for a child in out-of-home care the following steps need to be completed by the child welfare professional:

- Make a referral to the assigned public adoption agency using form Adoption Readiness and Referral (DCF-F-CFS2370-E).
- Participate in case collaboration with the public adoption agency if indicated in Part II of the Adoption Readiness and Referral.
- Complete the Public Adoption Case Transition Checklist (DCF-F-5056-E) within 30 days of TPR disposition. It is recommended that the checklist be started as early as TPR filing.

Adoption may occur when:

- The child is legally free for adoption,
- There is an identified and approved adoptive resource, and
- The court finalizes the adoption in a court hearing.

Documentation Requirement in the Permanency Plan for Choosing the Goal of Adoption

When adoption is selected as the goal the following information must be documented to support and justify this decision:

- The rationale for choosing the goal of adoption.
- The efforts of the agency to achieve the goal of adoption.

Guardianship Criteria and Process

Guardianship is a long-term permanency option for children when reunification cannot occur. Guardianship transfers the duty and authority to make important legal decisions for the child to an individual without severing the child's legal relationship with their parents and other family members.

Guardianship can be transferred pursuant to Wis. Stat. s. 48.977, Wis. Stat. s. 48.9795, or under a substantially similar tribal court order. The child welfare professional assesses the relationship between the child and their proposed guardian(s), and that the proposed guardian(s) is willing and able to care for the child long-term. This includes maintaining the child's parent(s) right to reasonable visitation with their child after permanence is achieved. The agency child welfare professional should consult with the child, their parents, and the proposed guardian(s) the supports and services available to them under guardianship.

Subsidized Guardianship

Subsidized guardianship supports the legal permanence option of guardianship and provides financial support to the guardian to offset the costs of caring for the child after permanency is achieved. Pursuant to Wis. Stat. s. 48.623 and Wis. Admin. Code Ch. DCF 55, the child and their prospective guardian(s) must meet specific eligibility criteria prior to the appointment of guardian. This program only applies to guardianships established under Wis. Stat. s. 48.977, or under a substantially similar tribal court.

Note: A child entering a guardianship established under Wis Stat. s. 48.977 or under a substantially similar tribal court order after age 16 is eligible for independent living services via the contracted Transition Resource Agencies (TRAs) starting at age 18. The child welfare professional should inform the child and guardian of their IL eligibility and collaborate with the TRA as they would for other IL-eligible youth transitioning from care.

Child Eligibility

- Has been removed from their home under:
    - A voluntary placement agreement under Wis. Stat. s. 48.63 or a substantially similar tribal law of a tribe located in Wisconsin, or
    - A Wisconsin court order or a substantially similar tribal court order containing a finding that continued placement of the child in their home would be contrary to the welfare of the child.
- Has been placed in the prospective guardian's home for at least six consecutive months before guardianship is established.
    - If the child is an Indian child and subject to the jurisdiction of a circuit court, placement preferences under Wis. Stat. s. 48.028 (7) (b), or, if applicable, Wis. Stat. s. 48.028 (7) (c) must be followed, unless the court found good cause, as described in Wis. Stat. s. 48.028 (7) (e), for departing from that order.

- Reunification or adoption/customary adoption are determined to not be in the child's best interest.
- If 14 years old or older, the child has been consulted regarding the guardianship arrangement.
- Has a strong attachment to the caregiver.

Prospective Guardian Eligibility

- Is a relative or fictive kin to the child.
    - Fictive kin is defined as a person who had a significant relationship with the child or child's family before the child's placement in out-of-home care, OR
    - A person who developed a significant relationship with the child or the child's family during the child's placement in out-of-home care and all the following apply:
        - The person is a foster parent who has had a relationship with the child for at least two years.
        - The child is 14 years of age or older.
        - The child has been placed in out-of-home care for 15 out of the last 22 months.
        - The agency or court determines that placement with a fit and willing relative is not in the child's best interest.
- Is a licensed foster parent for at least six consecutive months before guardianship is established.
- Has a strong commitment to permanently care for the child long term.

Additional Eligibility

- Caregiver enters into a subsidized guardianship agreement with the child welfare agency prior to the guardianship being established.
- After guardianship is established under Wis. Stat. s. 48.977 or under a substantially similar tribal court order, the underlying court order placing the child or continuing the placement of the child outside their home must be dismissed or terminated.

For more information about Subsidized Guardianship go to: https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/sg.

Documentation Requirement in the Permanency Plan for Choosing the Goal of Guardianship

When guardianship is selected as the goal the following information must be documented to support and justify this decision:

- The rationale for choosing the goal of guardianship.
- The efforts of the agency to achieve the goal of transfer of guardianship.

Guardianships can be terminated if a parent or guardian petitions the court to have the guardianship terminated. Prior to terminating a guardianship pursuant to Wis. Stat. ch. 48, the court should notify the child welfare agency of any petition to terminate the guardianship. If a guardianship is terminated, another person may be appointed as a successor guardian in accordance with Wis. Stat. s. 48.9795(8) or Wis. Stat. ss. 48.977623 and 48.977(5m).

Permanence has not been achieved if the agency is unable to achieve safe closure, keeps the out-of-home care placement open for financial purposes, or the court continues the out-of-home care placement. In this case all permanency planning requirements are still in effect, including family interaction planning.

Permanent Placement with a Fit and Willing Relative

Permanent placement with a fit and willing relative may occur when:

- The relative demonstrates to the agency the capacity and ability to work with the child's parents/guardians to manage conflict and obtain the necessary consent to maintain the child's health and well-being needs.
- The relative must also demonstrate the ability, capacity, and commitment to provide long-term for the child's safety, permanence, and well-being needs.
- The relative must fall within the definition of relative for placement purposes under Wis. Stat. s. 48.02(15).
- The agency child welfare professional has explained to the relative the supports and services available to them under other more permanent options such as guardianship or adoption.

Documentation Requirements in the Child's Permanency Plan

When permanent placement with a fit and willing relative is selected as the goal, the following information must be documented to support and justify this decision:

- The rationale for choosing the goal of permanent placement with a fit and willing relative.
- The efforts of the agency to achieve permanent placement with a fit and willing relative.

Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (OPPLA) is the least preferred option for a child and lacks legal permanence for the child. OPPLA is an arrangement that is planned and intended to establish permanency for a child through a supportive relationship with a significant adult(s) that will endure over time, minimally until the child reaches the age of 18 years old. OPPLA can only be used as a goal for children age 16 or older. OPPLA is not intended for a temporary placement plan and should not be confused with Independent Living services.

This goal may only be used when there is a finding by the court that the other four goals are not in the child's best interests.

The child welfare professional must continue the following efforts:

- Continue diligent efforts to locate and engage non-household parents, and relatives as resources for the child.
- Review the file in detail and talk with those familiar with the child to locate and identify relationships or significant connections that may have been missed or that may be developing, i.e., teachers, medical caregivers, volunteers, etc. to see if a permanent resource can be made.
- Talk to the child about the important people in their lives, who they look up to and who they feel they can count on to "be there" for them.
- Exploration of the child's relationships as they develop and change over time.
- For relationships that have been identified, evaluate and screen, support and nurture such relationships through interaction, information sharing, and activities that build on the foundation that has been established.

Documentation Requirements

The following must be documented in the child's Permanency Plan in eWiSACWIS:

- The rationale for choosing the goal of OPPLA.
- The continued efforts of the agency to achieve the other permanence options for the child, unless there is a Sustaining Care Contract (Wis. Stat. s. 48.428) with the caregiver.
- The intensive, ongoing, and unsuccessful efforts made by the agency to return the child home or place the child for adoption, with a guardian, or with a fit and willing relative, including through efforts that utilize technology, such as social media, to find the child's biological family members.

The following must be documented on the permanency review or hearing results template in eWiSACWIS:

- Confirmation that the court or administrative body discussed with the child their desired permanency outcome.
- A finding by the court or administrative body that OPPLA is the best Permanency Plan for the child.

Transitioning a Child to Permanence

The agency must assist and prepare the child for the transition to permanence. Transition preparation must identify and address long-term needs consistent with the child's age and development. The child welfare professional shall ensure that the transition is known and agreed to with others involved in implementing the transition to permanence.

A child's readiness to proceed with permanence is aided by conscientious preparation by child welfare professionals before, during, and after transitions to:

- Prepare the child and family.
- Assess any current or ongoing needs.
- Develop a process for the transition that is in the best interests of the child considering his/her emotional, behavioral, and psychological needs.

Child welfare professionals must assess the steps taken earlier to prepare the child and permanent caregiver(s) to determine any additional and on-going services needed to plan for the child's safety, emotional readiness, overall functioning, and the family's readiness for permanent placement.

When multiple children of the same family are involved, the plans to transition to permanence should be child-specific with efforts made to prevent re-entry. For reunification, consideration should be given to the timing of each child's reunification and the parents/guardians' capacity to manage the reintegration of each family member into the family unit and each child's specific needs for transitioning. The use of trial reunification may also be warranted.

Reunification does not always equal case closure. Once the child is reunified, the child welfare professional may continue to work with the parents/guardians on behavioral changes to improve family functioning ensure safety, permanence, and stability for their children. When a child cannot return home and another permanent living arrangement is identified for the child, the agency should ensure safety and permanence is achieved for the child prior to closing the case.

Safety and permanence are achieved within a family relationship that offers safe and committed parenting, unconditional love and lifelong support, and legal family membership status.

Older adolescents are in a crucial transition phase toward self-sufficiency. Therefore, healthy relationships and supportive individuals, including foster parents, friends, and other adults in the community are extremely important to youth exiting out-of-home care, as well as opportunities to practice life-skills; mechanisms for assuring the involvement in decisions affecting their lives; assuring youth's familiarity with community resources and the establishment of transitional living resources. Lifelong connections to caring adults are paramount to the success of older youth exiting out-of-home care.

Independent Living Planning

Independent Living Planning, Service Documentation, and Document Provision

If an individual is 14 years of age or older and has been in out-of-home care for at least six months, the youth becomes eligible for independent living (IL) supports and services. At that time, an independent living plan is required to specify the programs and services that will be, or are being, provided to assist the youth in developing life-skills while in care and preparing their transition from out-of-home care to stability and self-sufficiency as a young adult. The child welfare professional must develop this plan with the youth, informed both by an independent living skill assessment of the youth (e.g. Daniel Memorial or Casey Life Skills Assessment) and the youth's input; IL shall then be integrated into the child's permanency and safety planning.

The child welfare professional shall use the eWiSACWIS independent living case note type to detail IL supports, services, and other work done for and with IL-eligible youth in care. They must also document all independent living services provided to the young person in the Services tab on the youth's IL page; this is required even if they also reference an IL service in a case note. The professional shall make service entries on the IL page on a regular basis to accurately reflect what IL supports and services the youth receives, when they receive them, and who or what entity provides the service to them. Many independent living services are single and finite, meaning they may be specific to one day or one activity. The child welfare professional shall log all services while a youth is IL-eligible and in care, update them as needed, and record an end date when the service is done or complete. Additional information about service documentation is available via https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/knowledgeweb/training/il-service-categories.

So long as the youth remains in a qualifying out-of-home care placement, their child welfare agency's child welfare professional and/or Child Welfare Agency IL Coordinator is responsible for coordinating IL supports and services and fulfilling independent living assessment, plan, supports and services, and documentation requirements.

The Permanency Plan and IL Plan must be developed in consultation with the youth and other individuals the youth selects who are not the youth's child welfare professional or out-of-home care provider. The agency may reject a person the youth's selects to be part of planning if the agency has good cause to believe that the person would not act in the best interests of the youth. The Permanency Plan must include all of the following:

- The anticipated age at which the youth will discharge from out-of-home care.
- The anticipated amount of time available in which to prepare the child for the transition from out-of-home care to stability and self-sufficiency as a young adult.
- The anticipated location and living situation of the child following discharge from out-of-home care.
- The date the youth received the Guide for Youth in Out-of-Home Care Placements in Wisconsin, which describes the rights of the child with respect to education, health, visitation, and participation in court proceedings.
- Current and previous IL supports or services provided to the youth to prepare them for the transition from out-of-home care and stability and self-sufficiency as a young adult. This includes the timeframe(s) during which the agency provides the IL supports and services.

- IL and services include. but are not limited to:
    - Housing, with emphasis on securing safe, stable, and sustainable housing, in addition to learning about home maintenance and healthy living situations with others
    - Employment, including learning about job and career options, soft and hard skill development, and opportunities for increased earnings
    - Income and finances, including how to budget and make bill payments, financial literacy, savings and aid, and the importance of credit
    - Education, including access to academic supports like tutoring, high school completion, and learning about or enrolling in postsecondary education, certification program, or vocational training
    - Health and well-being, including physical and mental wellness, sexual education, family planning, and healthy friendships/relationships
    - Transportation, with emphasis on safe and reliable transportation options
    - Mentoring and support network, including fostering prosocial activities and relationships, fostering cultural connections, and affirming a youth's gender identity, gender expression, and/or sexual orientation
    - Cultural competency and connections, including learning about and fostering connections with community, ancestry/lineage, customs, and more
    - Knowledge of community resources and supports, including how to access them

The child welfare professional, young person, and young person's supportive adults should revisit and, as applicable, update the IL plan and assessment every six months, reflecting on the youth's progress towards IL goals, any new/emerging needs, and any approaching developmental milestones.

CWAs may use an IL assessment tool and an IL plan of their choosing. CWAs are welcome to use DCF's Independent Living Plan template (DCF-F-CFS2256-E; available via DCF Forms) or to use and/or develop their own IL planning template.

If the youth is age 14 or older, the agency must provide the youth with a copy of each credit report run on the youth's behalf or a letter from the agency verifying a credit check was conducted and contained no evidence of credit abuse. The agency shall provide this annually. If there are any "hits" in the credit report, the agency shall make efforts to amend these issues.

If a youth has been in care for six months or longer and reaches the age of majority, the agency responsible for providing services to the youth must ensure the child is in possession of the following before discharge from care:

- Original certified birth certificate;
- State identification card or driver's license;
- Social Security card; and
- Health insurance information, including any cards needed to access medical care.

The agency must update and provide the following to the youth 90 days prior to the youth's 18th birthday:

- Copy of the youth's health care records.

These documents must be provided to the youth 90 days prior to when the youth reaches age 18. If the youth remains in care after age 18, the agency must continue to update these documents and provide them to the youth 90 days prior to the termination of the court order or Voluntary Transition to Independent Living Agreement. This must be documented on the child's Permanency Plan.

Resources and guidance related to independent living are available at https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/il (under "Resources, Training, & Reports").

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)

NYTD is a federal initiative to collect service information about and survey responses directly from youth with out-of-home care experience as an adolescent. DCF submits both service and survey information to the federal government twice a year.

NYTD Services
DCF and its independent living partners are required to document and track independent living service information in eWiSACWIS on an ongoing basis, and DCF submits this service information twice a year as part of its NYTD federal reporting. This includes service information for youth who received at least one IL service in the given reporting period, regardless of whether they also completed a NYTD survey (see below) during that reporting period. See the Independent Living Planning sections on pages 81 and 133 for more guidance about documenting IL services in eWiSACWIS.

NYTD Survey
Survey results are used to inform national and state policies. The NYTD survey asks youth questions about their financial self-sufficiency, any experience with homelessness; educational attainment; employment status; connection to family and supportive adults; high-risk behavior; access to health care, insurance, and other benefits; and more.

The child welfare professional or designee is required to ensure that a youth in an out-of-home care placement who is eligible to complete the NYTD survey does so. This includes youth in supervised independent living and/or extended out-of-home care. At no time should anyone other than the identified youth complete the survey. However, the youth can and should receive any necessary assistance to help them complete the survey.

DCF's NYTD website (https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/ys/nytd) provides background information about NYTD, including youth eligibility, FAQs, tip sheets to help child welfare professionals and other supportive adults discuss NYTD with youth, and more resources.

Youth at age 17

Any youth in out-of-home care on their 17th birthday or any of the 45 days that follow is a part of the baseline population for the NYTD outcomes survey process.

Youth in the baseline population must complete their survey within 45 days of their 17th birthday.

While DCF and the UW Survey Center (UWSC) play a primary role in the management, outreach and survey completion functions, county agencies also have a role in the youth successfully completing their survey, as outlined below. Youth may be more able and willing to complete the survey with the support and encouragement of their child welfare professional – whether because the child welfare professional reminds them of the importance of their survey responses, provides them the technology on which to complete the survey, or helps the youth understand the survey questions.

The process is as follows:

- On or near the youth's 17th birthday, UWSC mails an initial letter to the youth containing a customized web link and passcode to access the web-based survey. UWSC includes a $5 bill in the initial letter as a token of appreciation for the youth's time.
- At the same time, UWSC sends the youth's child welfare professional an e-mail with the same web link. An eWiSACWIS tickler will notify child welfare professionals that the NYTD Outcomes Survey for the 17-year-old must be completed within 45 days after the youth's 17th birthday. Upon receiving the e-mail, child welfare professionals should contact the youth to make sure the youth received UWSC's letter and the $5 bill. If the youth did not receive the letter, or if the youth requires additional encouragement, child welfare professionals can send the youth the link in their e-mail, which provides direct access to the survey.

NOTE: If the youth has internet access, the youth is encouraged to take the survey right away. If the youth does not have internet access and/or needs assistance, the child welfare professional should arrange a time with the youth to take the survey.

- In addition to the initial letter to the youth, UWSC will send additional reminder letters; UWSC will suspend this effort once the youth completes the survey, if the youth informs UWSC that they do not plan to complete the survey, or when 45 days have passed since the youth's 17th birthday, whichever comes first.
- If a youth does not complete the survey after repeated letters, UWSC staff attempt to survey the youth via telephone.
- In addition to direct outreach to the youth, UWSC will also continue outreach to the identified child welfare professionals and other collateral contacts in the youth's life.
- Once the youth completes the survey within the 45-day timeframe, UWSC sends the youth $20. Except in extenuating circumstances, youth who complete the survey late (outside of the 45-day timeframe) will not receive the $20.

Survey results, when authorized by the youth, will download onto the youth's IL page in eWiSACWIS.

To ensure information is collected in a timely manner, it is recommended that workers arrange their monthly visit to take place immediately following the youth's 17th birthday to provide opportunity for the youth to complete and submit the survey within the required 45 days.

In addition to understanding the NYTD process and assisting qualifying youth as appropriate, child welfare professionals can improve the success of DCF and UWSC's outreach to youth by keeping youth contact information current in eWiSACWIS. This includes while they are in out-of-home care and in anticipation of their exit from care. Because youth are asked to complete NYTD again at ages 19 and 21, it is crucial to have correct and current contact information. This information must be entered on the Contacts Tab on the IL page in eWiSACWIS

Youth at Ages 19 and 21

Each youth who completes the NYTD survey as part of the baseline population at age 17 becomes part of the follow-up populations at ages 19 and 21. (Those who participated in the data collection at age 17, but not 19 for a reason other than being deceased, remain a part of the follow-up population at age 21.) These youth must complete the survey within the federal reporting period in which a youth's 19th and 21st birthdate falls. While youth eligible to complete the survey at age 17 must do so within 45 days of their 17th birthday, youth eligible at age 19 or 21 do so within the 6-month window in which their birthday falls. For example, a youth who participated at age 17, whose 19th or 21st birthday falls between the reporting period of October 1st through March 31st, must complete the survey anytime between October and March. Likewise, a youth whose 19th or 21st birthday falls between April 1st and September 31st must complete the survey between April and September.

Even though many youth discharge from out-of-home care prior to being 19 or 21, the child welfare professional still has a role to play. For 19- and 21-year-olds still in care, the child welfare professional can encourage the youth to complete the survey and assist them as needed. For those 19- and 21-year-olds no longer in care but for whom the child welfare professional still has contact information or with whom the child welfare professional is still in touch, the child welfare professional can play a crucial role in encouraging the young person to complete the NYTD survey.

The process is as follows:

- For 19-year-olds and 21-year-olds, UWSC mails an initial letter at the beginning of the federal reporting period. For example, if a youth's birthday falls between October 1st and March 31st, UWSC will send the youth a letter on or near October 1st. The initial letter will contain a customized web link and passcode to access the web-based survey. UWSC includes a $5 bill in the initial letter as a token of appreciation for the youth's time.

NOTE: In order to assist the UWSC with its outreach efforts, child welfare professional should update contact information in eWiSACWIS for youth due to discharge from care prior to their discharge and again if/when they learn of additional contact information.

- UWSC sends frequent reminder letters to the youth until the survey is completed.
- If a youth does not complete the survey after repeated letters, UWSC staff attempt to survey the youth via telephone.
- In addition to direct outreach to the youth, UWSC will also continue outreach to the identified child welfare professionals and other collateral contacts in the youth's life.
- Once the youth completes the survey within the 45-day timeframe, UWSC sends the youth $20. Except in extenuating circumstances, youth who complete the survey late (outside of the 45-day timeframe) will not receive $20.

As with the NYTD survey at age 17, survey results for 19- and 21-year-olds, when authorized by the youth, will download onto the youth's IL page in eWiSACWIS.

Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan

If a youth is 17.5 or older while in out-of-home care, the focus of a youth's independent living plan changes from one of life-skills development while in out-of-home care to transitioning from care as a self-sufficient young adult. The child welfare professional must create an Independent Living Transition to Discharge (ILTD) plan for each youth who will discharge from care on or after turning 18. The ILTD must be started no later than when the youth turns 17.5 and be finalized no later than 90 prior to the youth's 18th birthday.

For more guidance, consult the ILTD Writing Guide and ILTD Desk Guide.

The ILTD is required even if a youth is missing from care at 17.5 or later; the child welfare professional and other supportive adults should do their best to complete the plan on the youth's behalf and engage the young person in discussion and plan development when they are no longer missing from care.

The ILTD is also required even if the youth remains in care after age 18. It should be started no later than 17.5 and updated on a regular basis to reflect the evolution of the youth's independent living needs and goals and transition planning, leading up the termination of their court order or Voluntary Transition to Independent Living Agreement. This applies to youth in extended care.

The child welfare professional shall work with the young person to define the youth's wants, needs, and goals following discharge and identify any services, resources, programs, and/or persons that will support the youth during discharge and beyond. The child welfare professional, in partnership with others on the youth's discharge planning team, must help the youth be familiar with and, as appropriate, connect with the individuals, agencies, and service providers who will help them leading up to and following discharge prior to the youth's discharge from out-of-home care.

Appropriate supports and services should complement the youth's efforts to achieve self-sufficiency both prior to and upon discharge. The ILTD, completed via the ILTD tab on the youth's IL page in eWiSACWIS, must be detailed and kept current to ensure that goals and tasks reflect the youth's wants, needs, and goals, and identified resources, helpers, and timeframes are specific, realistic, and relevant to the need. It includes numerous opportunities for the youth to provide direct input for their plan.

ILTD areas of focus are many of the ones relevant throughout a youth's IL eligibility while in care, revisited in the context of the youth approaching discharge. These areas of focus include, but are not limited to:

- Youth concurrent planning, such as when a youth will discharge to adult services
- Youth eligibility for extended out-of-home care
- Youth knowledge of community resources, supports, and benefits, including eligibility and how to access them

- Housing, with emphasis on securing safe, stable, and sustainable housing, in addition to learning about home maintenance and healthy living situations with others
- Employment, including learning about job and career options, soft and hard skill development, and opportunities for increased earnings
- Income and finances, including how to budget and make bill payments, financial literacy, savings and aid, and the importance of credit
- Education, including access to academic supports like tutoring, high school completion, and learning about or enrolling in postsecondary education, certification program, or vocational training
- Health and well-being, including physical and mental wellness, sexual education, family planning, and healthy friendships/relationships
- Transportation, with emphasis on safe and reliable transportation options
- Community and support network, including fostering prosocial activities and relationships, fostering cultural connections, and affirming a youth's gender identity, gender expression, and/or sexual orientation

In addition to completing the ILTD with the youth and others in their support network, the child welfare professional must also provide required documents to the young person prior to discharge. Once provided, they should check these off on the IL page>Referral tab; that list then pre-fills to the ILTD print out. The required documents are:

- Original certified birth certificate (federally required);
- State identification card or driver's license (federally required);
- Social Security card (federally required);
- Health insurance information, including any cards needed to access medical care (federally required);
- Education records
- Documentation of immigration, citizenship, or naturalization, if appropriate
- Death certificate if parent is deceased
- Proof of tribal registration and membership, if appropriate
- Copy of ILTD plan
- Selective Service card, if appropriate
- Annual credit report and efforts made by the agency to amend any inaccuracies

Other important documents include:

- Placement history, if appropriate
- Copy of permanency plan, if appropriate
- Change of address card
- Employment information

While the child welfare professional is responsible for coordinating and facilitating ILTD meetings and conversations, and documenting and completing the ILTD tab in eWiSACWIS, they shall collaborate with the youth and other participants in the youth's discharge planning. The child welfare professional shall encourage the youth to lead their

ILTD planning. Supportive adults, as identified by the youth, should be part of the planning process.

Even if an ILTD is not completed for youth adopted or under a Wis. Stat. s. 48.977 guardianship after age 16, the child welfare agency child welfare professional and/or IL Coordinator shall make the youth aware of their IL eligibility prior to case closure and inform the TRA of the youth's eligibility as well.

See also page 195, "Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan"; page 271, "Appendix 4: Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan (Additional Information)"; and the ILTD Writing Guide and ILTD Desk Guide for more guidance.

Also note that a previous ILTD training video is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0DNPd6lojA&feature=youtu.be. Though referencing an older version of the ILTD, the video still includes good practice considerations.

Case Closure

Prior to case closure, the agency should arrange and facilitate a process to engage family members, service providers, and informal supports in developing a plan for identifying and meeting child and family needs after agency involvement has ended.

Case Closure

Child Welfare Case Types (Child in Need of Protection and Services (CHIPS), Juvenile in Need of Protection and Services (JIPS), and Youth Justice)

Closure is appropriate when permanence and goals for the child and family have been achieved, and child welfare services are no longer needed.

This determination is based on the following:

- Family and child has made sufficient progress in addressing permanency and case goals or conditions.
- Formal or informal supports are available and accessible to the family, as needed, after the case is closed with the agency.

The child welfare professional must have face-to-face contact with family members and family team prior to closure to:

- Support the family in determining how their needs will be met after agency involvement ends.
- Identify the date that services will end.

Permanence has not been achieved if the agency keeps the out-of-home care placement open for financial purposes. In this situation all planning requirements are still in effect, including family interaction planning.

The Ongoing Services child welfare professional should work with the family to ensure informal or formal supports are in place prior to closure. These supports include arrangements and connections within the family network or community that can be created, facilitated, or reinforced to provide the parents/guardians resources and assistance once agency involvement ends.

Documentation

Closure information must be documented in the Permanency Plan and the family eWiSACWIS record and approved by a supervisor or his/her designee within 30 days from the date the closure decision was made by the supervisor and child welfare professional. Documentation at closure must include:

- The rationale for the decision to close.
- A description of the closure process with the family and service providers, including the family's plan for meeting future service needs.

A case may not be closed if there is an active CHIPS, JIPS, or Delinquency order.

When a child is an Indian child, a letter must be sent to the Indian child's tribe indicating that the family's case has been closed, and a copy of the letter must be maintained in the family's case record.

Early Dismissal of Dispositional Order

One responsibility of the child welfare professional is to initiate additional court actions throughout the case process. When a determination is made a family is no longer in need of court ordered services, a request to terminate the dispositional order (JD-1776) must be submitted to the court for early dismissal of dispositional order and the order terminating the dispositional order (JD-1775) must be signed by the judge before a case with court jurisdiction can be closed by the agency.

Any decision that is made shall be made in consultation with the agency's legal counsel.

Requirements for All Children Placed in Out-of-Home Care

Requirements begin on the following page.

REQUIREMENTS WHEN CHILDREN ARE PLACED IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE

This section applies to all children placed into out-of-home care under Wis. Stat. ch. 48 or 938.

Choosing a Placement for a Child

There are many considerations when determining an appropriate placement for a child. At a minimum, the agency must consider placements that are in the child's best interests and document in the record that a placement is either unavailable or inappropriate if the following are not met with the child's placement. These considerations must be made at initial placement and at any time there is a change of placement for the child:

- Placement proximity to the child's parents/guardians within 60 miles.
- Placement with siblings.
- Placement with relative or like-kin.
- Placement that allows the child to remain in the school the child currently attends.
- Placement with a provider that meets or exceeds the child's assessed Level of Need, unless the agency documents an exception that includes supports and services to the out-of-home care provider to meet the child's identified needs and to promote the stability of the child's placement.
- Placement with a provider that follows the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard as it applies to the child to ensure the child has regular opportunities to engage in age and developmentally appropriate activities.

All placements shall be made on a case-by-case basis in the child's best interests.

To ensure a placement is in the child's best interests the out-of-home provider must be able to meet the specific needs of the child that have been identified.

Educational Considerations

Students placed in out-of-home care often experience educational disruptions that can impact their academic experiences and outcomes. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and Child Welfare Agencies (CWAs) collaborate to implement policies and practices that minimize those disruptions and preserve students' opportunities for improved well-being and success in school.

The following should be considered when locating an out-of-home care provider:

- Consideration of a placement that does not require the child's school to change, if it is safe and appropriate to do so.
- If the new placement of the child requires the child to change schools, efforts should be made to help the child to attend the school of origin or to promptly enroll in the new school district.
- Agencies should also consider early educational settings and preschools when trying to create educational stability.

For licensed out-of-home care placements, exceptional payments may be made to support transporting the child to the school of origin (see Wis. Admin. Code. Ch. DCF

56.23). Under Wis. Stat. s. 121.84(1)(a), there are provisions to allow a child to continue to attend a school when they are no longer a resident of the district.

A child's right to education is established under Article X, Section 3, of the Wisconsin Constitution. A child may not be denied enrollment in school, no matter the length of their placement. When a student must transfer schools, the child welfare professional shall assist the school with the following information to ensure the child is promptly enrolled in an educational setting as required by law:

- The child's new address and the responsible party for educational matters.
- Educational information documenting what school services the child needs. This is typically provided by the previous school district, however, if the agency has information at the time of enrollment that shall be shared with the school.
- Information pertaining to that child's safety and the safety of others, including if there are any no contact orders or restrictions on family interaction.

ESSA Requirements for Students in Out-of-Home Care

- **Collaboration:** LEAs and CWAs must work in partnership to facilitate the educational stability of students placed in out-of-home care. Ongoing communication and joint decision-making are key to helping ensure educational stability and school success. Collaboration begins with the Points of Contact. These liaison positions work to cultivate knowledge and communication between agencies. Visit the Points of Contact page to find a LEA or CWA Point of Contact
- **School of Origin:** To ensure educational stability, children placed in out-of-home care are presumed to remain in their school of origin (the school they were enrolled or most recently enrolled in at the time of placement). A child's right to continue in their school of origin remains in effect during the entire time they are placed in out-of-home care. These rights apply to all public-school students placed in out-of-home care, including children attending public preschools or public charter schools.
- **Transportation:** Once a child is placed, transportation must be immediately provided, arranged, and funded to the school of origin for the duration of the student's placement. CWAs should collaborate with the LEAs to develop agreed upon procedures to ensure transportation. The Department of Public Instruction and the Department of Children and Families have created joint guidance to address issues such as funding and sharing of additional costs between local agencies. Also provided are model procedures and a transportation plan template. Use of these forms is not required but might assist agencies as they develop procedures unique to their localities.
- **Best Interest Determination**: If there is consideration that it is not in the student's best interest to remain in the school of origin, the LEAs and CWA must conduct a best interest determination review. All factors relating to the child's best interest must be considered. CWAs and LEAs should establish a well-informed determination process that takes into consideration student-centered factors including: the preferences of the child; the number of previous transitions; proximity of the school to the child's current residence; specialized services that are available to the child at either school; or any special relationships with staff that the child has formed at their current school.

- **Immediate Enrollment:** If it is determined to be in the best interest of a child placed in out-of-home care to enroll in their resident school, the LEA will immediately enroll the child even without documents normally required for enrollment.
- **Transfer of Records:** If the child changes to the school of residence, that school must immediately request the transfer of academic and other records from the school of origin.

Additional information related to education for children in out-of-home care can be found on the DCF site Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care and on the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) site Educational Stability for Students in Out-of-Home Care.

Documentation

Agencies must document in the Permanency Plan whether a child remained in their school of origin following placement in out-of-home care, and if not, the reason why. One of the following statements must be selected in eWISACWIS to reflect the child's educational status and decision-making at the time of placement:

- Current child welfare professional did not place the child, and the record does not document the information.
- Placement that would maintain the child in the same school was unavailable.
- The original placement resource was considered to be in the child's best interest even though it required a change in the child's school placement.
- Child continued to attend the same school.
- Child is not of school age.

To aid child welfare professionals in making a placement for a child in a placement setting not licensed by the county agency, the Out-of-Home Care Placement Referral is available in eWiSACWIS to improve placement matching and targeted recruitment for out-of-home care placement resources. Child welfare professionals with full eWiSACWIS access can securely transmit information to out-of-home care providers and child placing agencies via SYNC (Supporting Youth and Children).

SYNC is a secure website that allows out-of-home care providers and child placing agencies to access and respond to referrals of youth in need of a placement. The Geographic Placement Resource System has been incorporated into the out-of-home care Placement Referral. The Geographic Placement Resource System uses child-specific information already entered into eWiSACWIS to generate visual displays of placement related information using mapping software. Data from eWiSACWIS is loaded nightly into the system to provide an updated resource for agency staff seeking to find appropriate placements for children and to target placement recruitment efforts. More information on SYNC can be found at https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/sync.

When an agency places an Indian child in out-of-home care, the agency must follow placement preferences of ICWA/WICWA.

In order to prioritize the child's connection to their family, Indian child's tribe, and culture, agencies must follow the placement preferences of ICWA/WICWA for out-of-home care placements:

- Home of an extended family member.
- A foster home licensed, approved, or specified by the Indian child's tribe.
- Indian foster home licensed or approved by the department, a county department, or a child placing agency.
- A group home or residential care center for children and youth approved by an Indian child's tribe or operated by an Indian organization that has a program suitable to meet the needs of the Indian child.

If the Indian child's tribe has established an order of preference, the order of preference established by that tribe generally must be followed, as provided under Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(7)(e).

For additional ICWA/WICWA information and requirements, refer to the DCF Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act Resources in Appendix 1, page 261.

As part of providing active efforts, child welfare professionals must collaborate with the Indian child's tribe regarding placement preferences and the appropriateness of placement resources.

Sleeping Arrangements

Sleeping Arrangements Requirements

Children under 12 months of age must sleep alone in a crib, bassinet, bedside sleeper, play yard, or sleeping device determined by tribal custom.

Children over age one should have a safe sleeping space as appropriate for their needs and age.

- A child over age one may not regularly share a bedroom with an adult unless one of the following applies:
    - The child and the adult are siblings, or the adult is the child's parent.
    - The child and the adult were sharing a bedroom prior to one of them turning 18 years of age.
    - The agency approves based on the child's needs; the child has a sleeping space in another bedroom to return to when the needs subside; and if the child is six years old or older consents to sharing a bedroom.

Note: this does not apply to children placed with relatives or like-kin.

A child may share a bedroom with another child with the approval of the agency and the consent of any child who is six years old or older.
Note: this does not apply to children placed with relatives or like-kin.

A foster parent and a child placed in out-of-home care may not share a bed.
Note: this does not apply to children placed with relatives or like-kin.

Related children placed in out-of-home care that are one year old or over may share a bed with approval of the agency and the consent of any child who is six years old or over.
Children placed in out-of-home care that are not related may not regularly share a bed.
Note: this does not apply to children placed with relatives or like-kin.

No child in out-of-home care may regularly sleep in any building, apartment, or other structure on the premises that is separate from the foster home, unless the child is of appropriate developmental maturity and consents to this arrangement and the agency approves.

Minor Parent with Child in Out-of-Home Care Placement

A child placed in out-of-home care is required to receive services, including permanency planning, under federal and state law. Safety of the placement for the child is continually assessed. In situations where the placed child is a minor parent and the young parent's child also resides in the out-of-home placement, federal and state law does not clearly specify court involvement. However, existing state law requires permanency planning. The planning may be an individual plan for the child or addressed in the minor parent's Permanency Plan.

Minor children born to youth who are placed in out-of-home care are considered to be at imminent risk of out-of-home care placement themselves. The Permanency Plan for an expecting or parenting youth must include a prevention plan that includes strategies to prevent removal of the minor child. The prevention plan identifies the specific prevention services to be provided to the expecting or parenting youth to best ensure the minor child may be parented by the youth without removal from their care.

Placements of Expecting and Parenting Youth

When an agency has placed an expecting or parenting youth into out-of-home care or where a youth in out-of-home care becomes a parent during the placement and the youth's child is living with them, the agency is responsible for services, out-of-home care prevention planning, and permanency planning for the child of the parenting youth. Prior to the child residing in out-of-home care with the parenting youth, the agency must determine appropriateness of the living arrangement for the child.

The agency must assess the feasibility of maintaining the minor parent and child together in the out-of-home setting. If it is not feasible, the agency must consider what, if any, grounds exist to separate the parent and child. The role of the other parent in the child's life must be identified.

For an Indian child, the agency must include the tribal child welfare professional to assist with any assessing and planning.

The agency must:

- Assess the minor parent's family and personal history preceding placement into out-of-home care, including:
  - Circumstances that brought the child into the child welfare system
  - History of violence, alcohol or drug abuse
  - Depression, post-partum depression, or other mental health issues.
  - Input from other services providers for the minor parent and their family
  - The relationship or role of the other biological parent of the child
- Continually assess the parent's ability to safely parent, including:
  - Prenatal care, feelings about pregnancy
  - Interaction with siblings or other children
  - Observation of the minor parent caring for and interacting with the child

- Develop an out-of-home care prevention plan for the child that:
  - Includes a list of the services to be provided to or on behalf of the youth to ensure that the youth is prepared (in the case of an expecting youth) or able (in the case of a parenting youth) to be a parent.
  - Describes the out-of-home care prevention strategy for any child born to the youth.
  - If the child born to the expecting or parenting youth is an Indian child, describe the active efforts made to prevent the break-up of the Indian family.
- Develop a plan of care for the child that identifies:
  - The caregiver primarily providing basic care for the child.
  - Any additional needs of the child and the assigned caregiver for each need.
  - Sleeping arrangement for the child.
  - Medical, dental, and mental health needs.
  - Person(s) responsible for supervision of the parent and child.
  - Person(s) to assist the parent with the child.
  - Who will monitor the parent's progress in attaching to and parenting the child.
  - A Family Interaction Plan, including noncustodial parent and child's siblings, where applicable.
- Develop a plan for the child at closure or transition out of out-of-home care if the minor parent has never independently cared for their child. The following areas must be assessed in regard to the child's safety with the young parent:
  - The parent's plan and demonstrated ability to provide care for the child.
  - The parent's progress on their own goals and requirements.
  - The conditions under which the parent is exiting care (e.g., aging out, court order expired, reunification, etc.)
  - Where the parent will live.
  - Any identified safety concerns for the child.
  - Required agency involvement to ensure child safety.

All of the above information and planning on behalf of the child must be documented and maintained in a case record for the child that is linked to the minor parent's case record.

Placing a Child in Out-of-Home Care

Placing a Child in Out-of-Home Care

When a child is placed in out-of-home care under Chapters 48 or 938, the agency with placement and care responsibility must ensure that all laws and policies related to children in out-of-home care are adhered to.

At the time of placement, the child welfare professional is responsible to ensure that all required paperwork and notifications are completed pursuant to law and standards. This includes:

- A Temporary Physical Custody Request, Voluntary Placement Agreement, and/or the court order placing the child in out-of-home care, including the date

and time of any subsequent court hearings. Prior to the first hearing in a child custody proceeding involving an Indian child, the agency shall follow the requirements for notification of the Indian child's tribe provided in ICWA/WICWA using the following forms:
    - Notice of Involuntary Child Custody Proceeding of an Indian Child https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/forms/pdf/2017.pdf
    - Voluntary Placement Agreement for an Indian Child: https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/forms/doc/2425.docx
- Entering into a Placement Agreement with the Out-of-Home care provider:
    - Foster Home Agreement Child Placed in Out-of-Home care by Agency: http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/forms/doc/0107.docx
    - Relative Caregiver Agreement Child Placed in Out-of-Home care by Agency: https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/forms/doc/2539.docx
- Providing information to the child's Out-of-Home care provider as required under Wis. Stat. s. 48.371 and Wis. Admin. Code. Ch. DCF 37 upon placement, but no later than 48 hours after placement if unknown to the agency at the time of placement:
    - Information for Out-of-Home Care Providers Part A & Part B: https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/policy/pdf/memos/2016-07.pdf
- Providing information to the child's out-of-home care provider regarding specific reasonable and prudent parenting considerations to ensure the child has regular opportunities to engage in age and developmentally appropriate activities.
    - This information is included in Information for Out-of-Home Care Providers Part A.
    - Child specific considerations should also be discussed when providing the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard brochure: http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/5105.pdf.
- Obtaining signed consents for:
    - Medical Services Consent
    - Other service providers the child may be utilizing including, but not limited to school, childcare facility, therapists, physicians, private agencies involved, etc.
- Obtaining medical services coverage either through the health insurance of the child's parent/guardians or Medicaid.
    - Ensuring that parents/guardians and relative caregivers are aware of eligibility changes to Medicaid when a child is removed from or enters their care.
- If a child is identified as an Indian child, the agency must comply with all ICWA/WICWA requirements, including placement preferences and active efforts. See the WICWA Online Resource for additional information.
- Notifying all adult relatives that the child has been placed into out-of-home care. Anytime that a child is removed from their parents/guardians' home under a court order and is not returned within 30 days, the notice must be sent. http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/forms/doc/2473.docx
- Notifying the school district in which an out-of-home provider is located, and the school which the child will enroll, when a school-age child is placed in that

provider's home, as required under Wis. Stat. s. 48.64(1r). If the child remains enrolled in their school and school district of origin, the agency shall give notification of the out-of-home care placement to the child's school district and school of origin. The notification shall include all of the following:
    - The name, address, and phone number of the out-of-home providers.
    - The name of the child.
- Ensuring the child is properly enrolled in an educational setting as required by law.
- Complying with placement and court finding requirements if the child is placed in a facility certified as a Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP).
- Documenting the child's placement in out-of-home care in eWiSACWIS within five (5) days.
- Providing the child, if the child is 14 years old or older, with a copy of A Guide for Youth in Out-of-Home Care Placements in Wisconsin. Document the date the youth received the guide in the youth's permanency plan.
- Documenting the child's current photograph in eWiSACWIS within 30 days.
    - The child's photograph shall be updated in eWiSACWIS every 6 months while the child remains in out-of-home care.
    - The photograph should be a picture of the child without any item obstructing the child's face, such as a mask or a hat.
        - If the child regularly wears eyeglasses, these should be captured in the image.
    - The photograph shall be taken close enough to the child as to be able to identify the child.
        - It is important to capture an image of the child's full body if the child has missing limbs, uses a wheelchair or other assistive device, etc.
    - The child shall be the only person in the photograph.
    - The photograph may be taken by someone other than an employee of the agency with placement and care responsibility but must be uploaded into eWiSACWIS every 6 months.
    - Agencies shall develop their own policy pertaining to capturing child photographs (i.e. using an agency-issued phone or camera).

The reason for sending the notice to all adult relatives and like-kin is not solely for finding an appropriate placement. Research shows that children who are removed from their family and placed into out-of-home care often experience loss and trauma resulting from the separation from their family and other people they know and love. When children are able to stay connected to their families and other identified kin, they experience more placement stability and shorter stays in out-of-home care. In addition, by including the natural support systems, families are provided with more lasting supports and children have better long-term outcomes when the child welfare system is no longer involved.

Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Tool

Assessing Needs and Strengths of Children Placed in Out-of-Home Care through the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool

Applicability
This standard applies to children and youth whom an agency has placement and care responsibility for and who is placed with a:

- Unlicensed provider (court ordered kinship with relative/like-kin or unlicensed unpaid provider)
- Licensed out-of-home provider (relative/like kin or non-relative)
- Group home
- Residential care center

This does not apply to a child placed or to be placed into:

- Shelter Care
- Detention
- Corrections
- Hospitals
- Missing from Out-of-Home Care
- Trial Reunification
- Foster Homes solely for the purpose of a domestic or international adoption
- An unlicensed placement, group home or residential care center from agencies outside of Wisconsin's jurisdiction

Agencies must ensure all actions of either agency or contracted provider staff comply with this standard.

Timeframes to Complete CANS: Initial Determination and Re-Determinations

Initial Determination

Unlicensed Provider (Court ordered kinship with relative/like-kin or unlicensed unpaid provider) and Licensed Provider (relative/like kin or non-relative).
The initial determination of the child's Level of Need shall be made prior to placement or within 30 days after the child's placement.

Group homes and residential care centers
The initial determination of the child's Level of Need shall be made no more than 30 days after the placement in a group home or residential care center.

Re-determinations

The agency shall reassess each child and the child's out-of-home care provider within six (6) months after the child's last determination or re-determination.

The agency, out-of-home care provider, or licensing agency may request a reassessment more frequently.

The initial and any re-determination shall be placed in the child's record and shared with the placement provider.

Documentation Requirements

The initial determination, re-determination(s), and exceptions allowed by this standard shall be documented in the child's electronic record.

Change of Placement

Change of Placement

A change of placement may occur at any time for a variety of reasons after a temporary physical custody (TPC), CHIPS, JIPS, delinquency or termination of parental rights (TPR) court order is issued.

Changes of placement must follow the procedures and notice requirements set forth in statute. This permits case participants, if allowed by statute, to object to the change of placement in a timely manner and to request a hearing. It also minimizes disruption if the court determines the proposed change is not in the child's best interests.

Note: If a request is being made to remove the child from in-home while under a TPC order to out-of-home care, the change of placement is not done according to these procedures and must be done by amending the TPC order under Wis. Stat. s. 48.21(6).

Emergency Change of Placement Wis. Stat. ss. 48.217(2), 48.357(2), 48.437(2), 938.217(2), 938.357(2)

If emergency conditions necessitate an immediate change of placement, a child may be moved without first requesting a change of placement. But proper notice of the change of placement must be sent within 48 hours after the change of placement. A hearing may also be required if there is an objection by parties or in some cases if the court decides to hold a hearing.

Examples of when an emergency change of placement would be appropriate include:

- Confirming Safe Environments reflects that the child is no longer safe in their placement.
- The out-of-home care provider is no longer willing or able to care for the child.
- Community safety requires immediate removal of the child from the placement.
- A safety assessment indicates that controls put into place on the safety plan are no longer keeping the child safe in the home.
- Other emergency conditions necessitate an immediate change in placement.

If a placement is changed on an emergency basis from in-home to out-of-home under a CHIPS, JIPS, or delinquency order, the hearing must be held within 48 hours after the emergency placement is made, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays.

As required in statute, the court, specified participants, and the physical custodian/out-of-home care provider of the child shall be provided notice of the change of placement and may have a right to object within 10 days of receipt of the notice and to request a hearing.

An out-of-home care provider may also have the ability to appeal the change of placement pursuant to Wis. Stat. s. 48.64.

Non-Emergency Change of Placement Wis. Stat. ss. 48.217, 48.357, 48.437, 938.217, 938.357

When emergency conditions do not exist, a child's placement may not be changed before following required procedures.

A change of placement may not occur until either a hearing is held or ten (10) business days after the notice of change of placement was filed and sent to the individuals specified in statute Individuals entitled to receive notice of the change of placement may have a right to object within ten (10) business days of receipt of the notice and request a hearing on the matter.

The child's placement may only be changed immediately outside of the emergency change of placement process outlined above, without waiting the ten (10) business days, if written waivers of objection have been signed by all the necessary participants, the Dispositional Order authorizes the change of placement, and the required notice is given. However, notice of the change of placement would still have to be provided to the court, specified participants, and the physical custodian.

An out-of-home care provider may also have the ability to appeal the change of placement pursuant to Wis. Stat. s. 48.64.

ADDITIONAL OUT-OF-HOME CARE POLICIES

Family Interaction When a Child is in Out-of-Home Care

Applicability

This standard applies to child protective services case types in which at least one child is placed in out-of-home care.

The agency must ensure all actions of either agency or contracted provider staff comply with this standard.

In some agencies, the requirements related to initiating and maintaining family interaction will not be performed by the same individual.

Purpose of Family Interaction

The primary purpose of family interaction is to preserve and strengthen family relationships, whenever possible. Additional purposes of family interaction include:

- Facilitating timely reunification of children to their families
- Assessing and addressing safety during family interaction
- Assessing and working with the family to enhance parental protective capacities
- Minimizing placement induced trauma for the child/family caused by separation
- Establishing, enhancing, and maintaining child, sibling, family, and like-kin attachments
- Establishing and facilitating other permanency options, when appropriate

Family interaction is an opportunity to maintain, establish, and promote caregiver-child relationships. In addition, family interaction is an opportunity for parents/guardians to evaluate their own parenting capacities and gain knowledge of new practices and views about parenting.

Children, their parents/guardians, and their sibling(s) have a right to family interaction whenever possible to maintain and enhance their attachment to each other. The agency should also evaluate the child's substantial relationships to determine the need to maintain those connections to reduce trauma and loss for the child. These substantial relationships may include like-kin individuals: friends, neighbors, local community and support groups, extended family members as defined by culture, and spiritual communities.

Family Interaction Defined

Family interaction is the interpersonal dynamics of the members of a family in a variety of environments and activities.

A Family Interaction Plan must include the immediate family which includes but is not limited to both parents (adoptive or biological), legal guardians, Indian custodian, or others in a parenting role, and siblings.

Family interaction includes:

- Face-to-face contact
- Telephone calls
- Letters
- Email
- Attendance at routine activities such as counseling sessions, medical appointments, school events, faith-related activities, and cultural activities.

Whenever possible, face-to-face family interaction is best practice. Face-to-face family interaction between parents/guardians and their children in placement is critical. Seeing the parents/caregivers during family interaction, for example, reduces the child's fantasies and fears of "bad things" happening to the parent/guardian, and can often help older children eliminate self-blame for the placement. Additionally, face-to-face family interaction communicates the agency's belief in the family as important to the child and to the child welfare professional, which further supports family involvement and timely reunification. Similarly, maintaining face-to-face contact with siblings during placement helps preserve vital family bonds, reduces feelings of isolation, and supports the child's emotional well-being. Although face-to-face family interaction is preferred, there may be times when it is not in the child's best interest or is not feasible.

Initial Family Interaction

Face-to-face family interaction must occur within five (5) business days of the child(ren)'s placement in out-of-home care. The agency is responsible for assuring that family interaction occurs.

The initial Family Interaction Plan shall be developed by the agency worker after consultation with the immediate family and, as appropriate, relatives and the out-of-home care provider. The plan shall include:

- Frequency and location of the face-to-face family interaction
- Transportation
- Who will be present
- Arrangements for monitoring or supervision, if needed

Before face-to-face family interaction is implemented, the child welfare professional must assess if there are present or impending danger threats to child safety. The child welfare professional must also assess for current or prior domestic violence in the relationships of the adults involved in the case.

Safety considerations to assist in determining whether face-to-face family interaction needs to be supervised include:

- There is a lack of information about the parent's/guardian's ability to ensure the child's safety.
- The parent/guardian exhibits behaviors or attitudes that might place the child's safety in jeopardy.
- The parent/guardian continues to deny or fails to accept responsibility for the actions which placed the child's safety in jeopardy or caused serious physical or emotional harm.
- The parent/guardian has a current or recent history of committing domestic violence.
- The child shows serious emotional effects (trauma, threatens suicide, etc.) which has immediate implications for intervention.
- There is reason to believe that the parent/guardian or other persons are likely to flee with the child.

In the absence of a court order or documented concerns for child safety or the safety of other family members, the agency must consider a plan for unsupervised family interaction.

Considerations in Situations That Involve Domestic Violence

Domestic violence cases are complex and can affect children on a deep emotional level even if they are not physically harmed. Risks to a victim of domestic violence and their children increase when there is a major change in family circumstances, such as separation or out-of-home placement of children, and the harm-doer (person who causes harm) attempts to regain control over the family. When domestic violence is present in combination with other forms of abuse, the impact on the child can be severe. A harm-doer may use a variety of controlling and manipulative tactics, such as using children as a vehicle to harm or control the victim, interfering with the relationship between the child and the adult victim, or deliberately creating or feeding family tensions. In addition to safety considerations, Family Interaction Plans should consider whether the harm-doer is likely,

based on past behavior, to use these tactics. The following considerations can help promote the safety and well-being of the child, as well as protect the safety of all family members:

- Check on possible restraining orders, no-contact orders or conditions of probation/parole that would have an impact on family interaction, and plan for safety accordingly.
- Ensure that Family Interaction Plans consider the safety of all family members. When necessary, safety measures can include, but are not limited to: supervised family interaction, arranging different schedules, using a safe drop off/pick up location, developing a safety plan for situations in which the harm-doer appears unexpectedly, and arranging for a signal that ends the interaction if necessary. Consult with the domestic violence victim to learn about safety strategies that work and the propensity of the harm-doer to inflict further violence.
- Separate family interaction schedules allow a victim of domestic violence to have uninterrupted parenting time with the children.

Relatives or like-kin connections can be used to supervise family interaction when the relative:

- Understands and acknowledges the risks presented by the harm-doer,
- Does not blame the victim for the violence; and
- Is able to identify and resist coercion or manipulation by the harm-doer.

In some cases of domestic violence, even supervised family interaction may not be sufficient to ensure physical and emotional safety for the child. If needed, the agency shall consider a plan for supervised family interaction.

In situations where parents/guardians reside in separate households, fathers have historically been left out or minimized**.** Efforts should be made to include both the child's parents/guardians in family interaction planning. In some cases, this may require the development of separate plans due to issues of safety, confidentiality, domestic violence, etc.

The Family Interaction Plan

When a child is in out-of-home care, the agency shall, no later than 60 calendar days after placement, establish and document a Family Interaction Plan that outlines the anticipated interaction for the child with their parents, siblings, and other identified participants. The interaction plan shall be developed by agency staff with the involvement of family members, including children who are able to contribute to the process, as well as the out-of-home care provider and other participants identified by the family and/or agency.

The interaction plan shall be documented in the record and shall, at a minimum, address the following information:

- A description of the parent/guardian's responsibilities to arrange/confirm visits with the child welfare professional, plan and prepare activities for family interaction, and assist their child with the transition at the conclusion of family interaction.
- How any necessary transportation will take place and who is responsible for the transportation.
- Any barriers that must be addressed by the agency to ensure that family interactions occur on a regular basis.

Family Interaction Plans should change over time depending on considerations of safety, permanence, and well-being. When reunification is the goal, face-to-face family interaction should become less restrictive (supervised, if appropriate; to decreasing levels of supervision; to unsupervised contact), increase in length, and support parents/guardians in enhancing their protective capacities. Unless parental rights are terminated, or family interaction has been prohibited by court order, parents/guardians and children have the right to interact.

When consistent family interaction does not occur, it is imperative that the child welfare professional meet with the parent/guardians to identify any barriers and in consultation with their supervisor, make necessary revisions to the plan. This would be an opportunity to discuss the parent's/guardian's identified diminished protective capacities and make a plan to enhance these areas.

Frequency of Family Interaction

The agency shall make reasonable or active efforts to facilitate face-to-face family interaction based upon the child's developmental needs; however, it must occur no less than weekly.

Additionally, children shall have other family interaction (e.g., telephone calls, letters, etc.) with their parent/guardians at least weekly.

Weekly interaction should be viewed as the minimum standard. However, best practice standards indicate the following:

If an attachment bond is to be maintained between parents/guardians and their children in out-of-home care, family interaction needs to be frequent. Children between the ages of 0-5, for example, should have contact with their parents/guardians 3-5 times a week, if the plan is reunification. As a best practice guideline, the frequency of family interaction between parents/guardians and their children in out-of-home care should correspond with the child's wishes, age, developmental level, and should be consistent with the child's case plan and permanence goals.

The optimum environment for face-to-face family interaction is in the home of the child's parent/guardians, if it is a safe environment for all participants. When this cannot occur, interaction should occur in the most natural setting as possible such as the home of the out-of-home care provider.

Location of Face-to-Face Family Interaction

Primary consideration must be given to face-to-face family interaction occurring in settings that encourage the most natural interaction between family members while minimizing any threats to safety that may exist to the children or other participants.

Guidelines to assist with making the determination about location of family interaction include:

- Suitability for developmentally related activities; (e.g., does the location allow for positive interaction relative to the child's development?)
- Parent/guardians' attitudes and feelings about the out-of-home care providers and their ability to have contact with the out-of-home care providers.
- Out-of-home care providers' interest, willingness, and ability to be involved in the family interaction process and their perceptions and feelings related to the parent/guardians.
- Factors that might determine whether family interaction takes place in the out-of-home care providers' home.
- Consideration for the child's physical safety and emotional stability.

Family Interaction with Siblings

Maintaining Sibling Relationships

Every effort must be made to place siblings together. Pursuant to Wis. Stat. s. 48.355(2)(b)6p, if siblings are not placed together frequent sibling interactions must occur. Sibling interactions provide an opportunity for siblings to build or maintain family relationships. The following applies to sibling interaction:

- Face-to-face sibling interaction must occur monthly, at a minimum.
- Facilitation of sibling face-to-face interaction is the responsibility of the child welfare professional.
- Additional family interactions between siblings must be encouraged, such as contact by telephone, letters, email, and virtual calls.

When siblings are placed apart, each sibling, or their parent/guardian, should know where the other sibling is and how to reach them.

Modifying Family Interaction

Decreasing or Suspending Family Interaction

The following outlines circumstances under which family interaction may be limited:

- Family interaction can only be prohibited by the agency if a court finds that continued contact is not in the child's best interests.
- Family interaction can be decreased or suspended if there is evidence that the contact is contrary to the safety of the child(ren) and this information is documented in the record.
- Family interaction cannot be used as a punishment, reward, or threat for a child.
- The agency cannot restrict or suspend family interaction to control or punish a parent/guardian for failure to work with agency or community providers or to comply with conditions of the court order or Permanency Plan.
- The out-of-home care provider cannot prohibit family interaction
- Being incarcerated or institutionalized does not within itself constitute grounds for prohibiting or canceling face-to-face family interaction.

Documentation Requirements

The following must be documented in the family's electronic record:

- The initial Family Interaction Plan.
- As a part of formal safety reassessment throughout the provision of CPS Ongoing Services, the plan for continuing family interaction must be addressed and documented in the comments section of the Safety Assessment.
- The occurrence of both supervised and unsupervised face-to-face family interactions.
- The occurrence of both supervised and unsupervised sibling face-to-face interactions.
- Any changes in the Family Interaction Plan.
- The circumstances involved if the agency is unable to fulfill these responsibilities due to parent/guardian unavailability, lack of cooperation, or refusal.

Any exceptions to the requirements of this standard must be approved by a supervisor and documented in the family record.

Locating Non-Household Parents, Relatives, and Like-kin

Wisconsin law requires that when children are placed in out-of-home care, placement with a relative must be considered, and, if a child is not placed with a relative, the reason(s) must be documented in the Permanency Plan. When a child is being removed from their home, child welfare professionals have a statutory responsibility to search out and locate relatives and make attempts to involve them in the child's life either as a placement or as a resource and potential future placement.

This standard provides minimum standards, guidance, and tools which will assist agencies in identifying, locating, and involving non-household parents, alleged fathers, relatives, and like-kin as resources for children, especially children who have been removed from their homes.

Concurrent Permanency Planning

Concurrent permanency planning allows child welfare professionals to simultaneously plan to achieve a permanence goal (e.g., reunify the family) while implementing an alternative permanent goal for a child. Identifying, locating, and involving family members is consistent with and supports concurrent permanency planning for a child. When non-household parents, alleged fathers, relatives, and like-kin are located early, subsequent moves for children can be reduced, in the event reunification does not occur.

The purpose of this standard is to assist agencies in determining if there are non-household parents, alleged fathers, relatives, or like-kin who could be appropriately involved either as resources or placement options for the child and family. Particular attention must be made to identify and involve individuals who may identify themselves as a legal parent to a child so that they are afforded due process in cases involving their children.

In addition, this standard may be useful when a child remains in the family home under a Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS) order. Relatives, like-kin and parents/guardians can be a resource for a family, such as providing respite care and ongoing support for a family.

Diligent Efforts to Search for Non-Household Parents, Relatives, and Like-kin

A diligent search for non-household parents, relatives, and like-kin includes the identification, consideration, and determination of non-household parents, relatives, and like-kin either as resources or placement options for children and families. The identification of relatives and like-kin should begin at access and continue through initial assessment and ongoing case management. Identifying and locating relatives and like-kin should begin when a child welfare professional is considering or recommending out-of-home care for the child, which will allow better planning for the child's transition. As part of the planning process, the child welfare professional should speak with the parent or guardian about relatives and like-kin who might be a resource for the child. Talking with parents/guardians regarding their preference for placement of their child, should that become necessary, is often more effective than waiting until the child is removed.

Non-Household Parents and Alleged Fathers

When Diligent Efforts to Search for Non-Household Parents and Alleged Fathers Are Required

Diligent efforts to search for non-household parents and alleged fathers must be initiated or continue at the following points in a case when:

- It is likely that a child will be placed in out-of-home care.
- The child is placed in out-of-home care.
- It is likely that the child's placement will change.
- A concurrent permanence goal is added or changed
- A child is determined to be subject to the Indian Child Welfare Act/Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA/WICWA), active efforts to locate and involve relatives must be made.

Diligent efforts to search for non-household parents and alleged fathers should be ongoing for children who are in out-of-home care.

Diligent Efforts to Search for Non-Household Parents and Alleged Fathers– Best Practice

Non-household parents and alleged father searches should include but are not limited to the following actions.

In all situations, including emergency situations:

- If the parent/guardian of the child can be identified and is present, ask them to identify and provide the whereabouts of the non-household parent or alleged father.
- When appropriate, ask the child to identify and provide the whereabouts of the non-household parent or alleged father.

As the case progresses, as part of continuing efforts to search:

- Check the family's agency record, including eWiSACWIS, for non-household parent and alleged father identification and whereabouts.
- Reference Appendix 2, "Identification and Engagement Tools for Locating Non-Household Parents, Relatives and Like-kin" on page 262.
- Check the Department of Children and Families, Bureau of Child Support's KIDS system for identification or location of a non-custodial parent or alleged father.
- Consult the identified Indian child's tribe for information on non-household parents and alleged fathers.
- Ask the reporter at time of a child maltreatment referral received by Access.
- Ask the school the child attends or previously attended to see which emergency contacts listed.
- Check the CARES system records if your agency has an information sharing agreement with your local CARES agency. CARES issues Wisconsin Works (W-2), Food Share, Medicaid, and Child Care benefits.
- Contact neighbors at a last known address to see if they have current location information.
- Utilize CCAP (Consolidated Court Automation Project): http://wcca.wicourts.gov
- Websites that provide criminal history information or incarceration status can be helpful to identify addresses or contact information for individuals if they have been justice-involved. The focus when using these websites for relative searches should be promoting relationships, connections, and gathering information about a child's family network and support system. A list of search websites is in Appendix 2, "Identification and Engagement Tools for Locating Non-Household Parents, Relatives, and Like-kin."

When seeking information, child welfare professionals must continue to maintain confidentiality about the identity and circumstances of the children and families with whom they are working. This may make it more difficult to obtain information, because the other person is reluctant to share information unless they know how it will be used. Nevertheless, confidentiality requirements must be followed.

Relatives

When Diligent Efforts to Search for Relatives are Required

Diligent efforts to search for relatives must be initiated or continue at the following points:

- It is likely that a child will be placed in out-of-home care with someone other than a relative.
- The child is placed in out-of-home care with someone other than a relative.
- It is likely that the child's placement will change to a non-relative placement.
- Paternity is adjudicated or acknowledged.
- A concurrent permanency goal is added or changed.
- A child is determined to be subject to ICWA, active efforts to locate and involve relatives must be made.

Relatives/like-kin may not be able to act as a placement resource, but they may have the ability to be a less formal resource for the child and be a connection that will last beyond the child's involvement in the child welfare system. Therefore, relative/like-kin searches should continue until the child welfare professional believes that the child's needs have been met or could be met by the relative/like-kin who have been located.

When evaluating a relative/like-kin as a placement for a child or sibling group, the child's best interest should be of paramount concern. Child welfare professionals should consider how the relative/like-kin could keep the children connected with their parents/guardians; whether the child has a relationship with the relative/like-kin; whether placement with the relative/like-kin would keep the child in their community or school system; whether the relative/like-kin has the capacity to meet the child's needs; if this is a sibling group, the capacity of the relative/like-kin to accept all of them and meet their needs; if this is not the child's first placement, the emotional needs the child may experience having to move placements again.

If a child remains in out-of-home care, the agency and court should review the appropriateness of renewing the relative/like-kin search during a change of placement, the Permanency Plan hearing or the Permanency Plan administrative review. When reviewing decisions about placing with a relative/like-kin, child welfare professionals should focus on the best interests of the child and determine whether any circumstances have changed that would now make placement with a relative an appropriate option for the child.

Child welfare professionals should also ask relatives/like-kin whether they would like to be contacted if there is a change in circumstances for a child.

When evaluating placement alternatives, relatives/like-kin should be prioritized in consideration. Additional consideration should be given to how long the child has been in

their current placement, the number of placement moves the child has experienced, whether the child has an established relationship with an interested and appropriate relative, and whether the relative has shown some commitment to the child while the child is in out-of-home care, even if they could not accept the child in their home.

Diligent Efforts to Search for Relatives/Like-kin – Best Practice

Relative/like-kin searches should include, but are not limited to the following actions:

Immediately and in all cases:

- If the parent/guardian of the child can be identified and is present, ask them to identify and provide the whereabouts of relatives/like-kin.
- When appropriate, ask the child to identify and provide the whereabouts of other relatives/like-kin.

As the case progresses, as part of continuing efforts to search:

- Continue to ask the parent/guardian and child about relatives and like-kin.
- Check the family's agency record, including eWiSACWIS, for relative/like-kin identification and whereabouts.
- Consult the identified Indian child's tribe for information on relatives/like-kin.
- Reference Appendix 2, "Identification and Engagement Tools for Locating Non-Household Parents, Relatives and Like-kin" on page 262.
- Use search engines approved by the agency.
- Ask the reporter at the time of a child maltreatment referral by Access.
- Ask the school the child attends or previously attended to see which emergency contacts are listed.
- Check the CARES system records if your agency has an information sharing agreement with your local CARES agency. CARES issues Wisconsin Works (W-2), Food Share, Medicaid, and Child Care benefits.
- Contact neighbors of a last known address to see if they have current location information.
- CCAP (Consolidated Court Automation Project): http://wcca.wicourts.gov
- Websites that provide criminal history information or incarceration status can be helpful to identify addresses or contact information for individuals if they have been justice-involved. The focus when using these websites for relative searches should be promoting relationships, connections, and gathering information about a child's family network and support system. A list of search websites is in Appendix 2, "Identification and Engagement Tools for Locating Non-Household Parents, Relatives, and Like-kin."

Support of Relative and Like-kin Caretakers

Once the agency has succeeded in locating and involving relatives or like-kin as either temporary or permanent placements, agency support for these caretakers is important. Services such as counseling or other mental health services for the child, transportation,

respite care for the child, targeted funding to meet the needs of the child, etc., should be explored as a means of supporting and encouraging the involvement of relatives as out-of-home care providers.

Identifying, Locating, and Involving Fathers

Fathers may be overlooked if efforts are not taken to establish paternity or involve them in the child's case. It is critical to identify and locate fathers early in the process of providing services to a family for the following reasons:

- Fathers have the right to be involved with their children, to receive services, and to make decisions about their children.
- Fathers have rights and responsibilities related to the care of their children, including financial responsibilities.
- Identification and location of a father may increase the relative/like-kin placement options and resources for the child.
- It enables the agency to gather information, such as physical or mental health histories or social history about the paternal relatives.
- To avoid disruption of foster or adoptive placements when fathers or Indian child's tribes are not notified early.

Fathers can be classified into two categories: fathers who are known or thought to be known, and fathers who are unknown. Fathers who are known or thought to be known includes fathers who are presumed, acknowledged, adjudicated, and alleged. Fathers who are unknown include unnamed individuals and may include some alleged fathers when there are multiple possible fathers.

Paternity Has Not Been Established

When the identity and whereabouts of the father are unknown, diligent efforts to identify and locate the father must include:

- Checking the child's birth certificate to see if there is a person listed as the father and follow up with location efforts if a father is listed on the birth certificate.
- Checking the Paternal Interest Registry in the Department of Children and Families. (See DCFS Info Memo 2006-17) on deadlines for registration and notice to registered or unregistered fathers.
- As directed by local agency policy, checking the KIDS system using the child's name, Social Security Number, or other specific identifying information that will most effectively select the correct child.
- Asking the mother, child, if appropriate, and relatives who the father is believed to be and any known information including location of conception or any identifying characteristics.
- Following up with efforts to locate individuals identified.

It may also include requesting paternity testing through the child support agency, if a father is identified and located.

The agency should continue trying to locate fathers even if the permanence goal becomes adoption, and a petition for termination of parental rights is being filed. If the child welfare professional learns new information about the child's father or possible father, that information must be pursued.

When a Parent or Legal Guardian Objects to a Relative/Like-kin Placement

Parents/guardians may object to the placement of a child with a relative/like-kin. After evaluation of the parent's guardian's objections, the child welfare professional may still place the child with the relative/like-kin after the safety of the home has been assessed and confirmed and required background checks have been completed. The parents/guardians should be informed that they may express their objections to the juvenile court judge at either the temporary custody or change in placement hearing.

When a Parent Refuses to Provide Information about a Parent, Relatives, or Like-kin

Search Requirements

If a parent/guardian refuses to provide any information about the non-household parent or relatives the child welfare professional must conduct the activities required under Diligent Efforts to Search for Non-Household Parents, Alleged Fathers, or Relatives.

If the court agrees, it may be most effective to have the judge question the parent/guardian during the temporary physical custody hearing, or when the parent/guardian first appears in court. The child welfare professional may want to involve the Guardian ad Litem in seeking information.

Search Requirements

If a parent/guardian continues to refuse to provide any information about a non-household parent or other relatives, the child welfare professional must consult with the agency's legal counsel to determine the appropriateness of having the court order the parents/guardians to provide the information.

When Search Is Not Required

Wisconsin law allows parents to anonymously relinquish custody of a newborn. The statute Wis. Stat. s. 48.195, is often referred to as the Safe Haven law. A parent must meet the following statutory requirements in order to relinquish their child under the Safe Haven law: the infant must be less than 72 hours old, must be left in a newborn infant safety device at a hospital, fire station, or law enforcement agency or turned over to a law enforcement officer, an emergency medical technician, a hospital staff member, who subsequently must turn the child over to a court intake worker. A parent who chooses to anonymously relinquish their infant under Wis. Stat. s. 48.195, may refuse to provide any identifying information unless the person accepting the infant believes that the infant was abused or neglected, or the parent is being coerced or induced into relinquishing their infant. If an agency is working

with an infant who was anonymously relinquished under Wis. Stat. s. 48.195, the agency will not be able to search for or locate the non-household parents or relatives/like-kin.

However, if there is reason to believe that the infant is an Indian child, agency staff should identify and contact the tribe with which the child is, or may be, affiliated. The Indian Child Welfare Act, 25 U.S.C. 1913(a), provides that any consent to an out-of-home placement or termination of parental rights by a parent or Indian custodian that occurs before the birth of the child or within ten (10) days of the birth of the child is not a valid consent. The United States Supreme Court in, Mississippi Choctaw Indian Tribe v. Holyfield, 490 U.S. 30 (1989), states:

> Nor can the result be any different simply because the twins were "voluntarily surrendered" by their mother. Tribal jurisdiction under 1911(a) was not meant to be defeated by the actions of individual members of the tribe, for Congress was concerned not solely about the interest of Indian children and families, but also about the impact on the tribes themselves of the large numbers of Indian children adopted by non-Indians.
>
> In addition, it is clear that Congress' concern over the placement of Indian children in non-Indian homes was based in part on evidence of the detrimental impact on the children themselves of such placements outside their culture. Congress determined to subject such placements to the ICWA's jurisdictional and other provisions, even in cases where the parent consented to an adoption, because of concerns going beyond the wishes of individual parents.
> (Holyfield, pp. 49-50)

When Agencies Identify or Locate Relatives/Like-kin Without the Assistance of the Parent

Agencies may learn about relatives/like-kin or non-household parents from a source other than the parent/guardians. Additionally, agencies may identify relatives/like-kin or non-household parents through the required diligent search efforts. Agencies are sometimes contacted by individuals who identify themselves as relatives. Schools, churches, or others with knowledge about the family may provide names of relatives/like-kin, and the child may offer the name of someone that they identify as a relative/like-kin.

Requirements

When an agency identifies or locates a relative/like-kin without the assistance or knowledge of a parent/guardian, the agency must:

- Document whatever information is offered regarding the identification and location of the non-household parent or relative/like-kin.
- Only disclose confidential information about the child or family to the extent necessary to facilitate the establishment of a relationship between the child and the relative, including whether there is an open child welfare case.

- Notify the parent/guardian that the information has been received and consult with the parent/guardians regarding involvement of the non-household parent or relative/like-kin.
- Verify independently that the individual is a non-household parent or relative/like-kin before considering the relative/like-kin or non-household parent as a placement option.

Though diligent efforts to locate like-kin are not required by statute, agencies should make continued efforts to locate like-kin individuals.

KIDS Family Violence Indicator

The department recommends that child welfare agencies enter into agreements with local child support agencies to allow access to systems and information within the parameters of the state agencies' agreement.

Within the Agreement is a provision regarding the KIDS Family Violence Indicator, which is placed on a KIDS participant record when a claim or finding of good cause for noncooperation with child support is entered in the KIDS system, or if a temporary restraining order or injunction has been entered to protect the participant, or if the child support agency has reason to believe that releasing the information might result in physical or emotional harm to the participant. The indicator will appear on all case screens. If the indicator is on the case record, information about the protected individuals may not be published, used, transmitted, or otherwise shared without first removing all information about location, employment, or other information identifying the whereabouts of the protected individuals.

Therefore, information about parents and, by extension, relatives/like-kin of those parents that is obtained from a KIDS record containing a Family Violence Indicator, cannot be used if it violates privacy protections. If the information about a parent or relative/like-kin is obtained from an independent source, then the child welfare professional should determine and consider the reasons a "Family Violence Indicator" is present in the KIDS case record and how that may impact the safety and well-being of the child and family.

Documenting Diligent Efforts to Search

Under Wisconsin law, certain information regarding placement of a child with a relative or with a sibling must be documented in the Permanency Plan. Those items are noted below. Other information identified below must be documented in the child's case record. Compiling information and updating within the Permanency Plan is acceptable.

Documentation Requirements

The following actions must be documented in the case record when conducting a non-household parent, and relative search for children placed in out-of-home care:

- Identification of non-household parents and maternal and paternal relatives.
- Efforts to locate, contact, and involve relatives including their response to involvement as a resource or placement option.
- Statement as to the availability and suitability of each relative as an out-of-home care provider for the child and, if the child is not placed with the relative, the reasons why the placement with the relative is not safe or appropriate. (Wis. Stat. s. 48.38(4)(bm))
- Statement as to the availability and suitability of a placement with the child's sibling(s) as a placement resource for the child, and, if the child is not placed with the sibling(s), the reasons why such placement is not safe or appropriate. (Wis. Stat. s. 48.38(4)(br)).
- Efforts to establish paternity.
- Refusal of parents/guardians to provide information regarding relatives or to give consent for relative searches to be conducted.
- The justification for choosing a relative/like-kin placement over the objections of a parent or legal guardian must be documented in a case note in the agency electronic record for the child.
- If applicable, documentation of compliance with ICWA placement preferences or the good cause showing made to support the agency's failure to follow the placement preferences set forth by the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).

Documentation of the search for non-household parents, alleged fathers, and relatives/like-kin may be critical in an action to terminate parental rights to demonstrate that the agency made diligent and/or active efforts to locate, involve, and place a child with a non-custodial parent, an alleged father, or a relative/like-kin.

Trial Reunification

In Child Protective Services (CPS) cases, placing a child in out-of-home care is a temporary action used to control and manage threats to child safety and ensure that a child is protected. An out-of-home safety plan clearly outlines what is needed for the child to return home with an in-home safety plan while the agency continues to work with parents/guardians in consistently providing a safe environment.

A trial reunification is a continuation of the out-of-home placement episode, so return to out-of-home care as a result of ending a trial reunification is not considered a re-entry into out-of-home care if it does not exceed time limits for a trial reunification. Trial reunification should only be used when it is anticipated that the child will remain with their parent/guardian and a return to out-of-home care is unlikely, except for short-term or respite services with the out-of-home care provider. Trial reunification is defined under Wis. Stat. s. 48.358(1)(a) and in federal law under 45 C.F.R. s. 1356.21(e).

A trial reunification may be appropriate when:

- Child Protective Services Case Types
    - An in-home safety plan can be implemented and the permanence goal for the child is reunification. Using a trial reunification affirms that returning a child is not predicated on parents/guardians fully changing their lives, but rather that reunification is possible as treatment services continue. Since it is difficult to predict with certainty the impact on the family when a child returns home, trial reunification is an opportunity to ensure that behavioral change is sustained over a period of time and to confirm that reunification remains the appropriate permanence goal.
- Child Welfare Case Types
    - The conditions leading to the removal of the child can be managed in the home of either parent/guardians or the relative/like-kin caregiver from whom the child was removed.

Note: Open cases with dispositions of Trial Reunification at age 18 or older still qualify for independent living (IL) services.

Applicability

This Standard applies to when the agency requests and the court orders the use of a trial reunification as part of a court order.

Wis. Stat. s. 48.358(6)(a)Prohibition

Except as provided in the exception, the court may not order a trial reunification in the home of a person who has been convicted under Wis. Stat. s. 940.01 of the first-degree intentional homicide, or under Wis. Stat. s. 940.05 of the 2nd-degree intentional homicide, of a parent of the child, if the conviction has not been reversed, set aside, or vacated.

The prohibition does not apply if the court determines by clear and convincing evidence that the placement would be in the best interests of the child. The court shall consider the wishes of the child in making that determination.

Agencies must ensure all actions of either agency or contracted provider staff complies with this standard.

Initiating a Trial Reunification

It is important to assess the progression of the Family Interaction Plan when considering if a trial reunification is appropriate. Face-to-face family interaction should become less restrictive (from supervised, if necessary, to decreasing levels of supervision, to unsupervised contact) and increase in length over time before a trial reunification is considered. The child welfare professional should consult the “Family Interaction for Child Protective Services (CPS) Cases When a Child is in Out-of-Home Care” section on page 158 for further guidance on CPS case types.

Determinations Prior to Initiating a Trial Reunification

The agency must determine:

- If any existing court orders (juvenile, criminal, tribal, family, civil) specifically limit family interaction in a manner that prevents the use of a trial reunification and determines:
  - Whether an in-home safety plan can be implemented to control impending danger threats and ensure child safety or
  - Whether the conditions leading to the removal of the child can be managed in the trial reunification home.

The child welfare professional should discuss trial reunification with the child when age and developmentally appropriate. The child welfare professional, therapist, or other adult close to the child may assist the child in identifying their hopes, fears, and attitudes about the trial reunification and provide support to the child as needed.

Request for Trial Reunification

The child welfare professional shall complete a "Request for Trial Reunification" (JD-1801) form to request the court to order a trial reunification. A trial reunification may not occur without a court order. The request shall include:

- The name and address of the requested trial reunification home.
- A statement describing why trial reunification is in the best interests of the child.
- A statement describing how the trial reunification satisfies the objectives of the child's Permanency Plan.

A request for a trial reunification may not be made on the sole grounds that an emergency condition necessitates immediate removal of the child from their out-of-home placement. If an emergency condition necessitates immediate removal, the person or agency primarily responsible for implementing the dispositional order shall proceed as provided in the change of placement provisions of statute. *See,* Wis. Stat. ss. 48.357 (2) and 938.357 (2).

Notice of Trial Reunification

The request shall be submitted to the court and written notice of the requested trial reunification shall be provided to:

- The child.
- The parent, guardian, and legal custodian of the child.
- Any foster parent or other physical custodian of the child.
- The child's court-appointed special advocate.
- All parties who are bound by the dispositional order.
- If the child is an Indian child who has been removed from the home of their Indian custodian and the Indian child's tribe.

The notice shall contain the information that is required to be included in the request. The Notice and Request for Trial Reunification (JD-1801) meets these requirements if provided to the required individuals.

Objection to Trial Reunification

Any person who is entitled to receive notice of a requested trial reunification under Wis. Stat. ss. 48.358(2)(b) or 938.358(2)(b)., other than a court-appointed special advocate, may obtain a hearing on the matter by filing an objection with the court within 10 working days after the request was filed with the court.

If an objection is filed, a hearing shall be held within 30 days after the request was filed with the court.

Not less than three (3) working days before the hearing, the person or agency requesting the trial reunification or the court shall provide notice of the hearing to all persons who are entitled to receive notice under Wis. Stat. ss. 48.358(2)(b) or 938.358(2)(b). A copy of the request for the trial reunification shall be attached to the notice.

Prior to Implementing a Trial Reunification

Child Protective Services Case Types Only

Prior to implementing a Trial Reunification, the child welfare professional must:

- Reassess child safety
- Develop an in-home safety plan that includes what will happen if threats to child safety can no longer be managed.

Additionally in all case types, a description of the following must be documented in the family record:

- How the agency will communicate the child's status and facilitate services to the out-of-home care provider, as appropriate.
- The nature and frequency of any contact the out-of-home care provider will have with the child.

If the order authorizing the trial reunification is obtained at the same time the trial reunification is implemented, that order serves as notification to all parties.

Managing a Trial Reunification

Information gathered from the parents/guardians, child, and service providers is used to evaluate the impact of the trial reunification and confirm that the child is safe by:

- Assuring that the services put in place continue to adequately control identified safety threats.
- Assuring that the commitments by the family and providers remain in effect.
- Determining whether previously identified safety threats have been eliminated or reduced.
- Determining if new safety threats to the child have emerged.
- Modifying the safety plan (related to impending danger threats) or Permanency Plan (related to protective capacities).

Implementation of Trial Reunification

The agency child welfare professional must:

- Continuously review and evaluate the adequacy of the in-home safety plan.
- Have monthly contact, at a minimum, with service providers involved in the safety plan, if applicable.

For all case types implementation includes:

- Face-to-face contact by the child welfare professional or designee with parent/guardian(s) and the child on the day the trial reunification begins.
- Twice a month face-to-face contact by the child welfare professional or designee with parents/guardians and the child unless a need for more immediate or frequent contact is indicated by the information obtained about the family.

Timeframes for Trial Reunification

A trial reunification means a period of seven (7) consecutive days or longer but not exceeding 150 days. If a trial reunification is ordered, it shall terminate 90 days after the date of the order, unless the court specifies a shorter period in the order, extends the trial reunification or it is revoked.

As provided in 45 C.F.R. s. 1356.21(i)(1)(i)(c), any time a child spends on a trial reunification is not included in the statutory timeline that requires an agency to request a petition for termination of parental rights when a child has been in out-of-home care for 15 of the most recent 22 months absent documentation of an exception under Wis. Stat. s. 48.417(2).

Information about a trial reunification should be incorporated into the case progress evaluation of the child's Permanency Plan.

Note: Open cases with dispositions of Trial Reunification at age 18 or older still qualify for independent living (IL) services.

Ending Trial Reunification

Prior to a trial reunification ending the agency must determine whether:

- Reunification is appropriate.
- The trial reunification needs to be extended.
- The child is to be returned to an out-of-home care setting.

When Reunification Can be Achieved

Prior to reunification, the agency must:

- Ensure that child safety can be maintained within the child's home.
- Request a Change of Placement under Wis. Stat. ss. 48.357 or 938.357 with the court no later than 10 business days prior to the end of the trial reunification to the trial reunification home; and
- Allow a minimum of 10 business days for parties to file an objection to the "Notice of Change in Placement," as required in Wis. Stat. ss. 48.357(1)(am) 2. or 938.357(1)(am)2.

If a party files an objection to the "Notice of Change in Placement," the trial reunification shall continue until further order of the court unless circumstances necessitate a revocation of the trial reunification.

Reunification may occur when the agency can conclude that impending danger threats have been eliminated or can be managed with an in-home safety plan or the conditions leading to the need for out-of-home care placement can now be managed in the trial reunification home. The decision to reunify does not always mean case closure. Agencies should continue to work with the family to ensure that there is sustainable behavioral change and/or that informal and formal supports are in place that can manage the safety of the child(ren).

Depending on family circumstances, there may be times when reunification criteria are not met within the initial court-ordered timeframe of 90 days, but safety can continue to be managed with an in-home safety plan.

In these instances, a trial reunification may be extended by order of the court.

Extending a Trial Reunification

The agency child welfare professional responsible for implementing the dispositional order may request an extension of a trial reunification using the "Notification of Request/Extension/Revocation of the Trial Reunification" (Form JD-1801).

The request shall contain a statement describing how the trial reunification continues to be in the best interests of the child. No later than ten business (10) days prior to the expiration of the trial reunification, the agency child welfare professional that requests the extension shall submit the request to the court that ordered the trial reunification and shall provide notice of the request to all individuals who are entitled to receive notice.

Revocation of Trial Reunification

If the person or agency primarily responsible for implementing the dispositional order determines that a trial reunification is no longer in the best interests of the child, that person or agency may, without prior court order, remove the child from the trial reunification home and place the child in the child's previous out-of-home placement or place the child in a new out-of-home placement. The agency does not need to take the child into custody under Temporary Physical Custody because under the trial reunification, the child has remained in out-of-home care placement.

- If the person or agency primarily responsible for implementing the dispositional order places the child in the child's previous out-of-home placement, within three (3) days after moving the child from the trial reunification home, that person or agency shall submit a request for revocation of the trial reunification to the court that ordered the trial reunification and notify all persons who are entitled to receive notice of the trial reunification.
    - The request shall contain:
        - The date on which the child was removed from the trial reunification home.
        - The address of the child's current placement.
        - The reasons for the proposed revocation.
- If the person or agency primarily responsible for implementing the dispositional order places the child in a new out-of-home placement, within three (3) days after removing the child from the trial reunification home, that person or agency shall request a change in placement.
    - The request shall include:
        - The date on which the child was removed from the trial reunification home
        - The information required under Wis. Stat. ss. 48.357 (1)(am)1. or 938.357 (1)(am)1.

The trial reunification is revoked when the change in placement order is granted.

Concluding Trial Reunification

At the end of a trial reunification, the person or agency primarily responsible for implementing the dispositional order is required to do one of the following:

1. Return the child to their previous out-of-home placement. The person or agency may do so without further order of the court, but within five (5) days after the return the person or agency shall provide notice of the date of the return and the address of that placement to all persons who are entitled to receive notice under Wis. Stat. s. 48.358(2)(b).

   A trial reunification is the continuation of an out-of-home placement episode; therefore, ending the trial reunification and continuing the child's placement with the same out-of-home care provider avoids a re-entry into out-of-home care.

2. Request a change in placement under Wis. Stat. ss. 48.357 or 938.357, to place the child in a new out-of-home placement.

3. Request a change in placement under Wis. Stat. ss. 48.357 or 938.357, to place the child in the trial reunification home, if a determination is made that a trial reunification will end with achieving the permanence goal of reunification.

When it is determined that safety cannot be managed with an in-home safety plan, it is important to avoid moving a child back and forth between out-of-home care placements and their home. The agency should make diligent efforts to return the child to the out-of-home care provider with whom the child was placed when the trial reunification was initiated, unless that placement is no longer available or not in the child's best interest.

Documenting Decisions Regarding Trial Reunification

Documentation of trial reunification is critical in later determining whether the agency has made reasonable efforts or active efforts to reunify a child.

Documentation Requirements

The following decisions and justification for the decisions must be approved by a supervisor or their designee and documented in the family record:

- The decision to initiate a trial reunification and the related Safety Analysis and Plan.
- The decision to end a trial reunification.
- The decision to reunify the child with their family.

The placement into the trial reunification and the conclusion shall be documented in eWiSACWIS within five (5) days of the order by the court initiating or terminating the trial reunification.

Child Welfare Professional Face-to-Face Contact Requirements

Regular and consistent face-to-face contact by a welfare professionals that are focused on the goals established in the plan directly impact positive outcomes for children and youth, including the management of safety, timely achievement of permanence, and improved well-being.

Purpose

This standard establishes the requirement for child welfare professionals to have face-to-face contact at least once each and every full calendar month with children and youth who are living in out-of-home care. More than 50 percent of the in-person contacts with a child in out-of-home care are required to be in the child's out-of-home care placement, occurring no less than every other month. Additionally, this standard directs agencies how to document information about the child welfare professional's face-to-face contact in eWiSACWIS.

There are no exceptions to this standard since it is enacting a federal requirement.

Agencies must ensure all actions of either agency or contract provider staff comply with this standard.

Agencies may use other professional staff as designees to complete the face-to-face contacts. Professional staff includes those who are trained to assess safety, facilitate permanence, ensure a child's well-being, and evaluate the progress of a child and family's case. Examples of child welfare professionals that do not qualify as appropriate designees are Guardian ad Litem or foster parent.

Court Ordered Out-of-home Placements of Indian Children

Wis. Stat. s. 48.645(2)(a)4, allows a county to fund an out-of-home placement ordered by a tribal court, providing that the county and tribe enter into a 161 Agreement. Those tribal court-ordered placements under a 161 Agreement are subject to the face-to-face contact requirement and must be performed by the county agency unless the Tribe and county include alternative language in a 161 Agreement, MOU or contract delineating responsibilities for the contacts.

Wisconsin Act 161 creates a mechanism for county agencies to make payments for costs of out-of-home placements of Indian children when placement is ordered by a tribal court and the county, and the tribe have entered into a written agreement regarding the circumstances under which such payments will be made. For more information, please read Memo Series DCFS 2008-11 Guidelines for Implementation of Act 161 Agreements (Out-of-home Placements of Indian Children by Tribal Courts).

Tribes have been given access and have the technical capacity to enter case notes in eWISACWIS. It is recommended that child welfare agencies and tribes continue to work together to ensure monthly contact information is updated in a timely manner. It is recommended that this information be included in the 161 Agreement. While tribes have the capability to enter contact notes in eWiSACWIS, they are not required to.

Applicability

I.
The child welfare professional face-to-face contact requirement applies to all children in out-of-home placement, including those placed through a Voluntary Placement Agreement (Wis. Stat. s. 48.63) and youth who are over 18 years of age if the agency maintains placement and care responsibility under a court order and the child is in an out-of-home setting listed below:

- Court-ordered kinship care.
- Foster family home (relative/like-kin or non-relative).
- Pre-adoptive home.
- Receiving home.
- Unlicensed relative/like-kin or non-relative placement.
- Group home.
- Shelter care (including Reception Center and Reception Center – Shelter).
- Residential care center.
- Trial reunification.
- Supervised independent living.
- Missing from out-of-home care.

II.
Children who are in the out-of-home care settings listed below are not subject to the face-to-face contact requirement in this standard except as described in the paragraph below:

- Juvenile correctional institutions.
- Adult corrections.
- Secure detention (including Reception Center – Detention).
- Hospitals.

If a child is placed in an out-of-home care setting listed in Section I and is subsequently moved to an out-of-home setting listed in Section II without discharge between those out-of-home care settings, the child welfare professional must continue to conduct monthly face-to-face contacts with the child.

Child Welfare Professional Face-to-Face Contact Requirements

Each child in an out-of-home placement must have at least one face-to-face contact with their child welfare professional in every full calendar month the child is in out-of-home care. The majority (greater than 50%) of the face-to-face contacts must be in the child's out-of-home placement, occurring no less than every other month.

Teleconferencing and videoconferencing do not constitute face-to-face contact.

Child welfare professional face-to-face contacts must be focused on the safety, permanence, and well-being of the child and must be of substance and duration sufficient to address the goals of the case plan or Permanency Plan. Content of the contacts must be documented in accordance with the documentation requirement below.

If the department or a county agency designates other child welfare professionals to be responsible for visits with the child, the county or department child welfare professional primarily responsible for the child should have face-to-face contact with the child on at least a quarterly basis.

For cases involving the interstate placement of children, visits must occur monthly and should be conducted by the agency responsible for supervision under the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) agreement for that child, generally the receiving state or a private agency child welfare professional under contract with the receiving state. The first face-to-face contact must occur no later than 30 days from the date on which the child is placed, or 30 days from the date on which the receiving state is notified of the child's placement, if notification occurs after placement. The sending state is responsible for documenting the visits in eWiSACWIS. Under the ICPC, the supervising agency is required to submit a supervision report every three (3) months following the date of receipt of the 100B form by the receiving state's ICPC office. Agencies may want to request a report about any visits during the final quarter of the Federal Fiscal Year (July, August, September) by the last week of October in order for those visits to be entered in eWiSACWIS and counted in the data submitted to the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) database. If the sending agency is not receiving the documentation from the receiving state, the agency should contact the assigned ICPC specialist at DCF as soon as a problem is detected. The assigned ICPC specialist will work with the receiving state to address the issue.

Quality of Face-to-Face Contacts

The federal Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 requires that, in order for a state to be eligible for federal funding, monthly contacts be well-planned and focused on issues pertinent to planning and service delivery to ensure safety, permanence, and well-being of children. It is important to make face-to-face contacts purposeful and meaningful to promote positive outcomes for children. The ultimate intent of face-to-face contacts is to monitor safety and to provide services to promote permanency and the well-being of the child, the child's family, and the child's caregivers. For this reason, it is critical that documentation reflects and supports the content of monthly contacts.

In the monthly contact a child welfare professional's face-to-face contact with a child may include or address the following topics:

- Safety:
    - Ongoing assessment of safety of the child and, if applicable, community
    - Child's behavioral risk, including risk to self and risk to others
- Stability/Adjustment of child in:
    - Current living arrangement (biological home, foster home, group home, RCC, incarceration)
    - Educational setting
    - Alternative setting (non-custodial parent, respite care)
- Status of child's well-being:
    - Physical health
    - Learning and development: educational program attendance, progress, and IEP (if applicable)
    - Mental health needs (emotional development and behavioral functioning)
- Progress towards planning goals/outcomes, permanence goals, and court orders:
    - Tracking progress on achieving outcomes.
    - Adjustment of strategies/intervention(s) when needed.
    - Life skills development and independent living needs and goals for youth aged 14 or older.
    - Opportunities to engage in age or developmentally appropriate activities following the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.
- Family interactions and relationships:
    - Frequency of contact/communication
    - Type of contact/communication and with whom
    - Quality of contact/communication and with whom
- An opportunity to engage in private communications with the child welfare professional regarding the out-of-home placement and any other concerns.

Documentation

The child welfare professional's monthly face-to-face contacts with a child must be documented in eWiSACWIS as a case note. The note must include, at a minimum, the following information describing the face-to-face contact:

- Date, time, and duration of the visit
- Participants involved
- Location of the visit
- Type of contact
- Purpose of the contact
- Summary of the results of the contact

The information listed above must be documented in eWiSACWIS within 20 calendar days after the face-to-face contact with the child.

The "Quick Reference Guide" that provides direction about how to enter a case note to meet the federal mandate on monthly contacts with children and youth in out-of-home care in eWiSACWIS can be accessed electronically at the following link: https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/knowledgeweb/training/ewisacwis-user-guides/case-work Specific information about documentation is found under the "Documenting Monthly Case Worker Contacts" link in the Narrative Section.

For additional explanation and guidance regarding documentation for shelter and secure detention settings, refer to the "Secure Detention and Shelter Care" sections of the Out-of-Home Placement Manual, located at: http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/knowledgeweb/training/user-guides-and-manuals/placement-documentation-manual

Agencies using contracted staff to conduct face-to-face contacts with children and youth in out-of-home care should develop a process with those agencies to ensure that the primary agency receives the information necessary to document the contacts as required above.

The CM06x100 Caseworker Contacts Report has been created to assist child welfare agencies in monitoring performance related to this requirement. This report allows CW agencies to identify their missing child welfare professional contacts and assess their agency's performance on a month-by-month and cumulative basis. This report can be accessed via eWReports. If you do not have the ability to access this report, work with your eWiSACWIS security delegate to obtain access to the report. In addition, the CM06x102 Caseworker Contacts Monitoring Report is available to monitor contacts that have or have not occurred in a given time period. This report is run weekly but is also available for On-Demand use for a requested time period. This report does not provide the compliance with the Federal Fiscal Year percentage requirement.

There is also a child welfare professional contacts dashboard located on the DCF website which provides interactive data for each county's performance on this measure. The dashboard is located at: https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/dashboard/cwcontacts

Children Missing from Out-of-Home Care

When the whereabouts of children living in out-of-home care settings are unknown, the safety and well-being of those children cannot be ensured. When children are missing from care, they are vulnerable to and at risk of additional emotional and physical trauma (e.g., sexual exploitation, sex trafficking, and other high-risk situations or activities). Thus, measures to locate the child, communicate with critical individuals and agencies involved with the child, and plan for the child's safe return must be made.

A child is considered to be in "out-of-home care" if the agency has placement and care responsibility for the child whether placed under a Voluntary Placement Agreement (under Wis. Stat. s. 48.63) or through a court order. This includes a child who is placed by the agency with relatives/like-kin or in court-ordered kinship care placements, whether or not payments are being made but the agency maintains placement and care responsibility. It does not include a child who is living with relatives/like-kin (or caregivers other than parents) but is not under the placement and care responsibility of the agency. The placement types included in this standard include:

- Foster care (relative/like-kin or non-relative)
- Court-ordered kinship care
- Unlicensed relatives/like-kin
- Unlicensed non-relatives
- Group home care
- Residential care center
- Trial Reunification
- Supervised independent living
- Secure detention
- Shelter care when a Permanency Plan is required.

This does not include care provided in a juvenile correctional facility as defined under Wis. Stat. s. 938.02(15m) It also does not include children who are receiving an in-home service of a 72-hour hold or a sanction at a shelter care facility.

Note: Children on a dispositional order determined to be missing from care age 18 or older still qualify for independent living services.

Applicability

This standard applies to all cases in which a child is living in an out-of-home care setting and the whereabouts of the child are either unknown or the child does not have permission to be away from the out-of-home care setting. This standard applies beginning at the point a child is removed from their home and the department, or a county agency, has placement and care responsibility.

Agencies must ensure that all actions of either the agency or contracted provider staff comply with this standard.

An agency is considered to have the placement and care responsibility of a child when the child is removed from their home by the department, an agency, or when a court enters an order placing a child in out-of-home care, whichever occurs first.

Purpose

The purpose of this standard is to:

- Define when a child is missing from out-of-home care.
- Establish requirements for agency response when a child is missing from out-of-home care.
- Establish requirements for documenting a child's missing status in eWiSACWIS.

Missing from Out-of-Home Care Defined

A child is considered missing from out-of-home care when they are under the placement and care responsibility of the department or a county agency, is living in an out-of-home care setting, and any of the following criteria are met:

- The child is unaccounted for a period of time that cannot reasonably be justified by the child's age, maturity, or emotional capacity which shall not exceed eight (8) hours.
- When efforts to locate the child have been unsuccessful.
- When it is known or suspected that a child has been taken by force or coercion.
- When the child is in the company of an unauthorized person or located in an unauthorized place.

An out-of-home care provider does not have to wait eight (8) hours to report a child missing from out-of-home care. For young, disabled, or vulnerable children, an unexplained absence for even a short period of time can be an alarming situation and might present significant child or community safety concerns.

The agency responsible for a child placed in out-of-home care must provide the out-of-home care provider upon placement, information relating to a child's history of being missing. The information must be updated to reflect any changes.

Confidentiality

Agencies must continue to abide by existing confidentiality standards when implementing this standard (Ref. Wis. Stat. ss. 48.78(2m) and 938.78). Agency staff must ensure that an out-of-home or respite provider understands confidentiality requirements as they pertain to children missing from care.

Agencies may want to consult with their legal counsel when questions arise regarding confidentiality.

Agency Coordination with Out-of-Home Care Providers and Other Caregivers

The agency must ensure that the parent/guardian, out-of-home care provider or respite provider when a child is on a home visit or trial reunification understands their responsibility to contact an agency representative when a child in their care is determined to be missing.

National Child Search Assistance Act Law and Legal Definition

The National Child Search Assistance Act (NCSA) is U.S. federal legislation enacted in 1990. This Act requires each federal, state, and local law enforcement agency to report each case of a missing child below the age of 21 to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC). Further, the NCSA states that no agency should maintain any policy establishing a waiting period before accepting a missing child report. These provisions are currently codified in 34 USCS §§ 41307 and 41308.

Pursuant to federal law, law enforcement to enter information about missing and abducted children in the NCIC database within two (2) hours of receiving a report.

Additionally, any child welfare professional who is having difficulty working with their local law enforcement when making reports of children missing from their care, may contact the Wisconsin Clearinghouse for Missing and Exploited Children and Adults which is operated by the Department of Justice.

The Wisconsin Clearinghouse for Missing and Exploited Children and Adults actively assists law enforcement, victim families, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and other missing children organizations in situations involving missing children, children who have experienced sex trafficking and children who are victims of enticement via the Internet. Wisconsin's Clearinghouse provides technical investigative assistance, referrals and advocacy in navigating the criminal justice system, along with other resources, services and information, to victim families of children and adults who are missing and considered endangered in the state of Wisconsin, nationwide and internationally.

The following is the contact information for the Wisconsin Clearinghouse for Missing & Exploited Children and Adults:

17 West Main Street
Madison, WI 53703
Office: 608-266-1671
1-800-THE HOPE (1-800-843-4673)
www.missingpersons.doj.wi.gov

Responsibilities When a Child is Missing from Out-of-Home Care

Once the agency has determined that a child is missing from out-of-home care, the agency must:

- Make efforts to immediately inform the following:
  - The parent/guardian.
  - The out-of-home care provider, if the child was not with the provider when they went missing.
  - The Indian child's tribe, if applicable.
  - The appropriate Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) or Interstate Compact for Juveniles (ICJ) contact if a child is placed in Wisconsin through the ICPC or ICJ.
- Within 8 hours, ensure that law enforcement has been notified that a child is missing.
  - Include in that notification include whether the child is at-risk or has experienced sex trafficking.
- Within 24 hours, notify the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).
  - Inform NCMEC if the child is at-risk or has experienced sex trafficking.
  - See Appendix 6: Information to be provided to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children for additional guidance about the requirements for making missing reports to NCMEC on page 283.
- Conduct and continue efforts to find the child until the child no longer meets the definition of missing from care including maintaining regular communication with law enforcement and NCMEC and sharing information pertaining to the child's recovery and circumstances related to the recovery
- Continue to do permanency planning activities according to Wis. Stat. ss. 48.38 and 938.38.
- Manage bed holds and provider payments.

Within 24 hours, the agency must document the child's missing episode in the child's Placement Status in eWiSACWIS once the child has been determined missing.

Note: Documenting the child's missing from out-of-home care placement will send this information directly to NCMEC through the portal.

Agencies must:

- Establish policies outlining the information and level of detail to be shared with parties (e.g., judges, district attorney, corporation counsel, state public defenders, Guardian ad Litem, etc.) when a child is missing from out-of-home care, including the timeframe for providing such information.

- Establish policies regarding what actions will occur for ongoing efforts to find the child.

An agency may also want to inform the child's school, mental health providers, legal representative, and other service providers working with the child and family to coordinate efforts to locate the child.

When agencies consult with court officials, agencies may wish to work with judges to include children missing from care polices in the court's policies under Wis. Stat. ss. 48.06(1)(a)2. and (2)(a) and 938.06(1)(a)2. and (2)(a).

Agencies can determine the continued efforts to search, as this will vary depending on the circumstances of the missing episode, the individual child. An agency should consider the following activities in searching for a child who has been determined to be missing:

- Contact with the child's friends, relatives/like-kin, or significant others for possible information about their whereabouts.
- Contact with the child's school if school is in session.
- If the child has been missing before, contact any person the child was found with or in the location the child was located previously.
- Determine whether any of the child's friends or significant others are also missing; if so, whether their families or friends have additional information.
- Determine whether the child or anyone taking the child left any written information which may indicate where the child has gone or been taken.

Responsibilities When a Child is No Longer Missing

Once the agency has determined the child has been found and is again under the care and supervision of the agency, the agency must:

- Make efforts to immediately inform the following:
  - the parent/guardian
  - the out-of-home care provider
  - the Indian child's tribe, if applicable, and
  - the appropriate Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) or Interstate Compact for Juveniles (ICJ) contact if a child is placed in Wisconsin through the ICPC or ICJ.
- Verify that law enforcement has been notified of the child's return if the child was listed as a missing person.
- Within 24 hours, the agency must document that the child is no longer missing in eWiSACWIS, which will notify NCEMC of the child's return to out-of-home care.
- Notify the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children of the child's return.
- Manage bed holds and provider payments.
- Inform the court and court officials as specified in inter-agency policies or agreements. Revise the Family Interaction Plan to consider any new safety concerns.
- Obtain any appropriate court restrictions to maintain the child safely in out-of-home care.
- Seek any necessary follow-up medical care or counseling for the child.
- Assist the child in obtaining any educational materials necessary to catch the child up from the time they were considered missing, if school was missed.

Agencies must evaluate the child's need for treatment and services within one working day following an episode of missing from care, by:

- Interviewing the child about the missing episode to determine the primary factors that contributed to the child's missing episode and follow up on any safety or well-being concerns raised by the child, their parent/guardian or their out-of-home care provider.
  - Assess the child to determine if the child experienced trafficking during the missing episode. According to federal law, any minor under the age of 18 engaging in commercial sex is a victim of sex trafficking, regardless of the presence of force, fraud, or coercion. "Commercial sex" is defined as any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person. The sex act can be for money, food, shelter, drugs or alcohol, or safety."
  - Seek any necessary medical attention for the child.
  - Discuss planning for the prevention of future missing from care episodes with the child and family team to ensure child safety, community safety, permanency, and well-being.
  - Note: Child welfare professionals should be aware of mandatory reporting requirements if a child discloses any abuse or victimization that may have occurred while they were missing from out-of-home care during the assessment.

Within 5 working days, the agency must document the primary factors that contributed to the child's missing episode in eWiSACWIS. Documentation of this information will be prompted in

eWiSACWIS in the “Assessment when a Child is No Longer Missing” group box once the child’s placement status is updated to reflect the child is no longer missing.

Documentation

The following must be documented in the child’s record:

- The efforts to locate the child, based upon information gathered.
- Notifications and efforts to notify the required individuals and entities that a child is missing from out-of-home care.
- Continued efforts to search for a child who is considered missing from out-of-home care.
- Notifications and efforts to notify the required individuals and entities that a child is no longer considered missing from out-of-home care.
- Document the primary factors that contributed to the child’s missing episode and the child’s experience(s) while missing. See Appendix 7: Assessment when a Child is No Longer Missing for a detailed description of this assessment on page 285.

When a child is considered missing from out-of-home care, the case shall not be closed. Any decision to close a case with an open court order for a child who has not yet attained 18 years of age, or who has attained 18 years of age with an open court order, should be done in consultation with the agency’s legal counsel.

The child’s missing status must be updated within 24 hours, excluding holidays and weekends, when:

- The child has been missing for 24 hours.
- The child returns to out-of-home care.

Note: Open cases with dispositions of Missing from Care at age 18 or older still qualify for independent living services.

Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan

This standard establishes the requirements for child welfare professionals to create an Independent Living Transition to Discharge (ILTD) Plan for all youth who are in an out-of-home care placement, have attained the age of 17 ½, and who are expected to exit out-of-home on their 18th birthday or after.

Applicability

The requirement for an ILTD Plan is required for all youth who are in an out-of-home placement, who have attained the age of 17 ½, and who are expected to exit from out-of-home care at age 18 or later. Planning for a youth's transition to discharge and independent living must begin no later than six months prior to a youth's 18th birthday (at age 17 ½).

Child welfare agencies must ensure all actions of either agency or contracted providers comply with this standard.

Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan Requirement

If the youth is 17.5 or older while in out-of-home care, the focus of a youth's independent living plan changes from one of life-skills development while in out-of-home care to transitioning from care as a self-sufficient young adult. The child welfare professional must create an Independent Living Transition to Discharge (ILTD) Plan for each youth who will discharge from care on or after turning 18. The ILTD must be started no later than when the youth turns 17.5 and be finalized no later than 90 days prior to the youth's 18th birthday.

For more guidance, consult the ILTD Writing Guide and ILTD Desk Guide.

The ILTD Plan is required even if a youth is missing from care at 17.5 or later; the child welfare professional and other supportive adults should do their best to complete the plan on the youth's behalf and engage the young person in discussion and plan development when they are no longer missing from care.

The ILTD Plan is also required even if the youth remains in care after age 18. It should be started no later than 17.5 and updated on a regular basis to reflect the evolution of the youth's independent living needs and goals and transition planning, leading up the termination of their court order or Voluntary Transition to Independent Living Agreement. This applies to youth in extended care.

The child welfare professional shall work with the young person to define the youth's wants, needs, and goals following discharge and identify any services, resources, programs, and/or persons that will support the youth during discharge and beyond. The child welfare professional, in partnership with others on the youth's discharge planning team, must help the youth be familiar with and, as appropriate, connect with the individuals, agencies, and service providers who will help them leading up to and following discharge prior to the youth's discharge from out-of-home care.

Appropriate supports and services should complement the youth's efforts to achieve self-sufficiency both prior to and upon discharge. The ILTD Plan, completed via the ILTD tab on the youth's IL page in eWiSACWIS, must be detailed and kept current to ensure that goals and tasks reflect the youth's wants, needs, and goals, and identified resources, helpers, and timeframes are specific, realistic, and relevant to the need. It includes numerous opportunities for the youth to provide direct input for their plan.

ILTD Plan areas of focus are many of the ones relevant throughout a youth's IL eligibility while in care, revisited in the context of the youth approaching discharge. These areas of focus include, but are not limited to:

- Youth concurrent planning, such as when a youth will discharge to adult services.
- Youth eligibility for extended out-of-home care.
- Youth knowledge of community resources, supports, and benefits, including eligibility and how to access them.
- Housing, with emphasis on securing safe, stable, and sustainable housing, in addition to learning about home maintenance and healthy living situations with others.

- Employment, including learning about job and career options, soft and hard skill development, and opportunities for increased earnings.
- Income and finances, including how to budget and make bill payments, financial literacy, savings and aid, and the importance of credit.
- Education, including access to academic supports like tutoring, high school completion, and learning about or enrolling in postsecondary education, certification program, or vocational training.
- Health and well-being, including physical and mental wellness, sexual education, family planning, and healthy friendships/relationships.
- Transportation, with emphasis on safe and reliable transportation options.
- Community and support network, including fostering prosocial activities and relationships, fostering cultural connections, and affirming a youth's gender identity, gender expression, and/or sexual orientation.

In addition to completing the ILTD Plan with the youth and others in their support network, the child welfare professional must also provide required documents to the young person prior to discharge. Once provided, they should check these off on the IL page>Referral tab; that list then pre-fills to the ILTD Plan print out. The required documents are:

- Original certified birth certificate (federally required).
- State identification card or driver's license (federally required).
- Social Security card (federally required)
- Health insurance information, including any cards needed to access medical care (federally required)
- Education records
- Documentation of immigration, citizenship, or naturalization, if appropriate
- Death certificate if parent is deceased
- Proof of tribal registration and membership, if appropriate
- Copy of ILTD plan
- Selective Service card, if appropriate
- Annual credit report and efforts made by the agency to amend any inaccuracies

Other important documents include:

- Placement history, if appropriate
- Copy of permanency plan, if appropriate
- Change of address card
- Employment information

While the child welfare professional is responsible for coordinating and facilitating ILTD meetings and conversations, and documenting and completing the ILTD tab in eWiSACWIS, they shall collaborate with the youth and other participants in the youth's discharge planning. The child welfare professional should encourage the youth to lead their ILTD planning. Supportive adults, as identified by the youth, should be part of the planning process.

Even if an ILTD Plan is not completed for youth adopted or in Wis. Stat. s. 48.977 guardianship, Wis. Stat. s. 48.9597 guardianship, or guardianship under substantially similar tribal law on or after their 16th birthday following time in court-ordered out-of-home care, the child welfare professional and/or IL Coordinator shall make the youth aware of their eligibility

for independent living services and supports prior to case closure. The TRA should also be made aware of the youth's IL eligibility.

See page 195, "Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan"; page 271, "Appendix 4: Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan (Additional Information)"; and the ILTD Writing Guide and ILTD Desk Guide for more guidance.

Also note that a previous ILTD training video is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0DNPd6IojA&feature=youtu.be. Though referencing an older version of the ILTD, the video still includes good practice considerations.

ILTD Planning Meetings

ILTD planning meetings must begin at age 17 ½ and be directed by the youth as much as possible (unless developmentally unable to participate). Prior to the meeting the youth must be encouraged to identify individuals who could play a central role in the meeting. The focus of meeting is to identify and implement specific action steps to achieve the requirements of the ILTD Plan.

See page 271, "Appendix 4: Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan (Additional Information)".

The child welfare professional should consider including individuals such as the youth's parent or legal guardian, substitute caregiver, Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), attorney, service providers, and others the youth determines are important individuals who can assist in the transition to independence.

Transition Requirements for Youth Who Age Out of Care: Collaboration with Regional IL Partners

It is imperative that youth be transitioned to the regional Transition Resource Agency (TRA) serving their area, in a way that is meaningful to them and supports/encourages future engagement with the TRA moving forward.

The list of contracted TRAs, their service areas, and contact information is available via https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/map/il-r.

The case transition requirements apply to youth aging out of care as well as those eligible youth who are no longer in out-of-home care and are under the age of 23 as follows:

The transition process for youth aging out of care takes place at age 17.5 with development of the ILTD and includes:

- Preparing the TRA professional for the initial meeting with the youth by providing:
  - Name, date of birth, address and anticipated date of discharge.
- Sharing and understanding information and decisions related to ongoing case management services, particularly related to life skills development, independent living assessment and planning.
- Ensuring a clear understanding of formal and informal family supports.
- Identifying additional agency and community resources, services, and supports the youth has been involved in or would like to be involved in.
- Collaboration on the Independent Living to Transition to Discharge (ILTD) plan with TRA beginning at age 17.5.
- TRA must become familiar with the youth, youth goals and accomplishments through discussions with the youth before the case can be fully transitioned.
- Once the case has been transitioned, and the youth ages out of care, the TRA will document (check box) on the youth's IL page in eWiSACWIS confirming transition of the case and full responsibility for providing services.

The transition process for eligible youth not in care and under the age of 23 includes:

- Preparing the TRA professional for the initial meeting with the youth by providing:
  - Name, date of birth, address
- Sharing and understanding information and decisions related to ongoing case management services, particularly related to life skills development, independent living assessment and planning.
- Ensuring a clear understanding of formal and informal family supports.
- Identifying additional agency and community resources, services, and supports the youth has been involved in or would like to be involved in.
- TRA must become familiar with the youth, youth goals and accomplishments through discussions before the case can be fully transitioned.
- Conduct at least one in-person case transition staffing for each youth as outlined above (or more as needed).
- Once the case has been transitioned, the TRA will document (via check box) on the youth's IL page in eWiSACWIS confirming transition of the case and full responsibility for providing services.

Preparing for Case Transition

The agency child welfare professional maintains responsibility for managing the case until the conclusion of the case transition staffing. This includes:

- Managing and overseeing creation and completion of the Independent Living Plan and ILTD plan.
- Ensuring all documentation of services and documents provided are completed and up to date on the youth's Independent Living page in eWiSACWIS.
- Facilitation of multiple opportunities for face-to-face staffing in order for youth to meet with the TRA during the months of December and January for the purpose of exchanging information, understanding of services available, and how to access them through the TRA.

The TRA professional should review the following prior to the case transition staffing:

- Most recent Independent Living Assessment
- Most recent Independent Living Transition plan and ILTD

Case Transition Staffing

For youth in out-of-home care, the case transition staffing should occur during the time of the development of the ILTD Plan and no less than 90 days prior to a youth's aging out of care. At minimum, the case transition staffing must include both the child welfare professional (or Independent Living Coordinator), the TRA professional and the youth. For all youth (those in out-of-home care as well as eligible youth no longer in out-of-home care) the following must occur:

- The two child welfare professionals must schedule a case transition staffing with the youth in a location comfortable and convenient for the youth.

- The following must be discussed at the case transition staffing:
    - Independent Living Transition plan and gaps in information, and decisions made.
    - Youth's needs, including a summary of medical, mental health, and school information, as available.
    - Whether a youth is an Indian child in accordance with the Indian Child Welfare Act/Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA/WICWA).
    - Review of Independent Living Assessment and Independent Living Plan (form DCF-F-CFS2256 is one IL plan option) and Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan(DCF-F-2549), if applicable, including discussion of the youth's future goals and services as well as how to access those provided by the TRA.

For youth in extended out-of-home care placement, the child welfare agency has the primary responsibility for ensuring permanency planning and life skills development opportunities continue as long as the youth remains in care. Agencies shall involve the TRA in development of Independent Living Transition to Discharge (ILTD) plans and activities along with the youth so that a relationship with the TRA is developed in the event that the youth decides to leave care earlier than anticipated and to increase the likelihood the youth will participate in TRA services following discharge from care.

Documentation

ILTD Plan

At age 17 ½, the primary child welfare professional will receive an eWiSACWIS tickler indicating that an Independent Living Transition to Discharge (ILTD) plan must be completed at the direction of the youth. The child welfare professional then coordinates ILTD planning meetings to work with the youth and other supportive adults to develop a comprehensive ILTD plan that focuses on goals and activities to support the youth's successful transition from OHC to living on their own as a young adult. The child welfare professional has 90 days to develop the plan with the young person, defining goals and activities to support the youth's transition and discharge. The child welfare professional must complete the ILTD tab, should provide copies to the young person throughout its development and once complete, and have the youth and members of their transition team sign it.

eWiSACWIS

The child welfare professional's supervisor should review the ILTD plan prior to the child welfare professional entering an ILTD plan completion date. Once the supervisor approves the plan (within 90 days of age 18) the child welfare professional shall record the completion date on the ILTD tab of the youth's IL page. ILTD goals and activities populate to the youth's Permanency Plan.

In addition to developing the ILTD plan with the youth and their supportive adults, the child welfare professional shall also ensure that all IL services are recorded on the Services tab of the youth's IL page prior to discharge. Services should be timely, accurate, and thorough, and include an end date prior to the youth's transition from care. IL services also populate to the youth's Permanency Plan.

Extension of Out-of-Home Care

Many youth who age out of the child welfare system are ill-prepared to meet the demands of adulthood successfully. One factor that increases the probability of success is the attainment of a high school diploma. Due to these factors, extension of out-of-home care to assist youth in completion of their high school or equivalent is seen as an avenue in which child welfare can improve the current outcomes for youth in care.

It is important to recognize that if extension of out-of-home care is merely a continuation of existing practices, these youth are likely to reach the end of their time in care still ill-prepared for life on their own. Therefore, consideration must be given to how placement and services will serve the youth in a different and effective way after age 18. Supports and services should be structured in a way that is appealing and appropriate for a youth; providing the greatest amount of developmentally appropriate freedom that makes it possible to prepare them for adult decision making and responsibilities. Allowing them to learn from experiences and mistakes while providing a home that lends support, and encouragement is a key principle during this period.

Applicability

This standard applies to all cases in which a child (youth from here forward) is under the placement and care responsibility of a county agency or the department and placed in a foster home, group home, or residential care center for children and youth, in the home of a relative other than a parent/guardian, or in a supervised independent living arrangement and for whom an Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan is required. The agency or the department must review the eligibility for the extension of out-of-home care for the youth.

The requirements under this standard are contained in the boxes.

Agencies must assure that all actions of either the agency or contracted provider staff comply with this standard.

An agency is considered to have the placement and care responsibility of a youth when the youth is removed from their home by the department or an agency or when a court enters an order placing a youth in out-of-home care, whichever occurs first.

Eligibility for Extension of Out-of-Home Care Determination

Not less than 120 days before an out-of-home care order terminates, during the development of the Independent Living Transition to Discharge (ILTD) Plan, the agency must determine and document whether a youth meets the extension of out-of-home care eligibility requirements under Wis. Stat. ss. 48.366 or 938.366. To meet the initial eligibility the youth must be:

- Expected to be in out-of-home care on their 18th birthday
- A full-time student at a secondary school or its technical or vocational equivalent
- Have an individualized education program under Wis. Stat. s. 115.787 that is in effect for the youth.

When a Youth is Determined to be Eligible

When it has been determined that the youth is eligible the agency must:

Conduct a face-to-face meeting with the youth to discuss:

- The options to remain in care along with the implications of each option,
- How to opt in and out,
- Explain an extended order verses the voluntary transition to independent living agreement, and
- The requirements and expectations of remaining in care, the court process and the process to return should they choose to leave.

The youth may decide to:

- Continue under the out-of-home care order,
- Continue in out-of-home care under a voluntary transition to independent living agreement, or
- Request to be discharged from out-of-home care on termination of the order.

Youth Would Like to Extend on a Court Order

If a youth wishes to continue in out-of-home care, the child welfare professional must request an extension of the court order under Wis. Stat. ss. 48.365 or 938.365.

Youth Would Like to Extend on a Voluntary Transition to Independent Living Agreement

If a youth wishes to continue under a voluntary transition to independent living agreement the agency and the youth shall enter into such an agreement on the form created by the department (DCF-F-5030-E).

Voluntary Transition to Independent Living Agreement

Once it has been determined that a youth qualifies for and wants to enter into an extension of out-of-home care through a voluntary transition to independent living the agency must enter into a written agreement with the youth or guardian if applicable.

The agency must provide a copy of the agreement to the youth and guardian if appropriate.

The voluntary transition to independent living gives the agency placement and care responsibility for the youth and shall be documented on the form (DCF-F-5030-E) created by the department and shall include all of the following conditions:

- The youth is 18 years of age or over but under 21 years of age.
- The youth is a full-time student at a secondary school or its technical or vocational equivalent.
- There is an individualized education program under Wis. Stat. s. 115.787, in effect for the youth.
- The youth will participate in activities assigned by the agency to prepare the youth for independent living.
- The youth will comply with school attendance requirements in the youth's individualized education program under Wis. Stat. s. 115.787, school district policies, and truancy laws and ordinances.
- The youth will not be missing from their out-of-home care placement for more than 2 weeks without contact with the agency.
- When there is any change in the youth's circumstances that affects a provision of the voluntary transition to independent living the youth must notify the agency within 10 calendar days.
- A description of the terms upon which the agreement may terminate.

The agency may not add additional parameters to the agreement.

Documentation

The signed voluntary transition to independent living shall be scanned into eWiSACWIS under the legal documents.

The voluntary transition to independent living remains effective as long as the youth remains eligible for extension of out-of-home care. If the youth or the youth's guardian on behalf of the youth wishes to terminate the agreement at any time during the term of the agreement, they may do so by notifying the agency in writing that they wish to terminate the agreement.

Youth Would Like to Discharge from Out-of-Home Care at the Time of Initial Determination

If the youth indicates that he or she wishes to be discharged from out-of-home care on termination of the order, the agency shall request a Transition to Discharge hearing as soon as possible but no later than 30 days before the youth is expected to exit care.

Transition to Discharge Hearing

Within 30 days after receipt of the request, the court will hold the Transition to Discharge hearing. Not less than 3 days before the hearing, the agency requesting the hearing shall provide notice of the hearing to the youth, the parent/guardian, and legal custodian of that person, any foster parent or other physical custodian described in Wis. Stat. s. 48.62(2) of that person, that person's court-appointed special advocate, all parties who are bound by the dispositional order, and, if that person is an Indian child who has been removed from the home of their parent/guardian, that person's Indian custodian and Indian child's tribe.

At the hearing the court will review with the youth the options available through extending care.

- If the court determines that the person wishes to continue in out-of-home care under an extension of the order under Wis. Stat. ss. 48.365 or 938.365, the court should order the extension in the hearing.
- If the court determines that the person wishes to continue in out-of-home care under a voluntary agreement under sub. (3), the court shall order the agency primarily responsible for providing placement and services to the youth under the order to enter into a voluntary independent living transition agreement.
- If the court determines that the youth understands that they may continue in out-of-home care, but wishes to be discharged from that care on termination of the order, the court shall advise the youth that they may enter into a voluntary agreement at any time before they are granted a high school or high school equivalency diploma or reaches 21 years of age, whichever occurs first, so long as they are a full-time student at a secondary school or its vocational or technical equivalent and an individualized education program is in effect for them.

The child welfare professional shall continue with independent living transition to discharge planning and must provide the youth contact information and a written process for returning to care under a voluntary transition to independent living agreement pursuant to Wis. Admin. Code. Ch. DCF 21 Re-Entry into Out-of-Home Care for Youth 18 to 21.

Documentation

The agency shall document the eligibility determination and the youth's decision in eWiSACWIS in the Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan (DCF-F-2549-E).

Any youth who exited care at age 18, who has not yet graduated high school, is in school full-time, has an active IEP and is under the age of 21 may be eligible to re-enter care under a voluntary-independent-living agreement pursuant to Wis. Admin. Code. Ch. DCF 21 Re-Entry into Out-of-Home Care for Youth 18 to 2.

Sometimes youth change their minds or plans do not work out and a youth may need to re-enter out-of-home care after aging out.

Re-entry Process

Any youth who exited out-of-home care at age 18, who has not yet graduated from high school, is in a secondary school or its vocational or technical equivalent program full-time, has an active IEP and is under the age of 21 may be eligible to re-enter care under a voluntary-independent-living agreement pursuant to Wis. Admin. Code. Ch. DCF 21 Re-Entry into Out-of-Home Care for Youth 18 to 21.

The process by which eligibility for re-entry is determined and agency responsibilities are set forth in Wis. Admin. Code. Ch. DCF 21 Re-Entry into Out of Care for Youth 18 to 21.

Documentation

All decisions related to a determination of eligibility for re-entry shall be documented in eWiSACWIS in the youth's Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan form (DCF-F-2549-E)

Extending care and court jurisdiction beyond age 18 is a continuation of all components of placement and care responsibilities including maintaining safe and appropriate placements, permanency planning, Permanency Plan reviews and hearings, and life skills development and activities that will lead to a successful transition to adulthood.

Youth placed under a court order or voluntary transition to independent living will have the opportunity to remain in their current placement setting when feasible and appropriate as they plan for a gradual transition to a more independent living setting while completing their secondary education. Agencies should consider providing a graduated progression of structure and supervision to greater levels of freedom and independence and making placement decisions in partnership with the youth and based on their interests and desires. This allows the youth to move from a higher level of supervision to expanded independence while supporting placement stability.

Placement Options for Youth in Extended Out-of-Home Care

Youth placed under a court order or voluntary transition to independent living shall be placed in the following settings: the home of a relative or like-kin, a kinship care provider, a foster home, a group home, a residential care center, a trial reunification, or in a supervised independent living placement.

Documentation

As required in the Ongoing Standards, all out-of-home care placements must be documented in eWiSACWIS within 5 days.

Permanency Planning

All permanency planning requirements in the child welfare out-of-home cases section apply to these cases, except, the parent/guardian assessment and service planning requirements of the Permanency Plan.

For permanency, the focus intensifies on helping the youth find or re-establish family connections and supporting the youth in identifying other life-long connections to caring adults. Intensive services designed to prepare youth for transitioning from out-of-home care to successful adulthood are continued through the Permanency Plan, Independent Living Plan, and the Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan 90 days prior to leaving care.

Services

Extended care allows youth to continue in placement to facilitate a meaningful transition to independence while under supervision. Assessment and planning should be guided by the principle that youth in extension of out-of-home care are adults in many respects under the law with different needs and legal rights than younger children.

Services must have a positive youth development approach; allowing youth to make their own decisions and learn from their mistakes. Similar to foster care for youth under the age of 18, for youth over 18, placement should not be contingent on good behavior but should help guide the youth to make appropriate decisions.

Activities must ensure life skill development, self-advocacy, fostering supportive relationships, and connecting youth to multiple community supports. Child welfare professionals and agencies must consider that the youth are now legal adults and their own guardian. The independent living services plan remains a significant aspect of the youth's Permanency Plan as it is imperative that a continuum of services leads to preparing youth for a healthy and productive adulthood upon discharge from care.

Components of Independent Living Programming

Extended care placements must include specific components to mindfully plan for the youth's transition to independence. The components of independent living programming (Appendix 4) that must be included are:

- Development of basic self-sufficiency skills.
- Housing stability.
- Supports and resources to promote financial stability; and
- A cultivation of a sense of self-worth and understanding of healthy relationships.

For youth in extended out-of-home care, the child welfare agency has the primary responsibility for ensuring permanency planning and life skills development opportunities. Agencies are encouraged to involve the TRA in development of Independent Living Plans and activities along with the youth so that a relationship with the TRA is developed in the event that the youth decides to leave care earlier than anticipated.

Documentation

All independent living activities and accomplishments shall be documented on the services tab on the youth's Independent Living page in eWiSACWIS.

Note: Independent living assessment and plan development requirements remain in place even for youth in extended care.

Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan

- If the youth does not extend care the ILTD Plan commences.
- If the youth remains in out-of-home through a court order or voluntary agreement, the ILTD Plan must be completed indicating general goals, activities and timelines in the event that the youth decides to leave care prior to graduating or turning 21 years of age. Certain aspects do not apply such as signing up for Badger Care plus, while others, such as designating a health care power of attorney may.

Documentation

The child welfare professional must complete the activities of the ILTD as outlined in the Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan Requirements section on page 195, and document in eWiSACWIS within 90 days of graduation or the youth's 21st birthday, whichever occurs first.

Termination

Court Orders

Youth who are placed under a court order under the extension of out-of-home care exit out-of-home care under the following circumstances:

- The conclusion of the terms of the court order.
- The youth attains the age of 21.
- The youth is no longer a full-time student at a secondary school or its technical or vocational equivalent.
- The youth is no longer the subject of an individualized education plan under Wis. Stat. s. 115.787.
- The youth requests the order be terminated sooner if they no longer wish to remain in out-of-home care.

In the last instance, the agency will need to make a request to the court to vacate the court order. The agency is required to provide the youth with the process to re-enter care if they have not yet graduated or attained the age of 21 should they decide they want to re-enter care at a later date under a Voluntary Transition to Independent Living Agreement.

Voluntary Transition to Independent Living Agreements (VTILA)

A VTILA terminates under the following circumstances:

- The conclusion of the terms of the agreement.
- The youth attains the age of 21.
- The youth is no longer a full-time student at a secondary school or its technical or vocational equivalent.
- The youth is no longer the subject of an individualized education plan under Wis. Stat. s. 115.787.
- The youth is missing from out-of-home care for more than two weeks.
- The youth requests the agreement be terminated sooner if they no longer wish to remain in out-of-home care.
- Upon the death, marriage, or entry into military service if any of these occur before the other terms of the agreement are reached.

See Wis. Admin. Code. Ch. DCF 21.07.

If the termination is based on the issue of noncompliance by the youth, the youth shall be provided an opportunity to actively participate in the development of a plan to address the concerns and if they demonstrate a willingness to comply with the plan that is developed the agreement shall not be terminated.

The agency shall provide the youth with the process to re-enter care if they have not yet graduated or attained the age of 21 should they decide they want to re-enter care at a later date under a new Voluntary Transition to Independent Living Agreement.

Appeals

The youth or their guardian may appeal the agency or department's decision to terminate the agreement as stated in Wis. Admin. Code. Ch. DCF 21.08. The request shall be sent to the director of the agency or their designee within 10 days after the date of the agency's notice of termination pursuant to Wis. Admin. Code. Ch. DCF 21.07(3).

Documentation

The decision to terminate the VTILA shall be documented in eWiSACWIS on a form created by the department (DCF-F- 5033). As required in the Ongoing Standards, all out-of-home care placements or discharges from out-of-home care must be documented in eWiSACWIS within 5 days.

Supervised Independent Living

Supervised Independent Living (SIL) is a highly integrated system of living arrangements and professional services that provides youth ages 17-21 a safe place to live, 24-hour access to supportive adults, and connections to community resources. SIL helps youth develop necessary skills and secure resources needed to maintain housing throughout adulthood. SIL is a combination of independent placements and programming.

Child welfare professionals play a critical role in SIL programs, assessing youth as individuals so that their unique needs may be met most effectively. Flexibility, individualization, nurturing, guidance through positive role modeling, and consistent coordination by a professional are key elements.

SIL programming should facilitate collaborative partnerships in the community in order to support youth's access to needed services and resources as they learn to live on their own. Listed below are critical components that provide a skill-building foundation to help youth develop self-sufficiency, so they become successful and productive adults. The components include: self-sufficiency, housing stability, financial stability, self-worth, and healthy relationships. Programs that incorporate these components are more likely to achieve desired outcomes. Components are complementary and together make up the foundation of an SIL program that promotes successful transitions.

Applicability

This standard applies when a county or the department places a youth into a supervised independent living placement and the programmatic requirements of this placement setting.

Agencies must ensure all actions of either agency or contracted provider staff comply with this standard.

Definition of a Supervised Independent Living Placement

A supervised independent living placement offers 17- to 21-year-olds, who are placed through a court ordered or Voluntary Transition to Independent Living Agreement into out-of-home care with placement and care responsibility through a county or the department which provides the youth the ability to live in their own (or shared) apartment, flat or room with supervision, support and monitoring from a child welfare professional and/or provider from a contracted agency.

A judge may order independent living as a dispositional alternative only upon a showing that the youth is of sufficient maturity and judgment to live independently and only upon proof of a reasonable plan for supervision by an appropriate person or agency (Wis. Stat. s. 48.345(10)(c)).

The agency with placement and care responsibility is responsible for supervision of the youth, maintains case management, and any associated ongoing services for the duration of the court order or Voluntary Transition to Independent Living Agreement. In addition, the agency provides financial assistance when needed.

Supervisory contact with the youth can range from moderate (2-3 times a week based on stability of the youth and the length of time the youth has been involved in Supervised Independent Living) to intense (where daily contact with the youth is necessary for a successful placement).

Acceptable Arrangements for Supervised Independent Living Placements

	Apartment, Shared Housing	Apartment, Scattered Site Housing	Tenant, Room in a House
Service Description	A supervised apartment program in which the contractor owns/operates the apartment complex and provides supervision and support to youth living semi-independently. Youth may live with a roommate approved by the agency (another youth in the program, a sibling, their minor child or an approved adult by the agency).	An independent apartment program in which the youth or the provider leases the apartment, the youth lives independently with decreasing levels of supervision and support from the provider. Youth may live with a roommate approved by the agency (another youth in the program, a sibling, their minor child or an approved adult by the agency).	An independent apartment program in which the youth leases a room in a house from a landlord/homeowner. The youth lives independently with decreasing levels of supervision and support. A tenant is defined as a person who rents or owns their home and leases to the youth.
Facility Type	Apartment building/block(s) of apartments in single building(s) or dorm-like The youth must have their own bedroom with a lock, access to kitchen and bathroom facilities 24/7, and access to the home 24/7.	Scattered-site apartments. The youth must have their own bedroom with a lock, access to kitchen and bathroom facilities 24/7, and access to the home 24/7.	Room in a house. The youth must have their own bedroom with a lock, access to kitchen and bathroom facilities 24/7, and access to the home 24/7.

Age Range	17 - 21		
Number of Beds in unit **&** **Requirements for Placement(s)**	Standard: 1 Optional: 2 or more, depending on youth circumstances; requires provider, agency, and supervisor approval prior to placement. Age differential not to exceed 4 years without written approval of the placing agency.	Standard: 1 Optional: 2 or more, depending on youth circumstances; requires provider, agency, and supervisor approval prior to placement. Age differential not to exceed 4 years without written approval of the placing agency.	Standard: 1 Optional: 2-3, depending on youth circumstances; requires provider, agency, and supervisor approval prior to placement. Age differential not to exceed 4 years without written approval of the placing agency.
Municipal Permit Requirements	Provider must obtain and present all required municipal permits and licenses for each facility; requirements vary by location. Home and bedroom must meet all building codes and municipal ordinances.	Provider must obtain and present all required municipal permits and licenses for each apartment location; requirements vary by location. Home and bedroom must meet all building codes and municipal ordinances.	Home and bedroom must meet all building codes and municipal ordinances.
Supervision & Staffing Requirements	On-site staff available 24 hours per day in person or by phone.	Off-site staff available 24 hours per day by phone.	Supervision and service requirements are the responsibility of the placing agency.
Contact Requirements	The provider is required to have a written contact policy that specifies the number, type, frequency, and content of regularly scheduled and random announced and unannounced contacts with the youth and visits to the youth's apartment. The contact policy and procedure must require minimum contacts with	The provider is required to have a written contact policy that specifies the number, type, frequency, and content of regularly scheduled and random announced and unannounced contacts with the youth and visits to the youth's apartment. The contact policy and procedure must require minimum contacts with the youth in a number, type, frequency, and	The provider is required to have a written contact policy that specifies the number, type, frequency, and content of regularly scheduled contacts with the youth and visits to the youth's apartment. The contact policy and procedure must require minimum contacts with the

	the youth in a number, type, frequency, and content sufficient to support the core components of Supervised Independent Living listed below.	content sufficient to support the core components of Supervised Independent Living listed below.	youth in a number, type, frequency, and content sufficient to support the core components of Supervised Independent Living listed below.

When determining if a youth can share a room or apartment with another individual, the agency should minimally consider physically and sexually aggressive behaviors, the backgrounds of the individuals and whether or not the youth wishes to have a roommate.

Agencies placing youth into Supervised Independent Living are encouraged to develop agreements specific to this placement setting. Sample agreements and guidelines are included in the Appendix 5, starting on page 275.

It is important for the youth, the agency, and any roommate to have a shared understanding of the expectations to avert issues before they arise.

Components of Independent Living Programming

Extended care placements must include specific components to mindfully plan for the youth's transition to independence. The components of independent living programming that must be included are:

- Development of basic self-sufficiency skills.
- Housing stability.
- Supports and resources to promote financial stability.
- A cultivation of a sense of self-worth and understanding of healthy relationships.

Documentation

All independent living activities and accomplishments shall be documented on the services tab on the youth's Independent Living page in eWiSACWIS.

Note: Independent living assessment and plan development requirements remain in place even for youth in extended care.

Supervised Independent Living Placement Payment Structure

Supervised independent living (SIL) rates must be separated into two categories (maintenance and administrative) and determined separately.

Maintenance Payments

Title IV-E (section 475(4) of the Social Security Act) allows maintenance payments to "… cover the cost of (and the cost of providing) food, clothing, shelter, daily supervision, school supplies, a child's personal incidentals, liability insurance with respect to a child and

reasonable travel to the child's home for visitation and reasonable travel for the child to remain in the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement."

When setting an appropriate monthly SIL maintenance rate for a child, the county or department shall complete the Supervised Independent Living Rate Setting form (DCF-F-5031-E), and may include the following cost categories:

- Rent
- Renter's Insurance
- Food Budget
- Furnishings
- Household Supplies
- Utilities (Electricity, Heat, Water and Sewer)
- Telephone
- Clothing
- School Supplies
- Travel to School
- Travel to Family Interaction
- Personal Incidentals
- Other

Daily supervision may be included if a private agency is providing supervision for the placing county, DMCW or the department. This would be an administrative cost and cannot be included if the placing county, DMCW or the department is the one providing the supervision to the SIL placement.

The county or department may enter costs into a category labeled "Other", but those costs will not be IV-E reimbursable.

The county or department is not to exceed a monthly maintenance rate of $3,000 and rates are to be based on actual costs. If a youth shares an apartment with another individual, the costs shall be distributed among the occupants commensurate with their portion of the total amount and must be re-determined if an additional occupant moves into a shared space if the costs are not already based on a proportion of the total amount.

- The manner in which the maintenance payment is distributed is at the discretion of the agency, on a case-by-case basis. If the agency determines that a contracted supervising agency should be paid the maintenance rate, that contracted supervising agency must act as a pass through and cannot keep any funding from a child's maintenance rate. The maintenance payment may be made as one payment to the child or as multiple payments to vendors and to the child.

Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard to Promote Normalcy

Children in out-of-home care have the right to have a childhood that is similar to children residing in their own home. It is the responsibility of those involved in their lives to create as

much normalcy as possible. Normalcy is the ability to easily engage in healthy and developmentally appropriate activities that promote well-being such as social, scholastic, and enrichment activities. Children in out-of-home care should be able to pursue their interests, do what their peers can do, build skills for their future, and maintain connections with their culture, family and friends. Age and developmentally appropriate is defined statutorily as “generally accepted as suitable for children of the same chronological age or level of maturity or that are determined to be developmentally appropriate for a child, based on the development of cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral capacities that are typical for an age or age group, "or in the case of a specific child, activities or items that are suitable for the child based on the developmental stages attained by the child with respect to the cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral capacities of the child.”

Applicability

For the purposes of this standard, an out-of-home care provider includes the following caregivers who have a child placed in their care:

- Unlicensed relatives and like-kin
- Unlicensed non-relatives
- Relatives/like-kin receiving court-ordered kinship care
- Foster parents,
- Group homes, residential care center, and or shelter care facilities.

For group homes, residential care centers, and shelter care facilities, the licensee or authorized representative, or a staff member of that home, center, or facility shall have designated authority to make reasonable and prudent parenting decisions concerning a child’s participation in age or developmentally appropriate activities on site.

Child placing agencies, the agency with placement and care responsibility, and group homes, residential care centers, and shelter care facilities must ensure that all applicable out-of-home care providers comply with this standard.

An agency is considered to have the placement and care responsibility of a child when the child is removed from their home by the department or an agency or when a court enters an order placing a child in out-of-home care, whichever occurs first.

Purpose

The purpose of this standard is to:

- Define the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.
- Establish requirements and parameters for out-of-home care providers to use the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.
- Establish requirements for child welfare professionals to ensure out-of-home care providers use the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard for children under their placement and care responsibility.
- Establish requirements for documenting the use of the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard in eWiSACWIS.

The intent of the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard is to establish normalcy for children in out-of-home care while keeping the health, safety, and best interests of the child as the priority. This standard allows children to:

- Pursue their interests.
- Participate in activities like their peers.
- Build skills for their future and transition to successful adulthood.

Caregiver oversight and guidance while allowing children and youth to participate in age and developmentally appropriate activities will allow them to learn natural consequences and how to make positive choices. Many children and youth in out-of-home care have experienced some form of trauma, and need additional support with emotional development, well-being, and understanding social cues. Some children and youth may need more support and guidance to engage in activities like their peers.

Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard Defined

The "Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard" is defined under Wis. Stat. s. 48.02(14r) as a standard for an out-of-home care provider to use in making decisions concerning a child's participation in age or developmentally appropriate extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities that is characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the health, safety, best interests, and cultural, religious, and tribal values of the child while at the same time encouraging the emotional and developmental growth of the child.

Age or developmentally appropriate activities are activities that are generally accepted as suitable for children of the same chronological age or level of maturity or that are determined to be developmentally appropriate for a child, based on the development of cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral capacities that are typical for an age or age group, or in the case of a specific child, activities or items that are suitable for the child based on the developmental stages attained by the child with respect to the cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral capacities of the child.

The application of the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard may include:

- Granting permission to participate in sports, field trips, overnight and other recreational activities.
- Signing of permission slips and the arrangement of transportation to and from these activities.
- Making decisions regarding a child's choices with respect to transportation, employment, peer relationships, and personal expression.

Reasonable and Student Parent Standard prohibitions include, but are not limited to:

- Permit the foster child to participate in an activity that would violate a court order or any federal or state statute, rule, or regulation.
- Make decisions that conflict with the child's Permanency Plan or Family Interaction Plan.
- Consent to the child's marriage.
- Authorize the child's enlistment in the U.S. armed forces.

- Authorize medical, psychiatric, or surgical treatment for the child beyond the terms of the consent for medical services authorized by the child's parent/guardian.
- Represent the child in a legal action or make a decision of substantial legal significance.
- Determine which school the child attends or make a decision regarding the educational rights of the child. (including, but not limited to Individualized Education Plans, Birth-to-Three decisions, school enrollment, etc.)
- Require or prohibit a child's participation in an activity solely for the foster parent's own convenience or based solely on the foster parent's own values.
- Authorize any significant change to a child's hair, such as haircuts or style or color changes, without permission from the child's parent/guardian, unless the child is 12 years of age or older and has made their own hair care decision (DCF 56.09(3)(e)).

If an activity that promotes normalcy coincides with a scheduled family interaction, therapy, or related schedule, the out-of-home care provider shall consult with the child's child welfare professional about the activity and whether the activity can be accommodated.

To ensure the health, safety, and best interests of the child, out-of-home care providers may only make reasonable and prudent parenting decisions and provide permissions if they and the child have the necessary training and safety equipment to safely engage in that activity.

Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard Requirements and Parameters

All out-of-home care providers are required to encourage activities which promote normalcy by using the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard. Decisions to allow a child to participate in an age and developmentally appropriate activity must be based on the individual child and the specific situation, and/or activity,

When making a decision using the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard, out-of-home care providers shall, at a minimum, consider the following:

- The health, safety, and best interests of the child.
- The physical and emotional developmental growth of the child.
- The child's wishes, as gathered by engaging the foster child in age-appropriate discussions about participation in the activity.
- The cultural, religious, and tribal values of a foster child and the child's family. If reasonably possible to do so, the out-of-home care provider shall consult with the child's parent/guardian about the child's participation in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities and the child's cultural, religious, and tribal values, in making decisions concerning the child's participation in those activities, but is not required to consult with the parent/guardian about every decision affecting the child.
- Potential risks of the activity under consideration.
- Whether participating in the activity will provide an experience that is similar to the experiences of the out-of-home care provider's children and other children in the home.
- Developmental activities of peers.
- Details included on the Information for Out-of-Home Care Providers Part A and B forms

Allowing the child to be involved in the decisions about their participation in normalcy activities allows the child to develop life skills and empowers children to be involved in their own planning. Children may have a different opinion about whether an activity is appropriate or in their best interest. Out-of-home care providers maintain the ability to say "no" to an activity a child would like to participate in, as long as it is a reasonable and prudent parenting decision.

Tribal considerations cannot be made if the out-of-home care provider does not have access to information about the values and beliefs of the Indian child's tribe. This information and how it impacts an out-of-home care provider's decision making is often best understood by consulting directly with an Indian child's tribe. Agencies with placement and care responsibility should consider this when discussing tribal considerations with an out-of-home care provider and incorporate normalcy into discussions when collaborating with tribes.

Training Requirements

Out-of-home care providers must be trained in the knowledge and skills related to the application of the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard, which includes:

- Knowledge and skills relating to the stages in the development of cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral capacities of children.
- Knowledge and skills relating to a child's age and developmentally appropriate participation in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, or social activities such as:
    - Sports, field trips, overnight and other recreational activities.
    - Signing of permission slips and the arrangement of transportation to and from these activities.
    - A child's choices with respect to transportation, employment, peer relationships, and personal expression.

Out-of-home care providers shall receive this training prior to using the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard to make decisions to promote normalcy for the child. Licensed out-of-home care providers shall be trained in the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard prior to taking placements. Unlicensed providers shall be trained as soon as possible after taking placement of a child.

Agency responsibility for training:

- Licensing agencies are responsible for ensuring that licensed foster homes are trained.
- Agencies with placement and care responsibility are responsible for ensuring that unlicensed providers are trained.
- Shelter care facilities, group homes, and residential care centers are responsible for ensuring that the licensees, authorized representatives, and/or designees are trained.

Confidentiality

Agencies and out-of-home care providers must continue to abide by existing confidentiality standards when implementing this standard (Ref. Wis. Stat. ss. 48.78, 938.78, 48.981(7)).

Child welfare professionals shall ensure that an out-of-home care provider understands confidentiality requirements as they pertain to applying the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.

Agencies may want to consult with their legal counsel when questions arise regarding confidentiality.

Agency Responsibilities

The agency with placement and care responsibility shall gather and prepare child specific information to provide to the out-of-home care provider at the time of placement. When preparing child specific information to provide to the out-of-home care provider, the agency with placement and care responsibility, if reasonable and appropriate, shall:

- Consult with the child's parents/guardians regarding considerations related to the child's participation in age and developmentally appropriate activities. This should include the child and family's religious, cultural, and tribal beliefs.
- Explain to the parent/guardians that their values will be considered in making reasonable and prudent parenting decisions but will not necessarily be the deciding factor in making decisions on the child's participation in age and developmentally appropriate activities.
- Consult with the child at the time of placement to understand and take into account their wishes when applying the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard.

The agency with placement and care responsibility shall document the child specific information that was gathered on form DCF-F-CFS0872, Information for Out-of-Home Care Providers, Part A.

At the time of placement with an out-of-home care provider and the agency with placement and care responsibility must discuss the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard and child specific considerations, documented on form DCF-F-CFS0872, Information for Out-of-Home Care Providers, Part A, with the out-of-home care provider. The agency must discuss:

- That the out-of-home care provider shall apply the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard in making decisions concerning a child's participation in age or developmentally appropriate extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities.
- That the out-of-home care provider shall consider whether the child has the necessary training and safety equipment to safely participate in the activity under consideration.
- That the out-of-home care provider may not make any decision that is in violation of any court order or any state or federal law, rule, or regulation.
- That in the case of any disagreement over the application of the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard, the agency is ultimately responsible for decisions concerning the care of the child.
- Documentation on child specific information about the child that shall be considered when making reasonable and prudent parenting decisions to allow the child to engage in age and developmentally appropriate activities.

When discussing the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard with the out-of-home care provider, the agency with placement and care responsibility may use the Reasonable and

Prudent Parent Standard: Promoting Normalcy for Children in Out-of-Home Care handout as a discussion tool.

The agency with placement and care responsibility must continue to provide updated information regarding considerations for reasonable and prudent parenting decisions for the child throughout the child's placement through child and family team meetings.

In preparation or revision of the child's Permanency Plan, the agency must:

- Consult with the child's parents/guardians and the child, if appropriate, regarding considerations related to the child's participation in age and developmentally appropriate activities. This should include the child and family's religious, cultural, and tribal beliefs.
- Consult with the child about their opportunities to participate in age or developmentally appropriate activities.
- Discuss the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard requirements with the out-of-home care provider.
- Evaluate if the child has regular, ongoing opportunities to engage in age and developmentally appropriate extracurricular, cultural, and social activities.

In circumstances of disagreement on the application of Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard, the agency with placement and care responsibility of the child is ultimately responsible for decisions regarding the child's care. Disagreements regarding the application of the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard to allow a child to participate in age or developmentally appropriate activities shall not act as a barrier to normalcy. The agency with placement and care responsibility shall work with any other agencies involved, such as the licensing agency, to gather information about the situation. The agency shall take all relevant information about the situation, including the out-of-home care provider's decision-making process, the out-of-home care provider's wishes, the parent/guardian's wishes, the child's wishes, cultural and tribal beliefs, and case details, into consideration to make a decision that is in the best interest of the child.

As a child grows and develops, activities that are age and developmentally appropriate for the child change. Thus, reasonable and prudent parenting decisions for an individual child will need to be adjusted. Agencies should regularly communicate with out-of-home care providers about changes in the considerations that should be taken when applying the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard for an individual child.

Documentation

Child welfare professionals are required to document:

- Whether the agency provided information to the out-of-home care provider for consideration in making reasonable and prudent parent decisions specific to the child.
- Efforts made by the agency to ensure that the child has regular, ongoing opportunities to engage in age or developmentally appropriate activities determined in accordance with the reasonable and prudent parent standard in the out-of-home care placement, which includes consulting with the child in an appropriate age manner.

Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children

The most appropriate home for a child may not be in Wisconsin, but with a family in another state. Each child deserves the same rights and protections when they move to another state as they have in their home state. The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) ensures that these children have the same protections and services when they are placed across state lines. The ICPC is a contract and uniform law among all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands that protects and enforces the jurisdictional, administrative, and human rights obligations of all the parties involved in a placement. The law offers states uniform guidelines and procedures to ensure these placements promote the best interests of each child.

Wisconsin enacted Wisconsin's Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (Wis. Stat. s. 48.988) to ensure children in need of out-of-home placement in and from other states receive the same protections guaranteed to children placed in out-of-home care within Wisconsin. All interstate placements that fall within the ICPC shall be made through the Wisconsin state compact office.

Wisconsin's state ICPC office relies on other state ICPC offices. Each state has different policy, structure, and consequences for compliance with the ICPC.

Applicability

The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) applies in certain situations when a child is being placed or moving across state lines. The ICPC process shall be used when an agency explores a placement or residency option in another state. This placement option is considered the placement resource, which is the person(s) or facility with whom the child has been or may be placed by a parent or legal custodian, placed by the court of jurisdiction in the sending state, or for whom placement is sought in the receiving state. The ICPC process is used when there is a court order, including a consent decree or a voluntary placement agreement, and may include situations in which a parent requests placement in another state, or when a parent requests to move to another state with a child. In these circumstances, the agency initiates the home study process through the state's ICPC office. No Wisconsin child under the jurisdiction of an agency can be moved from one state to another state without the approval of the Wisconsin ICPC office as required under the ICPC.

The ICPC does not specify an age restriction at the time of placement, but uses the broad definition of "child", which permits jurisdiction up to age 21 per the sending state's laws and concurrence by the receiving state. The ICPC process is used for Child in Need of Protection or Services (CHIPS), Temporary Physical Custody (TPC), and consent decrees related to CPS. Youth Justice (YJ) and Juvenile in Need of Protection or Services (JIPS) fall under ICPC only when the placement is an out-of-state residential care center or group home.

The compact applies to four types of situations in which children may be sent to other states:

- Placements with parents, relatives and like-kin when a parent or relative is not making the placement.
- Licensed or approved foster homes, including relative and like-kin caregivers.
- Group homes and residential care centers, including adjudicated delinquents in institutions in other states.

- Public and private adoptions, including placements preliminary to adoption.

ICPC does not apply in the following circumstances:

- Placement into a medical facility.
- Placement into a boarding school.
- Placement into a mental health facility.
- Placement by the court with a parent from whom the child was not removed, if the court:
  - Has no evidence that the parent is unfit,
  - Does not seek evidence that the parent is fit or unfit, and
  - Relinquishes jurisdiction as soon as the child is placed.
- Home studies solely for the purpose of periodic assessment of a placement where there is no ongoing supervision.
- Certain placements made between certain relatives or non-agency guardians with legal rights to place.
- Placements handled by divorce, paternity, or probate courts.
- Out-of-state visits (defined later in this standard).
- Placements pursuant to another type of interstate compact.

<u>ICPC and Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)/Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA)</u>
As established by federal law, federally recognized Indian tribes exercise powers of self-government over their members and territory. As a result, the Interstate Compact for Placement of Children (ICPC) does not apply to interstate placements of an Indian child, as defined in Wis. Stat. s. 48.02(8g), by a tribe if a tribal nation is receiving the placement except when:

- The Indian child's tribe requests ICPC services
- The Indian child's tribe has adopted the ICPC or incorporated its provisions into its own law
- The Indian child's tribe has an existing IV-E agreement with the state requiring compliance with the ICPC
- A Wisconsin county is making the out-of-home care payment for a child under the exclusive jurisdiction of a tribal court through a 161 agreement or other arrangement, and the placement is outside of Wisconsin

If an Indian child is being placed across state lines by a state or county agency or is being placed by a tribe across state lines, outside of tribal land, and under the supervision of a state or county, the ICPC applies. However, ICWA placement preferences and all other ICWA and WICWA requirements supersede any ICPC requirements that interfere or impede with ICWA and WICWA compliance.

In any ICPC placement involving an Indian child, if the placement resource is licensed by a federally recognized tribe, full faith and credit will be given to tribal documents, including the foster care license and home study per Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(3)(f). Wisconsin agencies are required to respect the tribe's licensing process and cannot impose additional requirements.

If Wisconsin is the receiving state and receives an ICPC request from a tribe for a home study or supervision, the assigned agency shall cooperate with the tribe. During the home study

process, the assigned child welfare professional should explore the placement resource's willingness and ability to ensure the child remains connected to their culture. If placement is made, the child welfare professional should gather information on the child's ongoing connection to their culture during monthly contacts and document this information in the quarterly supervision reports.

Tribal ICPC Placement Documentation (DCF-F-CFS0100T)
If the placement is from a Wisconsin title IV-E agency to an out-of-state tribal title IV-E agency or an Indian tribe with a title IV-E agreement, the sending agency shall submit the Tribal ICPC Placement Documentation (DCF-F-CFS0100T) form in addition to the 100A (DCF-F-CFS100A) form.

ICPC Roles
The ICPC relies on an understanding that the two states, referred to as the sending and receiving states, are involved in any ICPC placement and have certain requirements applicable to the sending or receiving state. There may be several agencies involved in both the sending and receiving state, such as private agencies contracting with the state. Both the sending and receiving states and the respective agencies have different roles:

- Sending State
  - The sending state is the state where the sending agency is located, or the state in which the court holds exclusive jurisdiction over a child, which causes, permits, or enables the child to be sent to another state. The sending state is the state making the request to place the child in the receiving state.
- Sending Agency
  - Within the sending state, there is a sending agency. Typically, the sending agency is the county or state agency that has placement and care responsibility of the child.
  - The sending agency maintains planning and financial responsibility for the child and is responsible for any payment for which the placement resource may be eligible, unless the responsibility is discharged as allowed by the ICPC.
- Receiving State
  - The receiving state is the state to which a child is sent, brought or caused to be sent or brought whether by public authorities or private persons or agencies, and whether for placement with state or local public authorities or for placement with private agencies or persons.
  - The receiving state ICPC office can approve or deny the ICPC request.
- Receiving State Local Agency
  - The receiving state assigns a local agency in the state in which the child would reside with the proposed placement resource. The local agency is responsible for completing a home study on the proposed placement resource to ensure the placement is safe and in the best interests of the child. The local agency provides a recommendation for approval or denial of the request to the receiving state but cannot provide final approval or denial of a request.

If the placement resource is approved, the local agency in the receiving state is required to supervise the placement and provide supervision reports to the sending state.

Placements in Violation of the ICPC

For placements subject to the ICPC, a child cannot be placed in the receiving state without approval of the receiving state. If a child is placed prior to approval from the receiving state, the placement is in violation of ICPC. If a child is placed in violation of the ICPC, the sending state bears full liability and responsibility for the safety of the child. The receiving state may request immediate removal of the child until the receiving state has made a decision per ICPC regulations. The receiving state is not required to proceed with the home study or supervision of the placement if the child is placed in violation of the compact.

During the course of an out-of-state placement, the sending agency and receiving state may disagree about specific decisions. Agency child welfare professionals should work with the Wisconsin ICPC office on significant issues of disagreement with the sending agency if the child is placed in Wisconsin and the issue may affect the safety and well-being of the child. Ultimately, the sending agency maintains planning and financial responsibility and is the final decision maker for a child's case; unless the receiving state finds that the resource is no longer in the best interests of the child and requests the sending state take the child back.

Purpose

The ICPC process is a mechanism that public and private child placing agencies shall use to obtain a home study of a proposed placement resource in another state prior to moving the child. The ICPC also provides for supervision of a child's placement or residence when located in another state.

The ICPC offers various safeguards for the child and all parties involved in the placement. Without the ICPC, the following will not be guaranteed:

- An opportunity for the sending agency to obtain home studies and evaluate the proposed placement.
- An opportunity for the receiving state to ensure the placement is not contrary to the best interests of the child.
- An opportunity for the receiving state to ensure that all applicable laws and policies have been followed before the placement is approved.
- Legal and financial protection for the child by fixing these responsibilities with the sending agency or individual.
- Assurance that the sending agency does not lose jurisdiction over the child once the child is moved to the receiving state.
- An opportunity for the sending state to obtain supervision, services, and regular reports on the child's adjustment and progress in the placement.

This standard is not intended to supersede any compact regulations and individuals should refer to the articles and regulations of the ICPC on the Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children's Website for more details.

ICPC Office Responsibilities

A state's Compact Administrator, Deputy Compact Administrators, and ICPC specialists act as the central clearing points for all referrals for interstate placements. A state's Compact Administrator, Deputy Compact Administrator, and ICPC specialists have the authority and responsibility to review and process all requests to place children out-of-state to ensure the proposed placement is not contrary to the child's best interests.
ICPC Specialists:

- Review submitted requests and documentation for completeness and send to the receiving state/assign to a local agency for action.
- Communicate with the receiving state to address any questions during the home study and investigation process.
- When Wisconsin is the sending state review final home study and receiving state's placement decision. When Wisconsin is the receiving state review home study reports and completed home study and Wisconsin local agencies' recommendation to approve or deny a placement and issue the final placement decision to the sending state. Review and process quarterly supervision reports from the receiving state.
- Ensure the sending agency maintains responsibility for the child and acts appropriately to return the child to the sending state following a placement disruption.
- Keep track of children placed in facilities outside of the state and notify the sending agency of any significant change in the child's status.

The ICPC specialists communicate with other state ICPC specialists, child welfare professionals, attorneys, and others across the nation to ensure applicable laws and regulations are followed by the sending state. The ICPC specialists do not have the authority to order another state to act contrary to that state's own laws and regulations. The ICPC specialists do not physically monitor placements, visit children, transport children, etc.

- Wisconsin child welfare professionals shall not directly contact other state ICPC offices but shall communicate with the Wisconsin ICPC office for requests, status changes, and other ICPC requirements.

Some states do not allow their local agency child welfare professionals to directly communicate with Wisconsin child welfare professionals for the purposes of case management and require that all communication be routed through the sending and receiving ICPC offices. This is per the state's local policy, and the Wisconsin ICPC office cannot override that state's policy.

Wisconsin ICPC allows local agency child welfare professionals to communicate with receiving state child welfare professionals for the purposes of case management as long as all required documentation or communication pertinent to the child is sent to the Wisconsin ICPC office.

For contact information for the ICPC specialist assigned to a child, visit
Wisconsin Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC)

Wisconsin Local Agency Responsibilities

Wisconsin local agencies have different responsibilities based on whether Wisconsin is the sending or receiving state. The following steps and responsibilities are required of Wisconsin local agencies when submitting or receiving an ICPC request.

Wisconsin as the Sending State

The sending agency must complete the following requirements:

1. Prior to submitting an ICPC request to the Wisconsin ICPC office, the sending agency shall discuss the possible placement with the proposed resource. The sending agency is responsible for investigating whether the placement resource is appropriate for placement as much as possible prior to submitting an ICPC request. This includes speaking directly with the proposed resource to gather information about their:
    - Home and others living in the home.
    - Ability to care for and support the child.
    - Willingness to have the child placed in their home.
    - Willingness to cooperate with the sending and receiving agencies.
2. After the sending agency completes the assessment regarding the proposed resource and determines they may be an appropriate placement option, a request shall be submitted to the ICPC office.
3. If placement approval is granted by the receiving state ICPC office, the sending agency must:
    - Meet case management and planning requirements for the child.
        - The sending agency retains all case planning, legal, and financial responsibility for the child. The sending agency has the authority and responsibility to determine all matters in relation to the custody, supervision, care, treatment, and disposition of the child.
        - This also includes any required eWiSACWIS documentation.
    - Document the child's out-of-state placement in eWiSACWIS.
    - Complete required Confirming Safe Environments documentation following the receiving state's safety check of the child in the placement.
        - Each state is required to confirm the safety of the child once the child is placed but may refer to this check as something other than Confirming Safe Environments or have different requirements for this check.
        - The Compact states the receiving state shall have face-to face contact with the child and placement resource no later than 30 calendar days after receiving notice of the placement via the 100b from the sending state. The receiving state is not required to follow Wisconsin's timeframes for face-to-face contact during the initial days of placement, and Wisconsin cannot require the receiving state make additional contacts. When documenting Confirming Safe Environments, the Wisconsin child welfare professional may use dates from the completed home study if necessary.
    - Complete the rate setting for the child if the proposed resource is receiving payment for the child's placement.
    - Notify the Wisconsin ICPC office of any status changes, including a termination of placement, new placement type, or transfer of legal custody.
    - Take action to ensure the ongoing safety of a child placed in the receiving state, including returning the child to the sending state within five (5) business days as required by the Compact, when return is requested by the receiving state.

- Take timely action to relieve the receiving state of any financial burden incurred as a result of placing the child in out-of-home care after removing the child from an unsafe home in which the child was previously placed by the sending agency.

Making an ICPC Request for Out-of-State Placement

To pursue a placement option for a child outside of Wisconsin, a request shall be sent first to the Wisconsin ICPC office. Requests shall be made by submitting a referral through eWiSACWIS and are not accepted from Wisconsin public child welfare agencies in any other format/manner.

Requests are made for specific children and specific placement resources. Placement requests can be made for the following types of caregivers:

- Parent
- Unlicensed relative/like-kin
- Licensed relative/like-kin
- Licensed non-relative
- Group home
- Residential care center

The following home study types can be requested for the appropriate type of caregiver:

- Parent home study
- Relative/like-kin home study
- Licensed relative home study
- Licensed non-relative home study
- Adoptive home study

Prior to making a request, the child welfare professional shall contact the potential resource for information about their home, willingness to accept placement of the child, and willingness to cooperate with the ICPC process. The sending agency shall make its best effort to assess whether placement with the proposed resource is in the best interests of the child, which may include assessing the proposed resource's history and relationship with the child, and completing background checks, including CPS checks, for the proposed resource if they ever resided in Wisconsin.

If the parent(s) of the child resides in the proposed home, the request shall be for a parent home study. If the parent resides in the home of a relative/like-kin, the home may not be studied as a relative/like-kin home study unless the residing parent is incapacitated or otherwise unable to care for the child to be placed.

An adoptive home study/placement request may only be submitted if a termination of parental rights (TPR) has been filed or granted. If there is no TPR petition or order, the request must be for another type of ICPC home study and a conversion request may be submitted

once TPR has been filed or granted. Some states will not accept a request for an adoption study unless TPR has been ordered (versus petitioned or filed). If the TPR petition has been filed but has not yet been ordered and the Wisconsin local agency wishes to submit a request for an adoption study, the Wisconsin child welfare professional should discuss the request with the Wisconsin ICPC specialist who will be assigned to the case, prior to submitting the referral through eWiSACWIS. The ICPC specialist will assist in determining what type of request to submit to the receiving state.

Required Documentation for ICPC Requests and Placements:
Within each regulation, there are several pieces of work that shall be completed in eWiSACWIS, such as the 100A (DCF-F-CFS0100A), Worker Statement (DCF-F-5158-E), 100B (DCF-F-CFS0100B), and the Financial/Medical Plan (DCF-F-CFS2196-E). Every state is required to use the 100A and 100B forms.

100A ICPC Placement Request (DCF-F-CFS0100A),
This form is required for each placement request, and provides basic information about the request, such as the type of care requested, whether the placement is for the purposes of adoption, the legal status of the child, and what services are requested. This form is also used to provide an approval or denial from the receiving state.

ICPC Worker Statement Regarding Proposed Placement Resource (DCF-F-5158-E)
The worker statement form is required for most types of ICPC requests and is crucial to ensure that the sending state agency has communicated with the proposed resource about their home and the plan for the placement. The information on the form is required to be gathered prior to making the placement request. The sending agency child welfare professional shall only make an ICPC request if the proposed resource is willing and able to accept placement, and the agency views the placement as an appropriate option for the child.

ICPC Financial/Medical Plan (DCF-F-CFS2196-E)
The Financial/Medical Plan provides the receiving state with information about the financial plan to support the child, as well as how medical care for the child will be funded. The sending agency shall speak with the proposed placement resource to ensure that the proposed resource understands how the placement will be supported. Regardless of what plan is chosen, the sending agency remains financially responsible for the child and will retain jurisdiction of the child as mandated by Article 5 of ICPC (Wis. Stat. s. 48.988(5)).

The sending agency is responsible for determining what assistance the proposed resource is eligible for, including kinship and foster care payments. If the child needs to return to Wisconsin, the sending agency is responsible for all transportation costs and will expect the full cooperation of the receiving state to accomplish this return.

If Wisconsin is paying kinship care to an out-of-state resource, the resource is required to complete an application for a license to operate a foster home pursuant to Wis. Admin. Code. Ch. DCF 58. The Wisconsin agency shall submit a conversion request to the Wisconsin ICPC office as soon as possible to pursue licensure and foster care payments for the resource in the receiving state. Some states require all relatives become licensed, so a foster home study request may be required depending on the rules in the receiving state.

Cover Letter
The cover letter is an opportunity for the sending agency to summarize the request and emphasize any specific information or concerns relevant to the request. The cover letter should identify the child to be placed as well as contact information for the proposed resource. It should also provide a brief statement about the legal status of the child, the reason for the proposed placement, and the long-term plan for the child. The cover letter should also include any information regarding the existing relationship the proposed resource has with the child(ren), including information on recent visits or contact. Any special circumstances or considerations for placement should also be specified if that information is not included in other documents.

100B ICPC Report on the Child's Placement Dates or Change of Placement (DCF-F-CFS0100B)
The 100B is a multipurpose form to provide information about the child's placement. The 100B is required to be submitted to the state ICPC office when:

- A child is initially placed in the receiving state and supervision shall be initiated.
- A child moves within the receiving state.
- The ICPC closes because a placement request is withdrawn, a placement ends, or jurisdiction of the child closes. ICPC cases may not be closed until the sending state requests and obtains written concurrence to close from the receiving state, per ICPC regulations.

The 100B shall be submitted by the sending agency to the sending state ICPC office no later than 3 working days of the occurrence of the circumstances above.

Additional information required for each request is based on the regulation for that type of request.

Request Considerations:
The sending state may request the receiving state complete home studies on multiple resources for the same child. This may place a significant amount of work on the receiving state, and therefore the sending state should consider the potential resource carefully prior to submitting a request.

Sending states should not request a home study on a resource if there is no possibility or intention to place the child with that resource. If the sending state court has ordered an ICPC request to be submitted for a resource the sending agency would not otherwise have considered, the sending agency should include information about concerns and the reason for the request in the cover letter submitted with the request.

Agencies should note some states do not accept requests for multiple home study types at the same time. For example, the receiving state may not complete a foster home study and adoption home study at the same time but may require that the foster home study is approved, and placement occurs before allowing the sending state to request that the resource be studied for the purposes of adoption.

Kinship Care Payments and Licensing Requirements:
Some states will not or cannot make kinship care payments to caregivers for out-of-state children placed in Wisconsin. The local Wisconsin agency may choose to provide kinship care

payments in these situations. If the local Wisconsin agency chooses to do this, the kinship care provider must complete the application for a license to operate a foster home. For situations in which Wisconsin is providing kinship care for another state's placement, the payment is made as a service, not as a placement in eWiSACWIS.

Regulations

Each ICPC request shall be submitted following the appropriate regulation requirements for that type of request. There are five regulations under the ICPC that apply to specific types of ICPC requests. The following regulations are required to be followed for interstate placements:

- Regulation 1: Relocation of the Family Unit
- Regulation 2: Public Court Jurisdiction Cases (parent, relative/like-kin, foster care, and adoption)
- Regulation 4: Residential Placement
- Regulation 7: Expedited Placement Decision
- Regulation 12: Private Adoptions

Each regulation has certain timeframe and documentation requirements. All documentation shall be completed in eWiSACWIS.

Regulation 1: Relocation of the Family Unit

This regulation applies when the child is currently placed with an approved resource (parent, relative, like-kin, foster or pre-adoptive family) in the sending state, and that resource would like to move to the receiving state and supervision of the child's placement will continue in the receiving state.

If the child moves with the approved resource to the receiving state as a temporary relocation for less than 90 calendar days, an ICPC request and the approval of the receiving state is not required. During this temporary relocation, the sending agency is responsible for monthly supervision of the child. The receiving state is not required to provide supervision without ICPC approval. If the sending agency wants to request supervision from the receiving state, the receiving state must be in agreement and the sending and receiving ICPC offices shall be notified of the placement through the submission of a completed 100B. If the temporary relocation is recurring, the sending agency shall submit an ICPC request, and the receiving state shall give approval of the proposed resource.

When a family is relocating to another state with a child, the sending agency shall submit a request for a Regulation 1 to the sending state's ICPC office no more than 10 working days prior to the relocation date.

When requesting a Regulation 1 through eWiSACWIS, the following documentation shall be included:

- Cover letter,
- 100A, which must include the address of the new residence in the receiving state,
- 100 B, only if the child is already placed in the receiving state,

- Court order placing the child, or a statement specific to the agency's authority to place the child and documentation that supervision is ongoing,
- History (can be documented in a court report, Permanency Plan or other existing documentation), including:
  - Placement and social history
  - Court involvement
  - Social dynamics
  - Special needs of the child
  - Other information relevant to the placement of the child
- Worker statement form, which must list the address and information regarding the new residence in the receiving state,
- Any licensure, certification, or approvals from the sending state, including verification of completed training, if applicable,
- Existing home study and any updates to that home study,
- Progress reports for the last six (6) months and most recent judicial review court report and court order,
- Copy of the child's case plan or Permanency Plan,
- IV-E Eligibility verification,
- Financial/Medical Plan,
- Social Security Number (SSN), if available, or documentation on the plan to obtain the SSN if not yet available.
- Birth certificate, if available, or documentation on the plan to obtain the birth certificate if not yet available.
- Petition or order for Termination of Parental Rights (TPR), if the request is for the purposes of adoption.

The sending state's ICPC office has 5 working days from the receipt of the request to process the request. The request shall include notice of the intended placement date. If the child is already in the receiving state, the receiving state's ICPC office has 5 working days to respond with provisional approval of the placement. For Regulation 1 requests, a provisional approval allows the placement of the child in the receiving state. This provisional approval of the placement must be followed by a final approval or final denial. A final denial will result in the return of the child to the sending state, if the child was placed during the provisional approval.

Within 60 calendar days of the receipt of the request, the receiving state local agency shall complete and return an initial home study report to the receiving state ICPC office. The report will include results of the study of the home environment for the purposes of assessing safety and suitability of the child to remain in the home. This home study report is not considered a full home study and is not required to include a decision on the recommendation to approve or deny the home study or provide a recommendation for placement. The receiving state is not required to issue a decision to approve or deny if the home study is not complete at the time of the report. If the receiving state local agency is unable to make a final decision to recommend approval or denial within the 60 calendar days, the agency shall provide a reason for the delay and an estimated time frame to complete the home study with a final recommendation to approve or deny the proposed resource.

The receiving state shall provide final approval or denial of the placement resource in the form of a signed 100A after assessing whether the family can continue to meet the needs of

the child no later than 180 calendar days of the receipt of the request. The receiving state may have additional requirements to give approval of the home study such as the placement resource be licensed or meet education/training requirements of the receiving state. The placement resource shall meet applicable laws and regulations of the receiving state as soon as reasonable, and as promptly as possible. The receiving state may deny the placement resource if they determine placement is not in the best interests of the child or they determine that the child's needs cannot be met under the circumstances of the proposed relocation, or there is not sufficient documentation about the resource. If the receiving state denies the placement, the sending state shall be responsible for the return of the child if the child was placed during the time of provisional approval.

The receiving state shall consider the sending state's license, certification, or approval effective unless there is evidence that it is expired or not valid. If the receiving state requires licensure as a condition of placement approval, or determines it is not valid or expired, both the sending state and the placement resource shall state in writing that the placement resource will become licensed in the receiving state. The receiving state shall recognize the required foster parent training, if it is substantially equivalent and there is evidence in the form of an official certificate or document identifying the training.

Within 30 calendar days of the receiving state being notified by the sending state or by the placement resource that the child has arrived, the receiving state shall visit the child and the placement resource in the home to ascertain conditions and progress toward compliance with the applicable federal and state laws of the receiving state.

<u>Regulation 2: Public Court Jurisdiction Cases (parents, relative/like-kin, foster care, and adoption)</u>
The most common regulation type requested by child welfare agencies are Regulation 2 requests. A Regulation 2 is when a child is under court jurisdiction for abuse, neglect, or dependency as a result of action by a child welfare agency. Regulation 2 requests are for children not yet placed with the proposed resource, or for requests to change the status of a placement already approved by ICPC (i.e. a placement with an unlicensed relative/like-kin to a licensed foster home, or a licensed foster home transitioning to adoption).

When requesting a Regulation 2 through eWiSACWIS, the following documentation shall be included:

- Cover letter
- 100A
- 100 B, only if the child is already placed without prior approval in the receiving state
- Court order placing the child, or a statement specific to the agency's authority to place the child and documentation that supervision is ongoing
- History (can be documented in a court report, Permanency Plan, or other existing documentation), including:
    - Placement and social history
    - Court involvement
    - Social dynamics
    - Special needs of the child
    - Other information relevant to the placement of the child
- Worker Statement form

- Information about the child's placement history in the sending state
- If the placement resource previously had children placed with them in the sending state, relevant information regarding the placement
- Copy of the child's case plan or Permanency Plan
- IV-E Eligibility verification
- Financial/Medical Plan
- Social Security Number (SSN), if available, or documentation of the plan to obtain the SSN if not yet available
- Birth certificate, if available, or documentation of the plan to obtain the birth certificate if not yet available
- Petition or order for Termination of Parental Rights (TPR), if the request is for the purposes of adoption
- Proof of paternity if the proposed resource is the father or a paternal relative and the request is for a parent home study or unlicensed relative home study.

Within 60 calendar days of the receipt of the request, the receiving state local agency shall complete and return an initial home study report to the receiving state ICPC office on the results of the study of the home environment for the purposes of assessing safety and suitability of the child to be placed in the home. This home study report is not considered a full home study and is not required to include a decision on the recommendation to approve or deny the home study and may or may not provide a recommendation for placement. The receiving state shall review the report and forward to the sending state ICPC office. The receiving state is not required to issue a decision to approve or deny if the home study is not complete at the time of the report. If the receiving state is unable to make a final decision to recommend approval or denial within the 60 calendar days, the agency shall provide a reason for the delay (i.e. licensure cannot be completed within the timeframe, waiting on documentation from the resource, required training must first be completed, etc.) and an estimated time frame to complete the home study and make a final recommendation to approve or deny the proposed resource for placement of the child.

If the home study report provides a favorable recommendation for the placement, but there is not a final approval for placement in the form of a signed 100A, the placement shall not be made until a signed and approved 100A is received.

The receiving state ICPC office shall provide final approval or denial of the placement resource in the form of a signed 100A after assessing whether the family can continue to meet the needs of the child no later than 180 calendar days of the receipt of the request. The receiving state ICPC office may give approval of the home study with the condition that the placement resource be licensed or meet education/training requirements of the receiving state. The placement resource shall meet applicable laws and regulations of the receiving state as soon as reasonable, and as promptly as possible.

The receiving state can deny the placement, if the home study reveals the proposed resource would be unable to meet the individual needs of the child, including the child's safety, permanency, health, well-being, and mental, emotional, and physical development. If the receiving state issues a denial, the placement shall not be made.

<u>Regulation 4: Residential Placement</u>

A Regulation 4 is for the purposes of placing a child in a residential care center or group home. Under the ICPC, a residential placement provides 24 hour supervised care beyond what is needed for assessment or treatment of an acute condition. Residential placements do not include programs that are primarily educational or medical. Whether a placement in a facility is subject to the ICPC is defined by the receiving state, and is determined by the services the facility provides, not the type of license it may hold or its source of funding. For additional guidance on whether a facility is considered primarily educational, a hospital, or other medical facility, agencies should reference the ICPC regulations.

An ICPC request under Regulation 4 applies when the child is under jurisdiction of a court for delinquency, abuse, neglect, or dependency, or as a result of action taken by a child welfare agency, or private placements made by parents or caregivers with the legal right to place. Regulation 4 requests are for children not yet placed in a group home or residential care center in the receiving state, as well as for children who are moving to a new facility in the same or different state. For residential placements, the sending agency remains obligated to retain jurisdiction and responsibility for the child while the child remains in the receiving state.

A child who is adjudicated delinquent that is being placed in an out-of-state facility shall be given a court hearing on notice to the parents/guardians with the opportunity to be heard prior to being sent to the facility. The court shall find that equivalent facilities for the child are not available in the sending state's jurisdiction and institutional care in the other jurisdiction is in the best interests of the child and will not produce undue hardship.

Prior to creating and submitting the request to the ICPC office, the sending agency shall communicate with the facility in the receiving state to obtain agreement to accept placement and required documentation from the facility.

When requesting a Regulation 4 in eWiSACWIS, the following documentation shall be included:

- 100A
- 100 B, only if the child is already placed in the receiving state
- letter of acceptance from the residential care center
- Financial/Medical Plan that includes the information regarding which agency/entity is paying for the child's placement in the facility, and who is responsible for medical costs that are incurred during the child's placement at the facility.
- Placement disruption agreement indicating who will be responsible for the return of the child if there is a request for the child's return to the sending state. This shall include who is responsible for costs and transportation.
- Current court order or other document showing who has authority to place the child:
- If the child to be placed is under a delinquency court order, the court order shall state that:
    - The child has been adjudicated delinquent
    - Equivalent facilities in the sending state are not available
    - Institutional care is in the best interests of the child and will not produce undue hardship.
- Current case history for the child, if the child is under a delinquency court order or is under the placement and care of a public child welfare agency.

- Service plan for the child, if the child is under a delinquency court order or is under the placement and care of a public child welfare agency.
- IV-E determination verification.

The receiving state's ICPC office will determine whether:

- It is contrary to the child's best interests to be placed in the facility.
- Ensure the facility is properly licensed and not under investigation by law enforcement, child protection, or licensing staff for unfit conditions or illegal activities that might place the child at risk of harm.
- Check to make sure the child is an appropriate match and that the request to place the child was fully reviewed and officially accepted before granting approval.

The receiving state shall provide final approval or denial of the placement resource within 3 working days of receiving a completed request, with understanding that receiving state's laws for approval may delay this timeframe.

<u>Regulation 7: Expedited Placement Decision</u>

A Regulation 7 request is intended to expedite ICPC placement approval or denial in certain circumstances. This regulation only applies if all of the following criteria are met:

- The child is involved in child welfare.
- The placement is with a:
    - Parent
    - Stepparent
    - Grandparent
    - Adult uncle
    - Adult aunt
    - Adult brother
    - Adult sister
    - Child's guardian.
- The child meets one of the following criteria:
    - Has an unexpected dependency due to a sudden or recent incarceration, incapacitation, or death of a parent or guardian. Incapacitation means a parent or guardian is unable to care for a child due to a medical, mental, or physical condition of a parent or guardian.
    - The child is four years of age or younger.
    - The child has a sibling(s) four years of age or younger to be placed with the same resource.
    - The court finds that any child in the sibling group has a substantial relationship with the proposed placement resource. Substantial relationship means the proposed placement has a familial or mentoring role with the child, has spent more than cursory time with the child, and has established more than a minimal bond with the child.
    - The child is currently in an emergency placement.

This regulation does not apply if:

- The child has already been placed in the receiving state in violation of the ICPC (except in some cases if a visit has been approved in writing by the receiving state

Compact Administrator and a subsequent order by the sending state authorizes the visit with a fixed return date).
- The intention of the sending state is for licensed or approved foster care or adoption, unless the placement is already licensed or approved at the time of the request.
- The resource is a parent, the court has no evidence the parent is unfit, does not seek any evidence from the receiving that the parent is either fit or unfit and the sending state will immediately close jurisdiction upon placement of the child.

Before a sending agency may submit a Regulation 7 request to the sending state ICPC office, the sending agency shall obtain a Regulation 7 Court Order of Compliance. The court order shall be on the Order for Expedited Placement Decision (JC-1648) and shall include whether there is a request for provisional approval. In order to obtain a Regulation 7 order of compliance, the sending agency shall provide a written statement to the court, which includes documentation of the following:

- The sending agency has spoken with the proposed placement resource and the resource:
    - Is interested in being a placement resource for the child and is willing to cooperate with the ICPC process.
    - Fits the definition for a Regulation 7 resource described above.
    - Has provided their name and address, all available telephone numbers and other contact information, and the birthdate and Social Security Numbers (SSNs) of all adults in the home.
    - Has financial resources or will access resources to feed, clothe, and care for the child.
    - Has a plan for childcare for the child, including how it will be paid.
    - Acknowledges that a criminal and child abuse and neglect history check will be completed and to the best of their knowledge, no one residing in the home has a criminal or child abuse or neglect history that would prohibit the placement.
- The sending agency is unaware of any fact that would prohibit the child being placed with the resource.
- The sending agency has completed ICPC information and is prepared to send the information to the ICPC office once the Regulation 7 Court Order is issued.

The court shall provide a copy of this order to the sending agency within 2 working days of entering the order. The sending agency is required to send a copy of the order and the ICPC request to the sending state ICPC office within 3 working days of receipt from the court.

After obtaining the Order for Expedited Placement Decision, the sending agency may submit an ICPC Request to the ICPC office. When requesting a Regulation 7 request, the following documentation shall be included:

- Cover letter
- ICPC Sending State Priority Home Study Request (DCF-F-CFS0101-E)
- ICPC Priority Placement Order (JC-1648)
- 100A
- Court order showing who has jurisdiction of the child in relation to custody, placement, supervision, care and disposition of the child.
- Case history (can be documented in a court report, Permanency Plan, or other existing documentation), including:

    - Placement and social history
    - Court involvement
    - Social dynamics
    - Special needs of the child
    - Other information relevant to the placement of the child
- Worker Statement form
- Information about placement history in the sending state
- Copy of the child's case plan or Permanency Plan
- IV-E determination verification
- Financial/Medical Plan
- Social Security Number (SSN), if available or documentation on the plan to obtain the SSN if not yet available
- Birth certificate, if available or documentation on the plan to obtain the birth certificate if not yet available
- Proof of paternity if the proposed resource is the father or paternal relative

The sending state's ICPC office is required to send the Regulation 7 request to the receiving state's ICPC office within 2 working days of receipt from the sending agency. The receiving state's ICPC office is required to send to the local agency within 2 working days of receipt of the request.

If requested from the sending state, the receiving state may, but is not required to, provide provisional approval or denial for the child to be placed with the parent or relative identified in the regulation 7 request.

If the receiving state agrees to provide a provisional placement decision, they shall make this expedited determination by:

- Performing a physical walk-through to assess the residence for risks and appropriateness for placement of the child.
- Searching the receiving state's child protective services database for prior reports/investigations as required by the receiving state for emergency placement of a child in its custody.
- Performing a local criminal background check on the prospective placement.
- Other determinations agreed upon by the sending and receiving states' ICPC offices
- Providing a provisional written report to the receiving state's ICPC office as to the appropriateness of the proposed placement.

The determination for provisional approval or denial is to be made within 7 calendar days of the receiving state ICPC office receiving the completed request. This provisional approval or denial shall be communicated in writing to the sending state's ICPC office and may not include the signed 100A until the final approval or denial decision is made. If provisional approval is provided for a Regulation 7 request, the child may be placed. If the receiving state completes the full assessment and issues a final denial, the child shall be brought back to the sending state.

If the request for information is insufficient, the sending or receiving ICPC office can request more information. The receiving state does not have to proceed with the full assessment until completed information is received but can choose to proceed with provisional approval.

The receiving state may provide a provisional denial. A provisional denial means that the receiving state is unable to approve a provisional placement pending the more comprehensive home study or assessment process due to any issues that may need to be resolved.

Provisional approval shall be followed by a final approval or denial. The local agency is required to review the request and investigate the proposed resource and send the results of the home study and recommendation to approve or deny placement to the receiving state's ICPC office within 15 working days of receipt of the request. The receiving state's ICPC office shall have an expedited decision for approval or denial within three (3) working days of receiving the report from the local agency, but no later than 20 working days from the date the receiving state's ICPC office received the request from the sending state's ICPC office.

If the receiving state ICPC office determines it will not be possible to meet the timeframes for an expedited request, the receiving state ICPC office shall notify the sending state ICPC office as soon as practical. The receiving state shall inform the sending state the estimated time for completion of the request as a regular ICPC request.

Regulation 12: Private Adoptions

Regulation 12 is for children being placed by a private agency or by an Independent Adoption Entity. For information about these requests, please see the Regulation Number 12: on the APHSA/AAICPC website:
https://aphsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Regulation-12-2012.pdf

Out-of-State Visits for Children in Out-of-Home Care

An out-of-state visit is not a placement for ICPC purposes, and agencies are not required to request permission or notify the Wisconsin ICPC office if the child's out-of-state stay meets the definition of a visit for ICPC purposes (unless there is a pending ICPC request for that home). Visits are distinguished from placements that require ICPC approval based on the purpose, duration, and intention.

The child's stay out-of-state may be considered a visit if all of the below apply:

- The purpose of the visit is to provide the child with a social or cultural experience of a short duration, such as visits with a parent/guardian, relative/like-kin, friend, or potential community-based placement option who has not assumed legal responsibility to care for the child.
- Visits must have a planned start and end date.
- The duration of the visit is no longer than 30 calendar days, or if longer than 30 calendar days, the visit begins and ends within the period of a child's vacation from school, such as summer or winter break.
- There is no intention for the visit to transition into a stay.

If a visit does not have an expressed end date or an unclear duration, it is considered a proposed placement and not a visit. A visit becomes a placement requiring ICPC approval if the visit exceeds 30 calendar days or the child's school vacation. A visit cannot be extended

or renewed if it exceeds 30 calendar days or the child's school vacation. An ICPC request for a home study that is submitted or pending while the child is on a visit will establish a rebuttable presumption that the intent of the stay or proposed stay is not a visit. The sending state agency needs to notify the sending state ICPC if the child is on a visit at the time the ICPC is submitted. The sending state ICPC must then seek permission from the receiving state for the child to remain on the visit while the home study is pending.

A placement made across state lines without ICPC approval is not considered an out-of-state visit and are subject to the ICPC because the intent was to place the child in the home. If an agency is unsure of whether a certain stay would be considered an out-of-state visit, the child welfare professional should contact the Wisconsin ICPC office.

Conducting the Home Study

The local agency assigned to complete the home study is responsible for using all information gathered during the home study process to determine if they will recommend approval or denial for placement of the child with the proposed resource. With each Regulation Type, the final decision to recommend approval or denial of the resource shall be made within ICPC timeframes.

When Wisconsin is the receiving state, the Wisconsin ICPC office will assign an agency to conduct the home study and recommend approval or denial of the proposed placement. Once the assigned Wisconsin agency has completed the home study of the proposed resource, the agency shall provide the home study and recommendation to the Wisconsin ICPC office. The completed home study should NOT be sent directly to the agency in the sending state.

Wisconsin requires the following based on the type of home study requested by the receiving state:

Parent home study: this home study is required to be documented on the ICPC Parent/Relative/Like-kin Unlicensed Home Study (DCF-F-CFS2335). As a part of this home study, the agency child welfare professional shall at a minimum document the following:

- Describe the home/neighborhood and the sleeping arrangements in the home.
- List the household members.
- Assess the social history, discipline techniques, health, financial status and ability to meet basic needs, strengths, and weakness of the proposed resource and how that may impact the parent's ability to care for the child once placed in the home.

Background checks shall also be conducted on the proposed resource, and any findings shall be factored into the decision to approve or deny the home study. The agency shall, complete the following and any other background checks required by law:

- Complete a Consolidated Court Automation Programs (CCAP) check on all individuals seventeen years of age and older residing in the identified placement home.
- Conduct a reverse address Sex Offender Registry check through the Department of Corrections: http://offender.doc.state.wi.us/public/.

- Conduct a check of child abuse and neglect records for all counties of residence past 5 years on all individuals seventeen years of age and older residing in the identified placement home.

Unlicensed Relative/Like-Kin home study: this home study is required to be documented on the ICPC Parent/Relative/Like-kin Unlicensed Home Study template (DCF-F-CFS2335). As a part of this home study, the agency child welfare professional shall at a minimum document the following:

- Describe the home/neighborhood and the sleeping arrangements in the home.
- List the household members.
- Assess the social history, discipline techniques, health, financial status and ability to meet basic needs, strengths, and weakness of the proposed resource and how that may impact their ability to care for the child once placed in the home.

Background checks shall also be conducted on the proposed resource, and any findings shall be factored into the decision to approve or deny placement. The agency shall complete the following and any other background checks required by law:

- Complete a Consolidated Court Automation Programs (CCAP) check on all individuals seventeen years of age and older residing in the identified placement home.
- Conduct a reverse address Sex Offender Registry check through the Department of Corrections: http://offender.doc.state.wi.us/public/
- Conduct a check of child abuse and neglect records for all counties of residence past 5 years on all individuals seventeen years of age and older residing in the identified placement home.

Foster home study/placement (including relatives/like-kin being licensed): All licensing requirements pursuant to Wis. Admin. Code. Ch. DCF apply for foster home licensure, including the requirement to use the department's assessment system.

Foster home study requests are often Regulation 2 requests. Regulation 2 requests require that within 60 calendar days the receiving state completes and sends a home study report with an approval or denial of the proposed resource but allows the receiving state to provide reason as to why they cannot complete the investigation within 60 calendar days. The purpose of this report is to notify the sending agency of the progress being made with the home study and allow the sending agency to prepare accordingly for the anticipated outcome for placement from the home study recommendation. The assigned Wisconsin local agency shall complete this home study report within the 60-calendar day requirement but is not required to give a recommendation for placement to the Wisconsin ICPC office if the home study is not complete and the resource is not able to be licensed within that time frame. The assigned Wisconsin agency must report why the home study was not able to be completed and an estimated date of completion.

The assigned Wisconsin local agency has 180 calendar days to complete the home study and issue a final decision to approve or deny the proposed resource, which allows for foster home licensing requirements to be met.

If a proposed resource is already licensed as a foster home at the time of the request for placement, the assigned Wisconsin agency shall complete a home study update by studying the family for the individual child to be placed. If the resource is licensed by a private agency, the sending agency may enter a contract with the Wisconsin private agency to complete the home study and all supervision requirements for an ICPC placement.

The assigned Wisconsin agency is responsible for maintaining the placement resource's foster home license and ensuring that the resource meets and follows all applicable laws, codes, and policy for licensure in Wisconsin.

Adoptive home study/placement: Only entities authorized to approve a home for adoption have the regulatory approval to complete an adoptive home study for a family. If a sending state requests that Wisconsin study and approve a home for adoption of a child, the appropriate public adoption agency will be assigned to conduct the study. All Wisconsin requirements to adopt shall be met prior to the finalization of the adoption in Wisconsin.

If the resource was approved for ICPC placement by a county child welfare agency prior to the request for an adoption home study, the adoption agency will work with the county agency that approved the resource to transition the case from the county.

Home Study Approvals and Denials:
The receiving state's ICPC office is required to make a final decision to approve or deny the resource based on the local agency's home study, recommendation, and all applicable laws and regulations in the receiving state. The receiving state ICPC office is not required to concur with the receiving state local agency that gave the recommendation. The receiving state ICPC office shall approve or deny the request for placement by sending a signed 100A to the sending state's ICPC office. If the placement is denied, the sending agency shall submit a 100B to the sending state's ICPC office to close the ICPC case.

Home studies for interstate placements are conducted in accordance with the applicable requirements of the state in which the home is located. States may have different requirements based on the type of home study that is requested. For example, a state may not allow more than one home study type to be conducted at the same time or may require all relatives/like-kin to be licensed prior to approval of the request. Applicable laws of the receiving state shall be followed when completing the home study.

When Wisconsin is the receiving state and is asked to complete a home study on a proposed resource, the agency completing the home study may have further questions for the sending state or sending agency. In these circumstances, the child welfare professional from the local agency completing the home study should contact the Wisconsin ICPC specialist assigned to the case to communicate concerns and process the request for more information from the sending state/sending agency.

If a home study report is received but no decision on placement is made through a signed 100A, the sending agency can use this information to prepare for the upcoming decision. For example, if a home study report is favorable, but there is a delay in licensure of the resource and therefore

approval, the sending agency can begin preparing a transition plan for the child's move. However, placement cannot be made until the sending state ICPC office receives the signed 100A containing a placement decision from the receiving state ICPC.

Placement

Once the placement request is approved by the receiving state, the sending state has the final authority to determine whether to use the placement resource. If placement is made by the sending agency following an approval from the receiving state, the sending agency is required to submit a 100B reporting the placement to the sending state's ICPC office within 3 working days of the actual placement. The sending state's ICPC office will send the 100B to the receiving state's ICPC office as notification of the placement. The receiving state's ICPC office will notify the receiving state's local agency to initiate placement supervision.

If placement is made by the sending agency without approval from the receiving state, the placement is considered a violation of the ICPC. The receiving state can choose to have the child sent back to the sending state immediately. If the Wisconsin ICPC is notified of a child placed in violation of the ICPC in Wisconsin, an ICPC specialist may contact the county in which the child is residing to complete an emergency assessment of the home to ensure the safety of the child. The ICPC specialist will then work with the local agency to determine whether to send the child back to the sending state or initiate a proper ICPC request from the sending state. If a local Wisconsin agency learns that a child has been placed in Wisconsin, in violation of the ICPC, the agency should notify the Wisconsin ICPC office. The Wisconsin ICPC office will work with the sending state to submit an ICPC request or initiate the return of the child to the sending state.

<u>When a Wisconsin agency is the sending agency making placement, the sending agency shall:</u>

- Place the child in the receiving state only following an approval through a signed 100A from the receiving state ICPC office.
    - If a Wisconsin agency places a child in another state without the approval of the receiving state ICPC office, the placement is considered a placement violation and an ICPC request shall be initiated immediately. The receiving state may require that the child be brought back to Wisconsin, and the Wisconsin sending agency is fully responsible for the care, safety, and return of the child to Wisconsin.
    - A court order to place the child outside of Wisconsin without ICPC approval is still considered a placement in violation of the ICPC and the ICPC process shall be followed to bring the case into compliance with the ICPC as soon as possible.
- Arrange for the transportation of the child to the receiving state according to the plan agreed upon by both the sending agency and the receiving state local agency providing supervision for the child.

- Submit a 100B to the Wisconsin ICPC office within three (3) working days of the placement of the child.
- Follow all applicable Wisconsin laws and standards for a child placed in out-of-home care.
- Follow all applicable documentation requirements in eWiSACWIS, including creating a placement, completing the Confirming Safe Environments based on information

gathered from the receiving state local agency supervising the placement, and any rate setting for the child's placement.

- The Compact requires the receiving state to have face-to-face contact with the child and placement resource no later than 30 calendar days after receiving notification of the placement. The receiving state is not required to follow Wisconsin's timelines for face-to-face contacts during the initial days of placement, and WI cannot require the receiving state to make additional contacts. When documenting Confirming Safe Environments, the WI child welfare professional may use dates from the completed home study if necessary.
- The child's Foster Care Medicaid will be closed out by the WI ICPC specialist, upon notification of the child's placement to another state. If the child is being placed in a border state and the WI placing agency would like WI Medicaid to continue, they must communicate this to WI ICPC when the placement is made, so that it is not closed out.
- When a child is placed in Wisconsin from out-of-state, the Wisconsin agency supervising the placement shall not document the placement in eWiSACWIS through a placement strip.

Placement approvals that are provided through Regulations 1 (Relocation of Family Units), 2 (Public Court Jurisdiction Cases for Public Adoption, Foster Care, Family setting and/or with Parents, Relatives/Like-kin), and 7 (Expedited Placement Decision) expire 6 months from the date the 100A was signed by the receiving state. If the Wisconsin sending agency wishes to place a child after the original approval expires, the sending agency shall contact Wisconsin ICPC, prior to the 100A expiration, to determine if it is possible to request an extension of the approval, or if a new ICPC request will need to be submitted. If a new request is required, updated documents will need to be included with the new referral. The receiving state will then determine if a new home study is required or if they can provide and update/addendum to the prior home study. If Wisconsin receives a new request to place with a resource with an expired approval, Wisconsin requires an update to the home study be completed if the home study is less than one (1) year old. Requests for a resource with a family that has a home study over a year old will be assessed by the Wisconsin ICPC specialists and they will decide whether to have the local Wisconsin agency complete a new home study on the family.

Regulation 4 (Residential Placements) approvals expire 30 calendar days from the date the 100A was signed by the receiving state. This 30-day timeframe can be extended upon mutual agreement between the sending and receiving states' ICPC offices.

If an approval for the home study request expires or the sending agency does not intend to place a child in an approved home, the sending agency is required to send a 100B to the sending state's ICPC office as notification that they are withdrawing their request and that the ICPC case shall be closed.

The receiving state shall notify the sending state ICPC office in writing of any unmet needs of a child placed in the receiving state. If the child's needs continue to be unmet after the notice to the sending state ICPC office, the receiving state may require the sending agency to return the child to the sending state. Before requiring the return of the child to the sending state, the receiving state shall take into consideration the impact on the child that may result from being removed from their home in the receiving state and shall weigh the potential for

negative impact against the potential benefits to the child of being returned to the sending state. The receiving state has sole discretion in determining whether to require return of a child to the sending state.

Reconsideration of a Denial

If a home study is denied by the receiving state, the sending state can request a reconsideration of a denial. The request for reconsideration shall be submitted to the sending state's ICPC office within 90 calendar days from the date the completed 100A was signed by the receiving state with the decision of denial. If a request for reconsideration is not submitted within 90 calendar days, the sending state may submit a new ICPC request.

The sending state may request the reconsideration with a new home study if the reason for denial has been corrected (i.e. the placement resource has completed a rehabilitation review and can now proceed with licensure). The receiving state is not required to accept the new home study request but can proceed if they believe the reason for the denial has been corrected. The sending state may also request the reconsideration without a new home study if the sending state can provide evidence or new information that the resource should be approved.

The receiving state has 60 calendar days from the formal request date to reconsider the denial was received by the sending state's ICPC office to approve or deny the proposed resource for placement of the child. A request for reconsideration of a denial cannot conflict with any appeal process in the receiving state.

A request for reconsideration is not a formal appeal process, and the receiving state does not have an obligation to reverse the decision to deny the home study of the proposed resource. Agency child welfare professionals should communicate with the assigned Wisconsin ICPC specialists about any request for reconsiderations for additional information.

Wisconsin agencies may submit a formal request for a reconsideration of a receiving state's denial by reaching out to the assigned ICPC specialist in Wisconsin. The Wisconsin ICPC specialist will ask for documentation of the changes that have occurred and reasons that the request should be reconsidered. The Wisconsin ICPC specialist will document the reconsideration request in eWiSACWIS and submit the request to the other state.

Placement Supervision

The receiving state is required to provide supervision of the child during the child's placement if the proposed resource is approved. Face-to-face visits shall be performed by a child welfare professional in the receiving state. The receiving state child welfare professional may be a private agency professional under contract with the receiving state.

Supervision shall begin when the child is placed in the receiving state pursuant to an approved placement and the receiving state has received the 100B from the sending state. Supervision shall begin if the receiving state finds out about the placement in a way other than through the 100B and the placement was approved. Supervision shall begin no later than

30 calendar days from the date on which the child is placed, or 30 calendar days from the date on which the receiving state is notified of the child's placement, if notification occurs after placement.

ICPC regulations require that supervision shall include face-to-face visits with the child at least once each month and that a majority of visits shall occur in the child's home. When a child is placed from out-of-state into Wisconsin, the assigned Wisconsin agency shall follow all child welfare professional contact requirements set forth in the Ongoing Services Standards, as well as contact requirements in Wis. Admin. Code. Ch. DCF 56 for licensed foster parents.

Supervision Reports

The child welfare professional assigned to supervise the child shall complete a Supervision Report (DCF-F-CFS2336) at least once every 90 calendar days following the date of the receipt of the 100B by the receiving state's ICPC office. The ICPC offices will exchange the supervision reports. These reports at a minimum shall contain:

- Date and location of each face-to-face contact with the child since the last supervision report was received.
- Summary of the child's current circumstances, including a statement regarding the ongoing safety, permanence, and well-being of the child.
- If the child is attending school, a summary of the child's academic performance along with copies of any available report cards, education-related evaluations, behavior support plans, and/or IEP documents.
- A summary of the child's current health status, including mental health, the dates of any health-related appointments that have occurred since the last supervision report was completed, the identity of any health providers seen, and copies of any available health-related evaluations, reports or other pertinent records.
- An assessment of the current placement and caregiver (e.g. physical conditions of the home; caregiver's commitment to the child current status of the caregiver and family any changes in family composition, health, financial situation, work, legal involvement, social relationships, and childcare arrangements).
- A description of any unmet needs and any recommendations for meeting identified needs.
- If applicable, the supervising child welfare professional's recommendation regarding continuation of placement, return of legal custody to a parent or parents with whom the child is residing and termination of the sending state's jurisdiction, finalization of adoption by the child's current caregiver or the granting of legal guardianship to the child's current caregiver.

Supervision shall continue until one of the following occurs:

- The child reaches the age of majority or is legally emancipated.
- The child's adoption is finalized.
- Legal custody of the child is granted to a caregiver or parent, and jurisdiction is terminated by the sending state.
- The child no longer resides at the home approved for placement of the child.
- Jurisdiction over the child is terminated by the sending state.
- Legal guardianship of the child is granted to the child's caregiver in the receiving state.

- The sending state requests in writing that supervision be discontinued, and the receiving state concurs.

Both states have the authority to agree to extend supervision after the occurrence of any of the above. Supervision shall continue until supervision is terminated by the sending state (the receiving state shall also agree to end supervision).

Residential Placement Supervision:
Under the ICPC, a facility is defined as the agency responsible for the 24-hour care of a child. The facility is responsible for the supervision, protection, safety, and well-being of the child. The sending agency making the placement is expected to enter into an agreement with the facility as to the program plan or expected level of supervision, treatment, frequency, and nature of any written progress or treatment reports. The Wisconsin sending agency may use monitoring and supervision performed by the facility to meet monthly child welfare professional contact requirements.

The receiving state child welfare professional and probation staff are not required to provide any monitoring or supervision of children placed in facility programs, unless an incident or allegation requires investigation by law enforcement, a child welfare agency, or the court. The frequency and nature of monitoring visits by the sending agency or individual making the placement are determined by the sending agency in accordance with applicable laws. Wisconsin sending agencies may contract with the receiving state child welfare agency to perform monthly face-to-face contacts, but the receiving state child welfare agency is not required to enter this contract under the ICPC.

If Wisconsin is the sending state, the sending agency is responsible for documenting the contacts for the child in eWiSACWIS. Once a supervision report is received the sending agency shall document the monthly contacts in eWiSACWIS for each month. Agencies may want to request a report about any visits during the final quarter of the Federal Fiscal Year (July, August, and September) by the last week of October in order for those visits to be documented in eWiSACWIS and counted in the data submitted to the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) database. If the sending agency is not receiving the documentation from the receiving state, the agency should contact the assigned ICPC specialist as soon as a problem is detected. The ICPC specialist will work with the receiving state to address the issue.

Placement Purpose Changes

When a child is placed out-of-state and the resource moves, the move shall be reported to the receiving and sending states' ICPC offices. A 100B shall be completed by the sending agency and submitted to the sending state's ICPC office within 3 working days of the change of address.

Placement Ending

The sending agency's responsibility for the child continues until the interstate placement is legally terminated due to the child:

- Returning to their home state
- Guardianship with the placement resource is established
- Being legally adopted
- Reaching the age of majority
- Discharging with appropriate concurrence from the receiving state.

The sending agency shall submit a completed 100B form to the sending state's ICPC office as soon as possible, but no later than 3 working days, when a placement ends for any of the following reasons:

- The receiving state requested the return of the child.
- The sending state requested the return of the child.
- There is a placement disruption.
- The child was transferred to another state.
- The child reached the age of majority.
- The sending state terminated custody.
- The placement request was withdrawn.
- The child is missing from out-of-home care.
- Action/treatment was completed.
- Legal custody of the child was returned.
- Guardianship with the placement resource was established
- The 100A approval expired.
- Adoption was finalized.
- Death of the child.

Regulation 1 and 7 Denial After Provisional Placement Approval
The receiving state may issue a final denial of a home study request following an initial or provisional approval of a proposed resource after the child has already been placed. In this circumstance, the receiving state may order the sending state to arrange for the return of the child. The sending agency is responsible for the planning and return of the child, including physical transportation of the child back to the sending state within 5 working days of the notification being given.

<u>Placement Disruption of an Approved Placement</u>
If a placement disrupts following placement of the child in the receiving state and the receiving state orders the sending state to bring the child back to the sending state, the sending state shall return the child within 5 working days from the date of notice for removal,

unless otherwise agreed upon between the sending and receiving states' ICPC offices. The sending agency is responsible for the planning and return of the child, including physical transportation of the child back to the sending state. The receiving state can withdraw the request for removal if the sending state employs services to resolve the reason and both ICPC offices agree to the plan.

An ICPC placement cannot be closed until the sending state ICPC office receives a 100B from the sending agency. The receiving state agency must continue supervision until the receiving state ICPC office receives the 100b from the sending state ICPC office.

Allegations of Child Abuse or Neglect

If a CPS or services report is made regarding a child placed in Wisconsin through an approved ICPC, the county agency responding to the report shall respond to the report in the same manner as it would for any other child residing in the receiving state. If the CPS or service report involves an open ICPC case, this shall not be linked to the existing ICPC case in eWiSACWIS. A new case should be created in eWiSACWIS, and all work related to the CPS or Service report should be conducted in the new case record and kept separate from the ICPC case record.

The child welfare professional involved in the investigation should contact the assigned Wisconsin ICPC specialist to notify them of the report as soon as possible and advise them of any subsequent actions that have been taken or are needed to address the allegations. The Wisconsin ICPC specialists will contact the sending state ICPC office and notify them of the concerns and any actions taken or actions necessary. If it is determined that the child cannot remain in the current placement and if the sending state cannot move the child at the time of this determination, the receiving state shall place the child in a safe and appropriate setting in the receiving state until the sending state can make arrangements for the child's return to their state, if warranted.

The sending agency has the responsibility to case plan and take timely action in response to any reports of abuse or neglect. The receiving state shall help the sending state find a suitable placement, and if it is in the best interests of the child, request the child be returned to the sending state.

See the DCF Knowledge Web for information about ICPC Documentation in eWiSACWIS.

Other Compacts

There are three other compacts that regulate certain types of interstate placements of children or components of those placements.

Interstate Compact for Juveniles (ICJ)
The Interstate Compact for Juveniles (ICJ) process is used for Juveniles in Need of Protection or Services (JIPS), Deferred Prosecutions, Consent Decrees, and Delinquency cases. The ICJ is an agreement between states that has the force of federal law. The ICJ provides for the

supervision of youths on probation and parole that move across state lines. It also assists states in returning youth who run away, escape, or abscond across state lines.

For additional information on the ICJ process, please refer to Wis. Stat. s. 938.999, and the Department of Corrections (DOC) website.

Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA)
The Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance (ICAMA) is an agreement between and among its member states that enables them to coordinate the provision of medical benefits and services to children receiving Adoption Assistance in interstate cases. The compact, which has the force of law within and among party states, provides a framework for uniformity and consistency in administrative procedures when a child with special needs is adopted by a family from another state, or the adoptive family moves to another state. For more information, please visit Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance – National Center for Interstate Compacts | The Council of State Governments.

The DCF ICAMA specialist works closely with the Wisconsin ICPC specialists to ensure that children placed across state lines have appropriate Medicaid Certification and Coverage.

The Interstate Compact on Mental Health (ICMH)
The Interstate Compact on Mental Health (ICMH) permits the transfer of children and adults with mental illness from a public institution in one state to a public institution in another state. It may also be used to secure publicly provided aftercare services in another state. A patient transferred through this Compact becomes the responsibility of the receiving state.

For additional information on the ICMH process, please refer to Wis. Stat. s. 51.87. Or visit the Department of Health Services website for contact information.

Other State Resources

The differences in laws, regulations, and policies across the nation make it difficult to keep track of requirements for specific ICPC requests. A webpage has been created to assist with information sharing about each state's requirements. This information is only updated periodically, but may be a helpful resource to understand other states' requirements: http://icpcstatepages.org/

Out-of-Home Care Placement in Settings Certified as Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP)

A qualified residential treatment program (QRTP) is a congregate care setting specifically intended for children and youth with complex mental health, emotional, or behavioral needs. Out-of-home placements in a QRTP should be utilized only when children cannot receive the appropriate services in a licensed or unlicensed foster home.

The intent of the creation of placement settings that are certified as a QRTP is to ensure children placed in these settings receive quality care and treatment to meet their mental health,

emotional, and behavioral needs. Placement settings certified as a QRTP must be accredited, use a trauma-informed treatment model, and employ registered or licensed nursing staff and other licensed clinical staff, among other requirements. Children placed in a QRTP must be assessed prior to or within 30 days of placement to determine if their needs can be met through placement with relatives/like-kin, in a licensed foster home, or in a less restrictive setting. It is the agency's responsibility to submit the necessary paperwork to the court within 30 days of the child's placement in a QRTP, or sooner in some situations, so that a court order with QRTP findings can be obtained. The court must approve or disapprove the QRTP placement within 60 days from the time of placement, and the agency with placement and care responsibility must continue to demonstrate at each permanency plan review or hearing that the QRTP placement is beneficial to the child.

All Wisconsin children and youth deserve to be safe and loved members of thriving families and communities, and the Wisconsin child welfare system is committed to elevating quality care for all children placed in congregate care settings. These efforts aim to successfully keep children placed in our state, ensuring that they are served in an appropriate setting based on their needs, and in an environment that is trauma informed.

Applicability

A child is considered to be in "out-of-home care" if the agency has placement and care responsibility for the child whether placed under a voluntary placement agreement (under Wis. Stat. s. 48.63 or through a court order. This includes a child who is placed by the agency with relatives/like-kin. It does not include a child who is living with relatives/like-kin (or caregivers other than their parents) but who is not under the placement and care responsibility of the agency.

This does not include care provided in a juvenile correctional facility as defined under Wis. Stat. s. 938.02(15m). It also does not include youth who are on a 72-hour hold or a sanction at a shelter care facility.

This standard applies to out-of-home care placements of children and youth in placement settings that are certified as a QRTP. The agency with placement and care responsibility must ensure that all placements in a QRTP comply with this standard. An agency is considered to have the placement and care responsibility of a child when they are removed from their home by the department or an agency, or when a court enters an order placing a child in out-of-home care, whichever occurs first.

Purpose

The purpose of this standard is to:

- Define placement settings certified as qualified residential treatment programs.
- Establish requirements for placements in QRTP facilities, including parameters for child welfare professionals to ensure the following requirements are met:
    - Family permanency team
    - Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment
    - Recommendation of the agency for placement in a QRTP

    - Seeking court approval of the QRTP placement
    - Continued demonstration of the appropriateness of placement in a QRTP
    - Extended QRTP placement
- Establish requirements for documenting the QRTP placement in eWiSACWIS.

Qualified Residential Treatment Program Defined

A QRTP means a residential care center for children and youth, group home, or shelter care facility certified under Wis. Stat. s. 48.675. The department may certify a residential care center for children and youth, group home, or shelter care facility to operate a qualified residential treatment program if it determines that the program meets the requirements of a QRTP as established in Wis. Admin. Code. Ch. DCF 61.

Family Permanency Team

If a child is placed in a setting certified as a QRTP, the agency with placement and care responsibility is required to assemble a family permanency team for the child. If the child is an Indian child, the tribal child welfare professional must be invited to participate in the family permanency team. Family permanency teams, consisting of family members, professionals, and others who are a resource for the child, participate in the assessment and placement decision-making process, as well as permanency planning.

If the child is an Indian child, the agency has the responsibility for complying with the Indian Child Welfare Act/Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA/WICWA), including but not limited to the active efforts and placement preference requirements. For further information about ICWA/WICWA requirements, refer to the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System's WICWA Online Resource.

Definition and Members

The child welfare professional for the child shall, at a minimum, invite the individuals below to participate in the Family Permanency Team. The child's parent/guardians must provide input on the members of the family permanency team. The child welfare professional may also invite others to participate in the team at the child welfare professional's discretion. If the child is an Indian child, the child welfare professional must request input on the members of the family permanency team from the tribal child welfare professional, this includes:

- The youth, if age 14 or above.
- The child's parents/guardians
- All biological or adoptive family members, relatives, and like–kin of the child (includes an individual who is or previously was the child's licensed foster parent), as determined by the agency.
- Appropriate professionals who serve as a resource for the family of the child, such as teachers, medical or mental health providers who have treated the child, clergy, or spiritual leaders.

- Others identified by a child over the age of 14. The child welfare professional may object to a person selected by the child if the agency has good cause to believe that the person would not act in the best interests of the child.
- If the child is an Indian child, the child's Indian custodian, tribal child welfare professional and extended family members as defined by Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(2)(am).

The child welfare professional shall determine the appropriateness of each person's participation in the team. This determination must be driven by the underlying needs and safety concerns of the child and their family. If the child is an Indian child, the tribal child welfare professional must be invited to participate and provide input on the members of the team. The child welfare professional may object to an individual's participation if the agency has good cause to believe that the person would not act in the best interests of the child. If the child is an Indian child, the child welfare professional shall make active efforts to make this determination in partnership with the tribal child welfare professional. The child's child welfare professional shall make a reasonable and good faith effort to identify and include all required individuals on the family permanency team.

Timeframe Requirements

The initial family permanency team meeting may be held prior to a child's placement in a QRTP, but no greater than 30 days after the date of placement in the QRTP. The team meetings shall be held at a time and place convenient for the family to the extent possible.

Initial Family Permanency Team Meetings

The purpose of the initial family permanency team meeting is to:

- Engage the family in the case planning process.
- Participate in and gather information for completion of the child's Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment.
- Discuss services that may be provided through placement in the QRTP.
- Identify the family's strengths and underlying needs.
- Identify the family's goals.
- Establish appropriate timeframes for the achievement of goals.
- Identify the plan for meeting the family's underlying needs.
- Identify services needed to address the underlying needs.
- Identify the preferred placement setting for the child, which should include a recognition that a child should be placed with their siblings whenever possible unless the court determines that a joint placement would be contrary to the safety or well–being of the child or any of those siblings.

Subsequent Meetings

Subsequent family permanency team meetings shall be held at a frequency determined by the team with the approval of the child welfare professional, and should remain consistent, as long as the child remains placed in a QRTP. The purpose of subsequent team meetings is to:

- Continue engaging the family in the case planning process.
- Continue to gather information for subsequent CANS assessments.
- Track and adjust the Permanency Plan.
- Clarify team member roles and responsibilities.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of services, including those through placement in the QRTP.
- Evaluate progress towards change.
- Inform and update team members on progress with and changes to the goals or plans.
- Identify the ongoing preferred placement setting for the child, which should include a recognition that a child should be placed with their siblings whenever possible unless the court determines that a joint placement would be contrary to the safety or well–being of the child or any of those siblings.

Similar to child and family team meetings, family permanency teams engage families in permanency planning. Family permanency team meetings use a strengths and needs based, solution-focused approach that incorporates the values and principles of family centeredness, respectful interaction, cultural responsiveness, and partnership. These team meetings should be used to determine the appropriateness of a QRTP placement for the child, and whether a QRTP placement is the placement that will provide the child with the most effective and appropriate level of care in the least restrictive environment.

The size, composition, function, and goals of the family permanency team should be driven by the underlying needs and safety concerns of the family. The group of individuals that comprise the team should be identified by the family, the child welfare professional, the tribal child welfare professional, informal/formal supports, out-of-home care providers, and service providers. All identified team members should be committed to the family's goals and invested in change.

Requirements for Placement in a Qualified Residential Treatment Program

An out-of-home care placement in a setting certified as a QRTP should be utilized only when children and youth cannot receive the appropriate services in a family-like setting. The intent of the creation of QRTP placement settings is to ensure children and youth receive quality care and treatment to meet their mental health, emotional, and behavioral needs. The agency with placement and care responsibility must assess and determine if placement in a QRTP is the most appropriate level of care for the child, or if the child's needs can be met through placement with relatives/like-kin, in a licensed foster home, or in a less restrictive setting. The child welfare professional should ensure, prior to placement, that the QRTP facility will provide the most appropriate, evidence-based interventions for the child, and that it will be used for the shortest amount of time necessary to achieve the child's treatment and service goals. For an Indian child, the child welfare professional shall make this determination in partnership with the tribal child welfare professional and take into consideration the availability of culturally appropriate services.

All placements in a QRTP must comply with the requirements set forth below.

QRTP Placement Determination

The agency with placement and care responsibility is required to determine the appropriateness of a child's placement in a QRTP to ensure the child will receive treatment and care services that are appropriate to their level of need. When determining the appropriateness of a placement in a QRTP, the child welfare professional must:

- Assess the needs and strengths of the child through completion of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool.

The professional shall use the information gathered in the CANS assessment for all the following:

- Determine the level of need for the child.
- Determine whether the child's needs can be met through placement with the child's relatives/like-kin, in a licensed foster home, or in a less restrictive setting. A shortage or lack of foster homes is not an acceptable reason for determining that the child's needs cannot be met in a foster home.
- Evaluate the match between the knowledge, skills, services, and abilities of the QRTP provider and the needs and strengths of the child. This evaluation shall be used to determine whether the QRTP placement will provide the child with the most effective and appropriate level of care in the least restrictive environment.
- Assist in the development of services and supports, and short-term and long-term goals, for the child.
- Determine whether the QRTP placement is consistent with the short−term and long−term goals for the child, as specified in their Permanency Plan.

Timeframe for Determination of QRTP Placement

The agency with placement and care responsibility shall complete the CANS and make a determination about the appropriateness of a QRTP placement prior to making the placement but no more than 30 days prior to placement in a setting certified as a QRTP. If the CANS was unable to be completed prior to placement, the assessment and determination shall be completed within 30 days of the child's placement in a QRTP.

This determination must be made each time a child is placed in a QRTP, and any time a child's placement is changed from one QRTP to a new QRTP.

The CANS is an assessment process and tool used to identify the needs and strengths of the child, determine the ability of the out-of-home care provider to meet the child's needs, and evaluate the stability of a child's placement. The results of the CANS are also used to determine the level of need for the child; generally, the higher the level of need, the more complex the needs of the child.

The information gathered in the CANS assessment is used to inform decisions regarding a placement at a level of care that is appropriate to meet the child's level of need. However, a child's level of need does not mean they must be placed with a specific provider or level of care. A child may be served at a level of care that is lower than their identified level of need if the agency can show that services and supports are provided to address the identified needs of the child, as well as the provider.

The family permanency team should also be engaged in this process. The team should be consulted to assist in determining if the child's needs can be met by placement in a less restrictive setting, or if placement in the QRTP will meet the identified preferred placement of the family permanency team. For an Indian child, the child welfare professional shall work collaboratively with the tribal child welfare professional and take into consideration the availability of culturally appropriate services.

Documentation

If the child welfare professional determines that the QRTP placement is the most appropriate placement for the child, the following must be documented in the child's Permanency Plan Addendum for Placement in a Setting Certified as a Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP), DCF-F-5479, in eWiSACWIS:

- Recommended QRTP placement provider for the child, as determined by the agency with placement and care responsibility.
- Documentation of the reasonable and good faith efforts to identify and include all required individuals on the family permanency team.
- The contact information for the members of the family permanency team.
- Information showing that the meetings of the family permanency team were held at a time and place convenient for the family to the extent possible.
- If reunification is the child's permanency goal, information demonstrating that the parent/guardian from whom the child was removed provided input on the members of the family permanency team, or why that input was not obtained.

- Information showing that the CANS assessment was completed in conjunction with the family permanency team.
- The preferred placement of the family permanency team, including a recognition that a child should be placed with their siblings unless the court determines that a joint placement would be contrary to the safety or well–being of the child or any of those siblings. For a child who is an Indian child, this must also include a statement as to whether the Indian child's placement complies with the order of placement preferences under Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(7)(b).
- If the preferred placement of the family permanency team is not the placement recommended by the child welfare professional, the reasons why the team's preferences were not recommended.
- Reasons why the needs of the child cannot be met through placement with a relative/like-kin or in a licensed foster home. A shortage or lack of licensed foster homes is not an acceptable reason for determining that the needs of the child cannot be met in a licensed foster home.
- Evidence that the placement in a QRTP is the setting that will provide the most effective and appropriate level of care in the least restrictive environment.
- Description of how the QRTP placement is consistent with the short– term and long–term goals for the child.

The child's Permanency Plan Addendum for Placement in a Setting Certified as a QRTP must be submitted to the court with the results of the child's CANS assessment, no later than 30 days after the date on which the placement is made (or earlier if required by court/statutory timelines).

Court Review and Finding

The placement of a child in a QRTP requires the court's review and a judicial finding either approving or disapproving of the placement within 60 days of the start of a child's placement in a QRTP. The court must consider the results of the child's CANS assessment and the QRTP placement determination made by the agency with placement and care responsibility. Based on this information, the court must determine if the child's needs can be met in a less restrictive placement setting, and either approve or disapprove the QRTP placement.

The request for the court's review and finding must follow the procedures and notice requirements set forth in Wis. Stat. 48 and 938.

Court Review Documentation

The agency with placement and care responsibility shall provide the following information to the court for its review no later than 30 days after the date on which the placement is made (or earlier if required by court/statutory timelines):

- Copy of the child's most recent CANS assessment.
- Recommended QRTP placement provider for the child, as determined by the agency with placement and care responsibility.

- Reasons why the needs of the child cannot be met through placement with a relative/like-kin or in a licensed foster home. A shortage or lack of licensed foster homes is not an acceptable reason for determining that the needs of the child cannot be met in a licensed foster home.
- Evidence that the placement in a QRTP is the setting that will provide the most effective and appropriate level of care in the least restrictive environment.
- Description of how the QRTP placement is consistent with the short– term and long–term goals for the child.
- The preferred placement of the family permanency team, including a recognition that a child should be placed with their siblings unless the court determines that a joint placement would be contrary to the safety or well–being of the child or any of those siblings. For a child who is an Indian child, this must also include a statement as to whether the Indian child's placement complies with the order of placement preferences under Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(7)(b).
    - If the preferred placement of the family permanency team is not the placement recommended by the child welfare professional, the reasons why the team's preferences were not recommended.

This information shall be provided to the court on the Permanency Plan Addendum for Placement in a Setting Certified as a Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP), DCF-F-5479-e, for the child. The agency shall submit the QRTP Addendum along with the Request for Qualified Residential Treatment Program Placement Findings form and the Findings and Order for Qualified Residential Treatment Program Placement form to the court for the court's findings.

Court Finding

The court shall make a finding either approving or disapproving the QRTP placement within the timeframes set forth in statute. The court will review the child's most recent CANS assessment, and the information contained in the Permanency Plan Addendum for Placement in a Setting Certified as a Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP), DCF-F-5479-e to determine the appropriateness of the placement in a QRTP for the child. The court's finding will include all the following:

- Whether the needs of the child can be met through placement in a foster home.
- Whether placement of the child in a QRTP provides the most effective and appropriate level of care for the child in the least restrictive environment.
- Whether the placement is consistent with the short–term and long–term goals for the child, as identified in the permanency planning.
- Whether the court approves or disapproves the placement.

The court's findings with respect to the above items do not affect whether the placement may be made by the agency with placement and care responsibility unless the court orders a change of placement for the child.

Continued QRTP Placement

Placement of children and youth in facilities certified as a QRTP must be continually assessed for the duration of the child's placement to determine the ongoing appropriateness of the placement setting. Placements in QRTPs should only continue to be utilized when the child's level of need justifies placement in a more restrictive setting and when children cannot receive the appropriate services in the home of their parent/guardian, guardian, Indian custodian, or another home-like setting. The agency with placement and care responsibility must assess and determine whether continued placement in a QRTP is the most appropriate level of care for the child or if the child's needs can be met through placement in a less restrictive setting.

Subsequent QRTP Placement Determination

The agency with placement and care responsibility is required to continue to determine the appropriateness of a child's placement in a QRTP to ensure the child is receiving treatment and care services that are appropriate to their level of need. For an Indian child, the child welfare professional shall work collaboratively with tribal child welfare professional and take into consideration the availability of culturally appropriate services. When determining the continued appropriateness of a placement in a QRTP, the child welfare professional must:

- Assess the needs and strengths of the child through completion of the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool. The agency shall reassess each child and the child's out-of-home care provider within six months after the child's last determination or re-determination.

The child welfare professional shall use the information gathered in the CANS assessment for all the following:

- Determine the level of need for the child.
- Determine whether the ongoing assessment of the child's needs continues to support the determination that the needs of the child cannot be met through placement with the child's family/like-kin, in a licensed foster home, or in a less restrictive setting. A shortage or lack of foster homes is not an acceptable reason for determining that the child's needs cannot be met in a foster home.
- Evaluate the continued match between the knowledge, skills, services, and abilities of the QRTP provider and the needs and strengths of the child. This evaluation shall be used to determine whether the QRTP placement continues to provide the child with the most effective and appropriate level of care in the least restrictive environment.
- Determine whether the QRTP placement continues to be consistent with the short–term and long–term goals for the child, as specified in their permanency plan.
- Review the specific treatment and service goals for the child that will be met through placement in the QRTP and adjust the goals, if necessary.

Subsequent Determination Timeframe

The agency with placement and care responsibility shall make ongoing determinations about the continued appropriateness of the child's QRTP placement at each Permanency Plan review or hearing for the child if the child continues to be placed in a QRTP.

Documentation

The information contained in the Permanency Plan Addendum for Placement in a Setting Certified as a QRTP, DCF-F-5479-e, for the child must be included in the child's Permanency Plan. In addition, the following must be documented in the child's Permanency Plan in eWiSACWIS and provided to the court or review panel at the child's next Permanency Plan hearing or review:

- Copy of the child's most recent CANS assessment.
- Description of how the ongoing CANS assessment for the child continues to support the child's placement in a QRTP.
- Reasons why the needs of the child cannot be met through placement with a relative/like-kin or in a licensed foster home. A shortage or lack of licensed foster homes is not an acceptable reason for determining that the needs of the child cannot be met in a licensed foster home.
- Evidence that the placement in a QRTP is the setting that will provide the most effective and appropriate level of care in the least restrictive environment.
- Description of how the QRTP placement is consistent with the short− term and long−term goals for the child.
- The specific treatment or service needs that will be met for the child in the placement and the length of the time the child is expected to need the treatment or services. For an Indian child, information must be provided about the culturally appropriate treatment or services that will be provided.
- The efforts made by the agency to prepare the child to return home or to be placed with a relative/like-kin, a guardian, or an adoptive parent, or in a foster home.
- Documentation of the determination and approval or disapproval of the QRTP placement made by the court.

The decision to place a child in a congregate care facility can have a lasting impact on the quality of a child's permanent relationships, cultural identity, and sense of self. All children need consistent, nurturing adults in their lives to form healthy attachments and to develop positive socio-emotional skills. While some children may benefit from the specialized treatment services available in congregate care placements, these facilities will lack the lifelong connections that children need. Safety and permanence are essential for all children involved with the child welfare system no matter the circumstances.

The use of congregate care as a placement resource, including facilities certified as a QRTP, should be a temporary tool to provide specialized treatment services for children and youth. These facilities are not intended to be utilized for long-term placements, and children should only remain in this placement setting for the duration of their need for treatment and services. Children should be transitioned to a less restrictive setting as soon as their treatment and service goals have been met. The placing agency child welfare professional should work collaboratively with the facility to plan for the child's transition and discharge from the facility, including planning for aftercare services. For an Indian child, the child welfare professional must also work collaboratively with the tribal child welfare professional in planning for the child's transition and discharge. Transition preparation must identify and address long-term needs consistent with the child's age and development. The placing agency child welfare professional must assess the child's preparation, as well as their caregiver(s), for discharge and the need for

any additional or ongoing services. The child welfare professional shall ensure that the transition is known and agreed to with others involved in implementing the transition plan.

Additionally, the agency with placement and care responsibility must assist and prepare the child for discharge from the facility, which may also include a transition to permanence. Healthy relationships and supportive individuals, including caregivers, friends, and other adults in the community are extremely important to older youth, as is providing opportunities for the youth to practice life-skills. Mechanisms to ensure that youth are involved in the decisions affecting their lives is extremely important and youth must have a voice in making these decisions.

Older youth are in a crucial transition phase toward self-sufficiency, both within the scope of independent living (IL) services and more broadly. Youth who are in court-ordered out-of-home care for a minimum of six (6) months after the age of 14 are eligible for IL and the agency with placement and care responsibility must fulfill the IL requirements detailed in these standards.

For youth who will discharge directly from out-of-home care at age 18 or older, the agency with placement and care responsibility must facilitate the youth's transition process, including but not limited to completion of their Independent Living Transition to Discharge (ILTD) plan, as detailed in Wis. Stat. ss. 48.385(1) and 938.385(1). Transition planning shall include family members and other supportive individuals crucial to the youth's stability and well-being beyond their time in care, such as the youth's parent, Indian custodian, legal guardian, Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), attorney, service providers, Transition Resource Agency (TRA) worker, and others the youth determines are important individuals who can assist in the transition to independence.

Extended QRTP Placements

Any child who is placed in a QRTP for more than twelve (12) consecutive months or eighteen (18) non-consecutive months (or, in the case of a child under age thirteen, for more than six consecutive or nonconsecutive months), the head of the child welfare placing agency must provide approval for ongoing placement. The approval must document all of the following:

- The most recent documentation and evidence of the following:
    - The ongoing CANS assessment of the needs and strengths of the child, which continues to support the determination that the child's needs cannot be met through placement in a foster home.
    - Evidence that the placement in a QRTP provides the most effective and appropriate level of care for the child.
    - Information that the placement is consistent with the short- and long-term goals for the child, as specified in the child's Permanency Plan.
    - Documentation of the specific treatment needs that will be met for the child in the QRTP placement and the length of time the child is expected to need the treatment or services.
    - For an Indian child, whether or not the specific treatment or services are culturally appropriate. Efforts made by the agency to prepare the child to return home or to be placed with a relative/like-kin or in a foster home.

The approval shall only be provided for the child's extended placement in the QRTP if their treatment and service needs have not yet been met through placement in the QRTP. A lack or shortage of available placements in a less restrictive setting is not an acceptable reason to allow for the extended QRTP placement.

Appendix 1: Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act Resources

Resources and contact information regarding the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA) Requirements can be found here: https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/wicwa.

Appendix 2: Identification and Engagement Tools for Locating Non-Household Parents, Relatives and Like-kin

If the parent/guardians of the child can be identified, ask them to provide information about relatives and connections for the child.

When appropriate, ask the child to identify and provide information about their relatives and connections.

For sample questions to use with families to identify connections, visit The Institute: Innovating Child Welfare

Engagement techniques:

For sample engagement scripts and techniques to use when contacting non-household parents and relatives, visit The Institute: Innovating Child Welfare's resource library at the bottom of the page. Expand the Engagement Techniques drop-down to explore these resources.

Tools and Activities:

For templates, tools, and activities to assist in identifying relatives and connections for children, youth and families, visit The Institute: Innovating Child Welfare's resource library at the bottom of the page. Expand the Tools & Activities drop-down to explore these resources.

Individual Locator Searches

- Search the **eWiSACWIS** case including active and inactive participants and related people. Search by individual person to identify all cases the individual is associated with.
- Search the **CARES** system records if your agency has an information sharing agreement with your local CARES agency. CARES issues Wisconsin Works (W-2), Food Share, Medicaid, and Child Care benefits.
- **Seneca** is a comprehensive name-based search for potential relatives and associates. The Seneca Search Request referral is completed by the child welfare professional and emailed to DCFSeneca@wisconsin.gov. Results are uploaded into the eWiSACWIS case file in the Permanency Consultation section upon return.
- The websites below offer search capabilities by name, address, and phone number. Searching by name will provide a list of potential relatives and associates for the individual. This can be used to review family connections and to find contact information. Click on a name to explore their details and find contact information.
    - www.familytreenow.com
    - www.truepeoplesearch.com (also allows search by email)
    - www.fastpeoplesearch.com

Social Media Sites for Searching

Social media platforms can be a valuable tool for enhancing family finding and engagement efforts. Searches conducted via social media must be used with careful consideration of privacy, ethics, and safety. Those utilizing social media searches should consult their agency's policies on social media use.

Appendix 3: Placement Danger Threats

The 17 placement danger threats are defined below with bulleted examples.

P1. Out-of-home care provider or others in the home are violent or out of control.
Consider out-of-home care providers, children in the home and others who are frequently in the home and may, therefore, be a threat to the placed child. This refers to people who are imposing and threatening, brandishing weapons, known to be dangerous and aggressive, or currently behaving in attacking, aggressive ways. Consider information provided by others, from records and from direct observation.

- Intimidating, hostile, violent, aggressive individuals generally observable and in direct interaction with CPS.
- People who carry guns or other weapons.
- Adults known to have a history of violence and trouble with civil authorities.
- Children known to have a history of violence and that behavior is not responsive to behavior control and management within the home.
- Hostile, aggressive behavior within the community; against non-family members; fighting.
- Children within the placement home who victimize other children physically or sexually and that behavior is not responsive to behavior control and management within the home.
- Extreme physical or verbal, angry or hostile outbursts at children or other family members.
- Use or reference to use of guns, knives or other instruments in a violent and threatening way.
- Communication and behavior that seems reckless, unstable or explosive.

Domestic Violence:
There is currently domestic violence in the home that poses a risk of serious physical or emotional harm to the child. This may be identified by a history of domestic violence, current records of active violence in the home or reports by reliable sources such as family members, neighbors or professionals. The children referred to in the examples are those who have resided in the home rather than the child being considered for placement.

- There is currently a pattern of physical violence to an out-of-home care provider by a spouse or other partner.
- Agency or law enforcement records of domestic violence.
- Family's own child was previously injured in domestic violence incident.
- Family's own child exhibits severe anxiety (e.g., nightmares, insomnia) related to situations associated with domestic violence.
- Family's own child cries, cowers, cringes, trembles, or otherwise exhibits fear as a result of domestic violence.
- Use of guns, knives or other instruments in a violent, threatening, or intimidating manner.
- Evidence of property damage resulting from domestic violence.

P2. Out-of-home care provider describes or acts toward the child in predominantly negative terms or has extremely unrealistic expectations.

The word "predominantly" is meant to suggest perceptions which are so negative they would, if present, create a threat to a child. These types of perceptions must be inaccurate with respect to the child. Although this includes both relative and foster out-of-home care providers, it is more likely to apply to those who are already familiar with the child.

- The child is seen as evil, stupid, ugly or in some other demeaning or degrading manner.
- The out-of-home care provider transfers feelings and perceptions of a person the out-of-home care provider dislikes, is hostile toward, or fears to the child.
- The child was/is unwanted in the family or placement.
- The child is considered a burden, nuisance or punishment.
- One of the out-of-home care providers is competitive with, or harbors ill will toward the child because the child is or is believed to be special or favored by the other out-of-home care provider.
- The out-of-home care provider directs a pattern of profanity toward the child or repeatedly attacks child's self-esteem.
- The out-of-home care provider scapegoats the child.
- The out-of-home care provider requires the child to perform or act in a way that is impossible or improbable for the child's age or developmental level (e.g., babies and young children expected not to cry; expected to be still for extended periods; be toilet trained or eat neatly).
- Out-of-home care provider has a history of expecting other children to behave in a manner that is impossible or improbable for the child's age or developmental level.

P3. Out-of-home care provider refuses access to the child or there is reason to believe that the placement family is about to flee.

This refers to specific and observable behavior, emotions or communication indicating the intent to avoid CPS.

- Out-of-home care provider advises CPS that they will not be needed, or that close contact is not warranted or desired.
- Out-of-home care provider is inaccessible and unavailable, particularly in early encounters.
- Out-of-home care provider cancels initial appointments, does not show up for meetings, cuts short meetings or phone calls.
- Out-of-home care provider is reluctant to make the placed child available.
- Out-of-home care provider disagrees or argues with CPS about needed involvement and intervention at first encounter.

P4. Out-of-home care provider communicates or behaves in ways that suggest that they may fail to protect the child from serious harm or threatened harm by other family members, other household members, or others having regular access to the child.

This applies when the out-of-home care provider does not understand or have the ability to shield the child from threats originating with others in the household. It may include

circumstances where the out-of-home care provider's loyalties to the other individual interfere with the out-of-home care provider's willingness or ability to make the protective role to the child the first priority.

- Out-of-home care provider has an inaccurate view of known threat originating with others in the home due to their behavior or emotion or minimizes this threat.
- Out-of-home care provider has a history of association with individuals who may pose a threat to the child and the out-of-home care provider sees no need to control access to the home to protect the child.
- Out-of-home care provider has a history of association with individuals who may pose a threat to the child and the out-of-home care provider is unable to regulate their access to the home.
- The child is maltreated in the placement home by another family member, household member or individual having regular access to the child.

P5. Out-of-home care provider is unwilling or unable to meet the child's immediate needs for food, clothing, shelter or medical care.

When assessing placement situations, it may be necessary to speculate about the potential for meeting a placed child's basic needs. Beyond the out-of-home care provider's intent or ability, one must assess the availability and accessibility of necessary resources. Following placement, evidence of not meeting basic needs may become more apparent.

- Other children in placement home appear malnourished.
- Family has limited, inadequate resources, finances, etc.
- Evidence of out-of-home care provider is withholding necessary resources from own or other placed children.
- Out-of-home care provider does not seek medical treatment for other children's immediate and dangerous medical conditions or does not follow prescribed treatment for such conditions.
- Out-of-home care provider perceives and describes medical needs inaccurately; fails to see seriousness of need.
- Out-of-home care provider holds beliefs that prevent them from seeking medical care.
- No food provided or available to the child or child deprived of food or drink for prolonged periods since the placement began.

P6. Out-of-home care provider has not protected the child or will not or is unable to provide supervision necessary to protect child from potentially serious harm.

At the time of placement, this must include the ability of the out-of-home care provider to be available to provide appropriate supervision or arrange such by another responsible adult over time. During the placement of the child, this refers to the actual availability of and quality of supervision. Assessment of supervision must consider the development of the child and circumstances of the home, in terms of potential dangers.

- Out-of-home care provider is likely to be absent from the home for periods of time inappropriate to the child's development; no other adult is available to provide supervision.

- Out-of-home care provider has arranged for care by another adult in their absence, but the plan is inadequate.
- Out-of-home care provider has obligations that will leave the home without a responsible adult.
- Though present, the out-of-home care provider does not attend to the child to the extent that the child's need for care goes unnoticed or unmet (e.g., although out-of-home care provider is present, child can wander outdoors alone, play with dangerous objects or be exposed to other serious hazards).
- Out-of-home care provider leaves child alone (time period varies with age and developmental factors).
- Out-of-home care provider makes inadequate or inappropriate childcare arrangements or demonstrates very poor planning for child's care.
- The overall level of childcare responsibility in the home results in the out-of-home care provider's inability to meet this child's needs for supervision.

P7. Child has exceptional needs or behavior which the out-of-home care provider cannot or will not meet or manage.

This includes conditions that may be organic (e.g., cognitive disability, acute medical need, etc.) or result from maltreatment (e.g., mental health issues, etc.). The condition must be serious, in that it has immediate implications and consequences. The threat includes the child's behavior being a threat to him or herself. The key issue is that the out-of-home care providers cannot or will not meet the child's needs or manage the child's behavior.

- The child has a physical or mental condition that, if untreated, serves as a threat of harm, and the
    - Out-of-home care provider does not recognize the condition, or
    - Out-of-home care provider views the condition as less serious than it is, or
    - Out-of-home care provider refuses to address the problem for religious or other reasons, or
    - Out-of-home care provider lacks the capacity to fully understand the child's condition or the threat of harm.
- Child has suicidal thoughts or behaviors that the out-of-home care provider cannot or will not manage.
- Child will run away; out-of-home care provider cannot or will not manage.
- Child's emotional state is such that immediate mental health/medical care is needed; out-of-home care provider cannot or will not manage.
- Child is a physical danger to others; out-of-home care provider cannot or will not manage.
- Child abuses substances; may overdose; out-of-home care provider cannot or will not manage.
- Child is so withdrawn that basic needs are not being met; out-of-home care provider cannot or will not manage.
- Child has self-inflicted, severe injuries; out-of-home care provider cannot or will not manage.
- The overall level of childcare responsibility in the home results in the out-of-home care provider's inability to meet this child's exceptional needs.

P8. Child is profoundly fearful or anxious of home situation.

This does not refer to general fear or anxiety. Most children entering placement are anxious about the unknown circumstances of the placement. This refers to circumstances where the child to be placed is familiar with the potential placement family and is afraid of being placed in this particular home. When the child has been living in the placement home, this refers to fear and anxiety related to remaining in the placement.

- Child demonstrates emotional and physical responses indicating fear of the specific home or people within the home – crying, withdrawal, etc.
- Child states fearfulness and describes people or circumstances that are reasonably threatening.
- Child recounts previous experiences that form the basis for fear.
- Child's describes threats against him or her that seem reasonable and believable.
- Child's fearful response escalates in the presence of the placement out-of-home care provider or in the placement home.
- Child has reasonable fears of retribution or retaliation from out-of-home care provider.

P9. Out-of-home care provider's home has physical living conditions that are hazardous and immediately threatening.

This applies when living conditions pose an immediate threat, having serious health and life implications. Unkempt and dirty homes do not meet this definition. The judgment of an immediate threat must consider the child's vulnerability.

- Dangerous substances or objects are stored in a manner that makes them accessible to the child.
- Lack of water or utilities (heat, plumbing, electricity) with no adequate alternative provisions.
- Environmental hazards, such as leaking gas, exposed electrical wires or broken windows.
- Garbage, spoiled food, infestation or animal waste that threatens health.
- Serious illness or significant injury has occurred due to living conditions and these conditions still exist (e.g., lead poisoning, rat bites).
- Guns or other weapons are not locked.

P10. Out-of-home care provider's drug or alcohol use appears to or could seriously affect his/her ability to supervise, protect or care for the child.

This refers to those who, because of the use of substances, are out of control, acting unpredictably or incoherent and are, therefore, unable to provide for the child. This may be observed at first encounter or may be known from other sources. This may be identified once the child is living in the placement home and prevents the out-of-home care provider from consistently providing for the child.

- Out-of-home care provider is incapacitated due to substance use at first contact.
- Out-of-home care provider's substance abuse problem renders them incapable of routinely and consistently attending to the basic needs and care of the child.
- Alcohol, drugs or drug paraphernalia are accessible to the child.

P11. Out-of-home care provider's emotional instability, mental health issue or disability appears to or could seriously affect his/her ability to supervise, protect or care for the child.

This refers to out-of-home care providers that possess mental disorders or cognitive limitations that affect their physical, emotional or cognitive capacity with respect to child safety. They may make poor judgments, cannot effectively solve problems, have deficient reality perception, are ineffective planners or have emotional states that interfere with basic responsibilities to the child. This threat may apply even though there has not been an official diagnosis of a condition or disorder.

- Refusal to follow prescribed medications may prevent the out-of-home care provider from adequately caring for child.
- Out-of-home care provider exhibits distorted perception of reality (e.g., hallucinations) that impacts ability to care for and protect child.
- Out-of-home care provider's inability to manage anger leads to excessive or inappropriate discipline.
- Depressed behavioral symptoms result in inability or failure to protect and provide basic care.
- Out-of-home care provider's cognitive delay interferes with the ability to consistently meet the child's needs.

P12. Out-of-home care provider's physical health or physical condition appears to or could seriously affect his/her ability to supervise, protect or care for the child.

This refers to out-of-home care providers who have an acute or chronic illness that compromises their ability to supervise the child or their capacity to provide care to the child at a level that affects child safety. This also includes physical conditions and limitations that interfere with the ability to physically provide care required for the child's level of vulnerability and dependence.

- Out-of-home care provider's level of energy is insufficient to routinely and consistently meet the needs of the child.
- Out-of-home care provider experiences periods of physical incapacitation that cannot be anticipated and planned for.
- Out-of-home care provider has sensory limitations (e.g., hearing, vision) that interfere with the ability to meet the child's basic needs and are not adequately managed.
- Out-of-home care provider is unable to manage the physical demands (e.g., carrying, lifting) of caring for the child.
- Out-of-home care provider's physical health or physical condition renders them incapable of routinely and consistently attending to the basic needs and care of the child.

P13. Out-of-home care provider has previously maltreated a child and the severity of the maltreatment or the out-of-home care provider's response to that incident suggests that safety may be a current concern.

This refers to the out-of-home care provider's previous maltreatment of their own children or a previous child placed with the out-of-home care provider. This may be identified when considering placement or may be discovered after a child has been placed.

- Previous maltreatment was serious enough to cause or could have caused severe injury or harm.
- Out-of-home care provider had retaliated or threatened retribution against a child in a past incident.
- Escalating pattern of maltreatment.
- Out-of-home care provider does not acknowledge or take responsibility for prior inflicted harm to a child or attempts to justify a prior incident.
- Out-of-home care provider does not explain prior injuries or conditions.

P14. Out-of-home care provider sees the child as responsible for the problems of the out-of-home care provider or the problems of the child's parent.

This refers to out-of-home care providers who blame the child and consider the child as the cause of the problems of the child's parents. Out-of-home care providers may blame the child for problems that they are experiencing themselves. This includes out-of-home care providers who give evidence of anticipating problems with the child.

- Child is blamed and held responsible for their parents' problems, for CPS involvement or for the placement.
- Out-of-home care provider directly associates difficulties in their life, limitations to freedom, financial or other burdens to the child.
- Conflicts that the out-of-home care provider experiences with others (family members, neighbors, school, police, etc.) are considered to be the child's fault.
- Losses the out-of-home care provider experiences (job, relationships, etc.) are attributed to the child.
- Lack of success as a placement out-of-home care provider is blamed on the child.

P15. Out-of-home care provider justifies the parent's behavior; believes the parent rather than CPS and/or is supportive of the parent's point of view.

This refers to circumstances in which the out-of-home care provider aligns with the parent's view of the situation which resulted in placement or justifies the parent's position though it is contrary to CPS and not accurate. This viewpoint results in a lack of empathy for the child and interferes with their ability to cooperate with CPS in managing the placement.

- Out-of-home care provider believes the parent has been wrongly accused.
- Out-of-home care provider believes the parent's account over that of the child or CPS.
- Out-of-home care provider acknowledges the parent's problems but makes excuses for them or justifies their actions based on the child's behavior or other circumstances.
- Out-of-home care provider believes CPS is overreacting and exaggerating.

P16. Out-of-home care provider indicates the child deserved what happened in the child's home.

This refers to out-of-home care providers who believe that whatever happened in the child's home was justified by things the child did or qualities of the child.

- Out-of-home care provider believes that a sexual abuse victim was asking for or provoking the sexual contact.
- Out-of-home care provider believes the child is old enough to care for themself and, therefore, responsible for lack of necessary care.
- Out-of-home care provider considers the child's behavior provocative and that this justifies parental maltreatment.

P17. Out-of-home care provider will not enforce restrictions required by the protective, family interaction or safety plan.

This refers to out-of-home care providers who are unable or unwilling to follow CPS requirements for contact between the child and parent.

- Out-of-home care provider believes the restrictions on the plan are unnecessary and, therefore, will allow unauthorized contact.
- Out-of-home care provider sees the restrictions as unimportant and, therefore, will not consistently exert control necessary to enforce them.
- Out-of-home care provider allows unauthorized phone calls or physical contact between the child and parent in the home or at any location.

Appendix 4: Independent Living Transition to Discharge Plan (Additional Information)

The following comes directly from DCF's ILTD Quick Reference Desk Guide for Child Welfare Agencies. CWA partners should consult the *Desk Guide* with the *ILTD Writing Guide*.

"What documents are required for youth before discharge?"
CWAs are required to provide numerous documents to youth prior to their discharge from out-of-home care (OHC). Please note this is not a complete list of all required documents; this list only includes those required per federal law. View the full list in the *ILTD Writing Guide* (p. 7-8).

- Original certified birth certificate and information on how to obtain a duplicate
- State ID card or driver's license and information on how to obtain a duplicate
- Health insurance information, including any cards needed to access medical care
- Social security card and information on how to obtain a duplicate
- Health records (e.g., medications, illnesses, diagnoses, immunizations, hospitalizations, surgeries, referrals, family medical history)
- Selective Service card (required for males only; must register at age 18)

"How will I know when the ILTD is coming due?"
For CWA professionals utilizing eWiSACWIS, tasks serve as a reminder about ILTD requirements and due dates. See the schedule below.

Task	Task release date	Due date	Escalation date
Schedule ILTD mtg	**Age 17 and 6 months**	**Age 17 and 7 months**	**Due date minus 7 days**
ILTD due	**Age 17 and 8 months**	**Age 17 and 9 months**	**Due date minus 7 days**

"What about youth in extended OHC?"
Given that plans for and about transition-aged youth are often fluid and evolving, an ILTD is still required for youth who will be in extended OHC. In fact, it may be even more important! The CWA should start the ILTD process at the same time (age 17 and 6 months) and keep the ILTD current and accurate up to the day the young person discharges. The guidance in this resource is still applicable for youth who are or will be in extended OHC.

"Who should come to ILTD meeting(s)?"

- The youth should always come to and be engaged in ILTD meeting(s) *except in very rare circumstances*. They should drive the plan.
- The regional Transition Resource Agency (TRA) IL Coordinator should always attend to ensure their familiarity with the youth and the youth's wants, needs, and goals, and help the youth become familiar with their IL program. This will help provide "a warm hand-off."
- The CWA professional is responsible for facilitating ILTD meetings and completing the plan in eWiSACWIS.
- Other critical planning meeting participants are those who will be involved with, invested in, and at times actively assisting the youth's well-being following their exit from OHC.

We encourage multiple meetings to target certain sections of the ILTD and ensure the presence of relevant partners. If someone is playing a critical role in the steps and tasks for a given section of the plan, best efforts should be made to ensure they attend the relevant ILTD meeting(s). For example:

- ILTD Housing section meeting: participants could be the TRA IL Coordinator, the youth's uncle who said they can stay with him following discharge, and the friend who offered a back-up living arrangement if living with uncle does not work out.
- ILTD Education section meeting: participants could be the Fostering Success program representative at the postsecondary institution the youth plans to attend, their high school guidance counselor, and their aunt who said she will help them complete the FAFSA and provide housing over breaks.

"What do we do in the ILTD meeting(s)?"
As the CWA ongoing and/or IL professional, you shall facilitate and coordinate completion of the ILTD and strive to have it be a youth-led and collaborative process. The ILTD serves as a record of all parties' commitments and roles; it specifies youth needs and goals and memorializes what supporters commit to do to help the youth fulfill those needs and achieve their goals.

The ILTD should serve as a living document, a frequently referenced and updated roadmap for both the youth and their adult supporters. It is not a "one and done" effort; the ILTD should be revisited and revised as needed up to the day the young person discharges from OHC. The child welfare professional is ultimately responsible for documentation of and updates to the ILTD.

"What is the structure of the ILTD and what are the required sections?"
The *ILTD Writing Guide* includes extensive direction about all parts of the ILTD, how they function in eWiSACWIS (e.g., pre-filled compared to manual entry), and which portions are required. A broad overview of the ILTD sections is below, including which ones have required portions (whether always required or sometimes required).

- ***Note:*** *Best practice is to fully complete ALL sections of the ILTD if possible; this is in the best interest of all parties, especially the youth. A comprehensive plan that includes detailed information and is rooted in all parties having a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities helps mitigate harm, ensure a team approach, and increase the likelihood of a smooth transition. Sections designated with a « below have at least one field that is required for all ILTDs, regardless of whether the youth does or does not participate in their discharge planning. The sections designated with a ‡ have at least one field that is required when the youth actively participates in their discharge planning, in addition to those already required for all ILTDs.*

Background and General Information Sections	Youth Demographic and Contact Information ★ *(primarily pre-fills)*	Essential Documents *(see list of federally required documents above)*
	Concurrent Planning ★ *(new section)*	Transition Planning ★
	Eligibility for Extended Out-of-Home Care/Youth Decision ★	Who I Am ★ *(new section)*
Youth-Driven Planning Sections	Housing ★	Health and Well-being ‡
	Employment ‡	Transportation ‡ *(new section)*
	Income and Finances ★‡	Community and Support Network ★
	Education ‡	Other Areas of Need

"What are the goal options for the planning sections?"

Housing	Safe and secure housing upon leaving care (including back-up housing plan) **(required)**	Develop/maintain healthy boundaries with roommate(s)
	Learn basic home maintenance and upkeep skills	Other (specify)
	Obtain basic housing items (e.g., sheets, cookware)	
Employment *(at least one goal required)*	Learn more about job/career opportunities	Get a higher wage or higher-paying job
	Network with/shadow others to learn more	Secure a (new) job
	Gain additional training/skill development	Other (specify)
Income and Finances	Increase financial literacy/understand how to budget and make monthly bill payments **(required)**	Build/repair credit score
	Increase savings **(required)**	Obtain second income
	Research postsecondary financial aid	Other (specify)
	Build an emergency fund	
Education *(at least one goal required)*	Finish high school	Work towards an associate degree
	Complete FAFSA	Work towards a Bachelor's (or higher) degree
	Attend a vocational/training/ certification program	Other (specify)
Health and Well-being	Enroll in private insurance or BadgerCare+ **(required)**	Know signs of abuse and how to get help
	Confirm continuity of healthcare following discharge **(required)**	Participate in prosocial activities/interests
	Select Power of Attorney for Healthcare **(required)**	Develop healthy friendships/relationships
	Prioritize physical and mental health	Other (specify)
	Know sexual healthcare and family planning options	

Transportation	Have safe and reliable transportation options after leaving foster care **(required)**	Increase preparedness for safe transport
	Obtain driver's license	Other (specify)
Other Areas of Need	Pregnant/parenting support	Cultural connections support
	Legal assistance	Delinquency/criminogenic needs support
	Gender identity/LGBTQIA2S+ support	Other support (specify)

Remember!
Best practice is for the CWA to provide the young person a hard copy of the ILTD plan prior to discharge; at minimum, this should be a copy of the signed version of the final plan before the youth's transition from care. It is acceptable and even advised to provide the youth with hard copies of earlier versions leading up to discharge.

Appendix 5: Supervised Independent Living Agreements and Guidelines

SUPERVISED INDEPENDENT LIVING CLIENT AGREEMENT

A Supervised Independent Living (SIL) placement offers youth who are under a court order or a voluntary agreement and placed into out-of-home care the ability to live in their own (or shared) apartment, flat or room (as deemed appropriate) with supervision, support and monitoring from a child welfare professional. The youth can expect the child welfare agency responsible for supervision to continue case management and any associated services for the duration of the Court Order or Voluntary Transition to Independent Living Agreement. Please check all that apply:

- □ I am willing to be employed and work diligently at maintaining my employment.
- □ I agree to open a savings account with the assistance of my child welfare professional or designee.
- □ I agree to put a mutually agreed upon portion of my earnings into my savings account.
- □ I will participate in my educational program until the program is completed.
- □ I agree to participate in activities to prepare me for living independently.
- □ I will not break any city, county or state ordinances including but not limited to possession of or use of illegal drugs, alcohol or participate in other illegal activities.
- □ I agree to observe local curfew ordinances or as designated by the SIL program.
- □ I will participate in all conditions of my Court Order or Voluntary Transition to Independent Living Agreement.
- □ I will keep all scheduled appointments with my child welfare professional, SIL program, probation officer, therapist and others involved in my program and Permanency Plan.
- □ Once housing is secured, I agree to follow all the rules of the household, landlord, or manager including no overnight guests.

Failure to comply with these expectations may be cause to have your participation in the SIL placement terminated. By signing this document, you are agreeing to the terms listed above and understand the effort required to live up to these standards.

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Agency Representative Signature: _____ Date: _____

SIL Placement Provider Signature: _____ Date: _____

SUPERVISED INDEPENDENT LIVING
PERSONAL SAFETY AGREEMENT

In the interest of your personal safety and well-being please review and sign the agreement below:

1. I will never let a stranger know where I live or enter my apartment and will report any suspicious behavior or harassment to my child welfare professional or program coordinator.

2. I will not share my phone number with people I do not know or feel that I can't trust.

3. If I have problems with my locks, electricity, gas or plumbing in my home, I will notify my child welfare professional or program coordinator or landlord.

4. I will check my smoke detector weekly to make sure it works and replace the batteries when needed or every six months.

5. If I do not know how to operate my stove, oven or other appliances, I will ask for assistance.

6. Before I leave my home, I will make sure that:
   - My stove is turned off.
   - The faucets are turned off.
   - All appliances are turned off (iron, curling iron, radio, TV, etc.).
   - All valuables are not left out in the open.
   - All windows and doors are locked; and
   - I have my key to get back in when I return.

7. I will not enter the car of anyone I do not know or who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

8. I will follow my curfew and make sure I have a ride home from any late-night activity. I will use good judgment when out late at night and will avoid having to be out alone after 11:00 p.m. or placement curfew.

9. I will make sure I know the location of the fire extinguisher in my home and how to use it.

10. I will post emergency numbers near or save them in my phone.

11. I understand the danger that weapons pose to myself and others and will not be in possession of guns, knives, brass knuckles, or anything that could be considered a weapon.

I have read and understand the above safety guidelines, and I agree to abide by them.

Youth's signature: _____ Date: _____

Staff Member's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Guidelines for a Supervised Independent Living Shared Living Agreement

These guidelines can be used as a basis for a written understanding between individuals providing for or sharing a home with youth in a Supervised Independent Living (SIL) setting. It is broad in scope, covering many aspects of shared daily living; however, agreements should be individualized, reflecting the specific values, concerns and personalities of those involved. The agreement should aid in the creation and maintenance of a successful placement, which supports youth's continued transition to independent adulthood. Since individuals and circumstances change, the agreement should be renegotiated and updated, as needed and appropriate.

GUIDELINE TOPICS:

Individuals should discuss and agree upon the expectations, rights and/or responsibilities for each of the categories listed. The bullet points under each category are intended to be a prompt for discussion purposes only. There is no need to reach agreement on each item (for example, not every agreement will include something about shared meals or a curfew). In addition, youth, roommate and/or provider should address any additional issues not included in the checklist that are important to their situation.

If the placement or household is currently licensed, all licensing rules remain in effect.

Determine Skills/Interests and opportunities for Mentoring

- Interests of the youth
- Strengths of the youth and the provider
- Area's youth want to gain skills or resources from providers
- Areas of shared interests

Household Agreements and Customs

- Check in/curfew and communication on schedules and vacations
- Noise level (i.e. loud music) as well as "quiet time" in the home
- Language (i.e. swearing, name calling)
- Cigarette smoking
- Guests in the house/appropriate visiting times (including overnight)/parties
- Identify shared items (including use of car)
- Identify shared and personal space
- Expectations regarding meals together, holidays, and other joint activities
- Rules around television/computer/video games
- Furnishing/decorating options
- Privacy for both provider or roommate and youth
- Periodic check-ins or "house meetings"

Health and Safety Concerns:

- Sharing information on medications in case of emergency
- Sharing information on allergies (to foods or medications)

Household Chores and Responsibilities

- Individual Chores (laundry, replacement of damaged or broken items)

- Shared Chores: (cleaning, cooking, dishes, shopping, yard work, routine maintenance, care of pets)

Attendance and Performance at School and/or Work

- Periodic check-in regarding school/work including schedules

Financial

- Allocation of foster care benefit, specifying provider and/or youth allotment
- Financial responsibility for particular items/bills/expenses
- Monthly allowance or stipend/monitored or unmonitored by provider
- Budgeting for expenses

Drugs and Alcohol:

- Clarity on response/consequences for drug and alcohol use both in and out-of-home (e.g. required counseling for repeated use of alcohol)

Conflict Resolution

- The youth and provider or roommate meet individually and/or together with worker
- The youth and caregiver meet individually and/or together with an outside counselor
- Written plan for resolving conflict/consequences for violations of agreement

Components of Supervised Independent Living Programming

Youth in a Supervised Independent Living placement are likely IL-eligible. Resources and guidance related to independent living are available at https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/il (under "Resources, Training, & Reports").

A. Help youth develop basic self-sufficiency skills, so that they will transition to independence with the ability to access resources and services without the assistance of a child welfare professional at the completion of the program.

The focus of this component is to cultivate:

1. A vision of a positive future within youth.

2. Self-advocacy, through an internal locus of control, an increased sense of personal responsibility, and confidence; and

3. Positive values-based decision-making.

Methods

1. Partner with youth in developing and updating their independent living plan; covering the major life domains such as education, employment, housing, finances, family, and community. Effective planning is created at the direction of the youth in order to reinforce responsibility for success and a sense of ownership in the future. Planning includes goal setting, identification of action steps, check-in meetings, celebration ceremonies (for accomplishments), and everyday opportunities to interact with caring adults. Youth also determine how discharge or transition from the program should take place.

2. Partner with youth to help them identify needs and how to access services, facilitating connections and access to community resources as appropriate. Focus areas include:

    a. Knowledge of Health Care: Includes general physical health, medication management, wellness planning (e.g., immunizations, nutrition, obesity, exercise, etc.), dental health, vision and hearing screening and care, mental health care, and violence prevention (e.g., healthy relationships, domestic violence prevention, gang violence prevention, etc.); and sexual and reproductive health. Work with the youth to document health history of parents, secure access to health insurance coverage and identify a health care proxy.

    b. Knowledge of Life Skills: Life-skills training includes the basics of self-sufficiency and responsible living within the community. Skills include soft skills such as time and stress management, decision-making, coping, multitasking, and prioritizing; as well as hard skills such as: cooking, budgeting, banking, employment search, parenting, laundry, and grocery shopping.

    c. Provide peer learning opportunities and support that recognizes the youth as an individual, incorporating her/his developmental needs. Allow youth opportunities to "fail safely" by providing allowances for youth to make mistakes and learn from

those experiences, with natural and logical consequences that enable them to correct mistakes while remaining in the placement.

d. Well-being: Facilitate access to education and employment supports, affordable transportation, socialization, community endeavors and access to spiritual resources as desired.

B. Housing Stability: Facilitate attainment of safe, stable and affordable housing support and resources that promote continued housing stability and independent living upon completion of the program.

1. Exploration of safe and affordable housing.
    a. Creating a budget for future housing.
    b. Decision making: Listing pros and cons of different living environments, of having roommates, location, etc.
    c. Practice looking for housing in the newspaper and completing rental applications.
    d. Practice looking at apartments and meeting with landlord.

2. To accomplish this, Supervised Independent Living placements need to facilitate:
    a. Financial support and/or access to financial support (e.g., assistance, vouchers, etc.).
    b. Housing navigation to locate safe, appropriate housing; providing a variety of options (e.g., group homes, scattered sites, etc.) to meet the needs of individual youth;
    c. Varied levels of supervision and structure to facilitate the experience of living independently while still in contact with caring, supportive adults;
    d. Assistance with moving, setting up and maintaining utilities, and access to and/or provision of basic supplies, furnishings, and supplies for children;
    e. Education and advocacy regarding landlord/tenant rights and laws;
    f. Communication and conflict resolution with landlord when needed to prevent eviction;
    g. Education on leasing options and legal rights when roommates are involved;
    h. Tenant lease compliance (including on time rental payment), safe housing maintenance, and cleanliness;
    i. Access to education and employment supports that are critical for maintaining safe and stable housing (i.e.: safe, affordable and reliable transportation);
    j. Uninterrupted, continued housing stability at completion of program by:
        i. Offering youth, the opportunity to keep all furnishings and to stay in current housing or
        ii. Transitioning youth to a new stable housing situation, and provide assistance with securing furnishings and moving;
        iii. Providing access to emergency funds (i.e., first/ last month's rent, utility deposits, utilities) if needed; and
        iv. Helping to set housing goals and educate about the possibility of home ownership; and first-time home buyer programs.

C. Supports and Resources to Promote Financial Stability:

Help youth to work toward financial stability by facilitating financial literacy, educational attainment and employment at a livable wage by:

1. Facilitating access to education supports:
    a. Work with youth to develop education and career plan with long-term and short-term goals and track progress toward attainment of those goals;
    b. Provide exposure to a range of postsecondary education options and career paths, resources, services, access and support cultivating a positive attitude toward education;
    c. Help youth complete high school or earn a GED;
    d. Facilitate access to tutors or a structured learning program; and/or contact person for vulnerable youth, on campus;
    e. Facilitate access to job training, technical internships, and/or voluntary services;
    f. Help youth develop a financial plan for education and access financial support.

2. Facilitate access to employment supports in order to help youth attain and maintain sustainable employment, with a steady income at a livable wage.
    a. Facilitate access to an employment liaison, job coach, and/or connections to employers and/or mentors to cultivate development of hard and soft skills (e.g., interviewing skills, professional attire, resume-writing, time management, etc.).
    b. Assist youth in maintaining employment obtained by providing mentoring mediation when needed, thus troubleshooting prior to issues developing.
    c. Facilitate access to publicly funded programs, including food stamps, WIC, and support for health care, etc.

3. Money Management:
    a. Provide education to increase knowledge and skills related to financial literacy through educating youth on credit cards, opening/maintaining savings and checking account;
    b. Take field trips with the youth to a local bank;
    c. Practice budgeting and shopping for groceries, household goods and clothing and paying bills;
    d. Review pay stubs;
    e. Develop short-term and long-term financial goals with youth
    f. Help youth secure needed documents; conduct a credit check
    g. For youth who are parents, facilitate access to legal assistance:
    Educate youth on child support laws and how to access child support when necessary
    h. If needed, provide information on expunging juvenile records.

4. Facilitate access to education and employment supports; safe, stable, and affordable childcare and transportation, as these services play a role in being able to maintain healthy relationships and stability.

D. Cultivate a sense of self-worth and right to healthy relationships

1. The spectrum of relationships includes *peers, family, partners, neighbors, community, professionals, landlords, their child's other parent, etc.*
    a. Provide education to develop an understanding of healthy relationships and educate youth to identify abuse, neglect, and trauma
    b. Help youth develop communication, and conflict resolution skills; provide anger and stress management counseling and mental health services as appropriate, negotiate healthy relationships
    c. For those with children, facilitate access to couples' counseling and co-parenting classes to keep the other parent engaged
    d. Help youth to develop an understanding of the importance of setting boundaries with their family.

2. Facilitate development of a positive social network; cultivating supportive relationships with family or family-like individuals; establish relationships with a healthy peer network, mentors, caring adults, family connection with appropriate boundaries; social resources to call upon when needed.

3. Continue to consider opportunities for legal permanence.

Appendix 6: Information to be Provided to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

When a child has been determined missing from out-of-home care, the agency with placement and care responsibility shall notify the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) within 24 hours. The department has created a portal within eWiSACWIS to automatically notify NCMEC when a child's placement status has been changed to missing from out-of-home care.

While it is the agency's responsibility to notify NCMEC that a child is missing within 24 hours, the agency may utilize a delegate, such as group home or residential care center staff, to make this report. A delegate may make a report of a missing child to NCMEC by calling 1-800-843-5678. The following information shall be provided to NCMEC in the missing report, when reasonably possible. It may be helpful for agencies to share this information with out-of-home care providers to aid in making reports.

Required Information:

- Child's first and last name and date of birth
- Child's race
- Child's gender identity or expression
- Child's height and weight
- Child's eye and hair color
- A photo of the child
- Date and time the child was last seen
- The person who reported the child missing to the agency
- City, country, and state the child was missing from
- NCMEC type: See below for a detailed description of each NCMEC type
    - Family Abduction (FA)
    - Non-Family Abduction (NFA)
    - Endangered Runaway (ERU)
    - Lost, Injured, or Otherwise Missing (LIM)
- Law enforcement agency information
    - Date of the report of missing was made to law enforcement
    - Law enforcement agency the report was made to
    - City and country the agency is located in
- Description of the circumstances surrounding the missing episode.
- Endangerment and special needs information of the child, such as medical conditions/prescriptions, allergies, cognitive/developmental delays, behavioral/emotional needs, history with running, history with or at-risk of drug and/or alcohol use, suicidal tendencies, gang involvement, pregnancy status, vulnerability to being sex trafficked, and other health or risk factors.
- Contact information for the agency with placement and care responsibility. This is the person that NCMEC will contact for additional information and follow-up once they receive the missing report.
    - Contact person's name
    - Contact person's phone number, email, and county
    - Contact person's agency and the agency's address

Optional Information

- Street address, zip code, and county the child was missing from
- A current photograph of the child.
- Vehicle information (i.e. make, model, year, color, license plate, etc.) associated with the child's missing episode.
- Companion(s)/abductor(s) (i.e. name, gender identity or expression, race, relationship to child, physical appearance, known address, etc.) who may be accompanying the child.
- Child's nickname(s)/alias(es)
- Child's medication(s)
- Child's parent(s)/guardian(s) information
- Child's cell phone and email address
- Law enforcement contact information who received the missing report:
    - Law enforcement case number
    - Law enforcement contact person's first and last name
    - Law enforcement contact person's email address and phone number
    - Lase enforcement agency's street address and zip code
- Confirmation of whether or not the missing report was also made to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC)

NCMEC Type

The following are descriptions of the different NCMEC types, which are required in the missing report that is made to NCMEC, as described above.

- Family Abduction (FA): The taking, retention, or concealment of a child, less than 18 years of age, by a parent, other person with a family relationship to the child, or their agent, in violation of the custody rights, including visitation rights, of another parent or legal guardian.
- Non-Family Abduction (NFA): The coerced and unauthorized taking, retention, luring, confinement, or concealment of a child younger than 18 years of age by someone other than a family member.
- Endangered Runaway (ERU): Any missing child younger than 18 years of age who is missing of their own accord and whose whereabouts are unknown to their parent(s) or legal guardian.
- Lost, Injured, or Otherwise Missing (LIM): Any missing child younger than 18 years of age where there are insufficient facts to determine the cause of the child's disappearance, or any child 10 years of age or younger who is missing on their own accord.

Appendix 7: Assessment When a Child is No Longer Missing

When a child is no longer missing from out-of-home care, the agency with placement and care responsibility shall interview the child about the missing episode to determine the primary factors that contributed to the child's missing episode and follow-up on any safety or well-being concerns raised by the child or their caregiver(s).

As part of this interview, the agency shall assess the child to determine if the child experienced sex trafficking during the missing episode, seek any necessary medical attention, and discuss planning for the prevention of future missing in care episodes with the child and family team to ensure the safety of the child, community safety, permanency, and well-being.

Within 5 working days, the agency must document the primary factors that contributed to the missing episode in eWiSACWIS. The following is a description of the assessment that the child welfare professional shall document in eWiSACWIS, which may assist the child welfare professional in preparing for the interview with the child.

<u>Assessment when a Child is No Longer Missing</u>

1. Determine if the missing episode was the result of the child running away. If the missing episode was due to the child running away, the child welfare professional shall assess the following:
    a. Frequency of Running
    b. Consistency of Destination
    c. Safety of Destination
    d. Involvement in Illegal Activities
    e. Likelihood to Return on their Own
    f. Involvement with Others
    g. Realistic Expectations

Note: These questions are the same questions that appears on the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool. However, the response to these questions will have no immediate impact on the child's current documented CANS.

2. Determine if the child was missing as the result of a perpetrator or exploiter influence, such as being forced or coerced to run away.

3. Determine the child's motivation for running away.
    a. Determine if the child was running to something, such as peers, parent(s), or other family members.
    b. Determine if the child was running from something, such as an unsafe environment or unsafe person.

4. Determine if the child was a victim of any of the following during the missing episode:
    a. Sex Trafficking
    b. Sexual Assault
    c. Physical Abuse
    d. Emotional Abuse
    e. Medical Trauma

f. Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse
g. Injuries

Describe the plan for the prevention of future missing episodes. This plan should be discussed with the child; the child's parent(s)/legal guardian; the out-of-home care provider; the child's treatment team; the Indian child's tribe, if applicable; and any other individual(s) who would be taking a role in the prevention of future missing episodes.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

"Acknowledged father" means a man who has filed an acknowledgment of paternity of a child with the State Registrar under Wis. Stat. s. 69.15(3)(b)3. This requires that both the mother and father sign a statement acknowledging paternity on a form provided by the State Registrar. If a parent is under the age of 18 years, the parent of that mother or father must also sign. The filed statement acknowledging paternity is a conclusive determination and has the same effect as a judgment of paternity. [Ref. Wis. Stat. s. 767.62]

Note: The acknowledgement form is entitled "Wisconsin Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment". Filing a correctly completed form with the State Registrar will result in the father's name being added to the child's birth certificate. The State Registrar manages the Vital Records Section of the Department's Bureau of Health Information and Policy.

"Adjudicated father" means a man whom the court has determined to be the father through a judicial process and has entered an order or judgment of paternity. [Ref. Wis. Stat. s. 767.51]

"Age or developmentally appropriate activities" means activities that are generally accepted as suitable for children of a given chronological age or level of maturity or that are determined to be developmentally appropriate for a child based on the cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral capacities that are typical for children of a given age or age group, or in the case of a specific child, activities that are suitable for the child based on the cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral capacities of that child.

"Agency" refers to either a county agency or the department.

"Alleged father" means a man whom the mother states she believes is the father or a man who claims he is the father of a child but has not been legally determined to be the father.

"**Child welfare professional**" means the social worker or other professional staff person, under Wis. Stat. ss. 48.067, 48.069, 938.067, and 938.069, assigned by the agency to provide general case supervision, to make child removal and placement decisions, or to provide case management for a child under the care or supervision of the agency. Child welfare professional can include but is not limited to a tribal child welfare professional, facility child welfare professional, treatment foster care child welfare professional, out-of-state child welfare professional, collaborative child welfare professional, contracted staff, or contracted aftercare staff.

"Child" means a person who is under the age of 18, or is a person aged 18 years who came into the supervision of the agency when under the age of 18, remains under the jurisdiction of the court, and is enrolled full-time in a high school program or its vocational or technical equivalent and is expected to graduate or complete their course of study by age 19. For purposes of this standard, unless otherwise specified, "child" includes a "juvenile" as defined in Wis. Stat. ss. 938.02(10m) or 938.57(3).

"Culturally responsive" means treating children, youth, and their families with fairness and equity and providing services to them within the context of their identities, communities, tribes, histories, cultures, and traditions. See WI's Child Welfare Model, click here.

"**Fit and willing relative**" means a relative, as defined in Wis. Stat. s. 48.02(15), of the child who successfully completes a background check under Wis. Stat. s. 48.685, who has expressed a willingness to provide care for the child until the child is 18 years of age, who has the physical, emotional, and mental capacity to provide for the child until the child's 18th birthday, and who has the willingness and capacity to protect the child from maltreatment.

"Household member" means any person living in the same home regardless of whether they are related, and it does not matter if the person resides in the home part-time or full-time.

"Imminent" refers to the belief that dangerous family behaviors, conditions, or situations will remain active or become active within the next several days to a couple of weeks and will have an impact on the child within that timeframe. This is consistent with a degree of certainty or inevitability that danger and harm are possible, even likely, outcomes without intervention.

"Indian child" means any unmarried person who is under eighteen years of age and is either:
(a) A member of a federally recognized Indian tribe, band, or community, or
(b) Is both eligible for membership in a federally recognized tribe, band, or community and is the biological child of a member of the tribe, band, or community.

"Indian Child's Tribe" means (a) The Indian tribe in which an Indian child is a member or eligible for membership, or (b) In the case of an Indian child who is a member of or eligible for members in more than one tribe, the Indian tribe with which the Indian child has the more significant contacts [Wis. Stat. s. 48.02(8m)].

"Indian Custodian" means an Indian person who has legal custody of an Indian child under tribal law or custom or under state law or to whom temporary physical care, custody, and control has been transferred by the parent of the child [Wis. Stat. s. 48.02(8p)].

"Indian Tribe" means any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community of Indians that is recognized as eligible for the services provided to Indians by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior because of Indian status, including any Alaska native village, as defined in 43 USC 1602(c) and Wis. Stat. s. 48.02(8r).

"In-home safety plan" refers to safety management so that safety services, actions, and responses ensure a child can be kept safe in his/her own home. In-home safety plans include activities and services that may occur within the home or outside the home but contribute to the child remaining home. People participating in in-home safety plans may be responsible for what they do inside or outside the child's home. An in-home safety plan primarily involves the home setting and the child's location within the home as central to the safety plan, however, in-home safety plans can also include periods of separation of the child from the home and may even contain an out-of-home placement option such as on weekends (e.g., respite).

"KIDS", is the child support information data system operated by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, Division of Families and Economic Security, Bureau of Child Support. Child welfare agency staff should consult their local child support office for assistance accessing KIDS for child welfare purposes. KIDS automatically accesses a large number of state and federal databases on a regular and frequent basis to update information. KIDS can provide information on the identification and location of parents, including alleged fathers.

“Like-kin” means an individual who has a significant emotional relationship with a child or the child’s family that is similar to a familial relationship and who is not and has not previously been the child’s licensed foster parent. For an Indian child, “like-kin” includes individuals identified by the child’s tribe according to tribal tradition, custom or resolution, code, or law.

“Observable” refers to family behaviors, conditions or situations representing a danger to a child that are specific, definite, real, can be seen, identified and understood and are subject to being reported, named, and justified. The criterion “observable” does not include suspicion, intuitive feelings, difficulties in child welfare professional-family interaction, lack of cooperation, or difficulties in obtaining information.

“Out-of-Control” refers to family behavior, conditions or situations which are unrestrained resulting in an unpredictable and possibly chaotic family environment not subject to the influence, manipulation, or ability within the family’s control. Such out-of-control family conditions pose a danger and are not being managed by anybody or anything internal to the family system. The family cannot or will not control these dangerous behaviors, conditions or situations.

“Out-of-home care provider” refers to the foster parent, relative out-of-home care provider or any other adult providing care in the placement home. This includes adults who are being considered as potential out-of-home care providers and actual Out-of-home care providers in the course of placement.

“Parent”, as defined in Wis. Stat. s. 48.02(13), means either a biological parent, a husband who has consented to the artificial insemination of his wife under s. 891.40, or a parent by adoption. If the child is a non-marital child who is not adopted or whose parents do not subsequently intermarry under Wis. Stat. s. 767.60, "parent” includes a person acknowledged under Wis. Stat. s. 767.62(1) or a substantially similar law of another state or adjudicated to be the biological father. “Parent” does not include any person whose parental rights have been terminated.
For an Indian child, a “**parent**” means a biological parent, an Indian husband who has consented to the artificial insemination of his wife under Wis. Stat. s. 891.40, or an Indian person who has lawfully adopted an Indian child, including adoptions under tribal law or custom, and includes, in the case of a nonmarital child who is not adopted or whose parents do not subsequently intermarry under Wis. Stat. s. 767.803, a person conclusively determined from genetic test results to be the father under Wis. Stat. s. 767.804, a person acknowledged under Wis. Stat. s. 767.805, a substantially similar law of another state, or tribal law or custom to be the biological father or other person adjudicated to be the biological father, but does not include any person whose parental rights have been terminated.

“Presumed father” means a man assumed to be the father because he was married to the mother at the time of the birth of the child, or they were subsequently married after the birth of the child but had a relationship with one another during the time the child was conceived. The presumption of paternity can be rebutted [Ref. Wis. Stat. s. 891.41(2)].

“Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard” means a standard for an out-of-home care provider to use in making decisions concerning a child’s participation in age or developmentally appropriate extra-curricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities that is characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the health, safety, cultural, religious or

tribal considerations, and the best interests of the child while at the same time encouraging the emotional and developmental growth of the child.

"Relative", as defined in Wis. Stat. s. 48.02(15), means a parent, stepparent, brother, sister, stepbrother, stepsister, half-brother, half-sister, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, first cousin, first cousin once removed, second cousin, nephew, niece, uncle, aunt, step-uncle, step-aunt, or any other person of a preceding generation as denoted by the prefix of grand, great, or great-great, whether by blood, marriage, or legal adoption, or the spouse of any person named in this subsection, even if the marriage is terminated by death or divorce. For purposes of placement of a child, "relative" also includes a parent of a sibling of the child who has legal custody of that sibling.

For an Indian child, a **"Relative"** also includes an extended family member, as defined in Wis. Stat. s. 48.028(2)(am), whether by blood, marriage, or adoption, including adoption under tribal law or custom.

"Severity" refers to the degree of harm that is possible or likely without intervention. As far as danger is concerned, the safety threshold is consistent with severe harm. Severe harm includes such effects as serious physical injury, disability, terror and extreme fear, impairment and death. The danger threshold is also in line with family conditions that reasonably could result in harsh and unacceptable pain and suffering for a vulnerable child. In judging whether a behavior or condition is a threat to safety, consider if the harm that is possible or likely within the next few weeks has potential for severe harm, even if it has not resulted in such harm in the past. In addition to this application in the threshold, the concept of severity can also be used to describe maltreatment that has occurred in the past.

"Sibling" means a person who is a brother or sister of the child, whether by blood, marriage, or adoption including a person who was a brother or sister of a child before the person was adopted or parental right to the person were terminated [Ref. Wis. Stat. s. 48.38(4)(br)] This definition is for the purpose of placement in out-of-home care or placement for adoption.

"Trial Reunification" means a period of 7 consecutive days or longer, but not exceeding 150 days, during which a child who is placed in an out-of-home placement under Wis. Stat. ss. 48.355, 48.357. 938.355, or 938.357 resides in the home of a relative of the child from which the child was removed or in the home of either of the child's parents for the purpose of determining the appropriateness of changing the placement of the child to that home.

"Trial Reunification Home" means the home in which in which a child resides during a trial reunification.

"Vulnerable Child" refers to a child who is dependent on others for protection and is exposed to circumstances that they are powerless to manage, and susceptible, accessible, and available to a threatening person and/or persons in authority over them. Vulnerability is judged according to age; physical and emotional development; ability to communicate needs; mobility; size and dependence and susceptibility. This definition also includes all young children from 0 – 6 and older children who, for whatever reason, are not able to protect themselves or seek help from protective others.



Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

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 Permanency 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.