

Title IV-E Legal Services Applications for Calendar Year 2026

Application Instructions

The purpose of the Title IV-E legal services reimbursement program is to provide funding to counties to support legal services for child welfare programs. The legal services must be allowable IV-E expenses and related to protecting the safety of children and achieving permanence for children in out-of-home care. Under this program, federal IV-E funds are provided on a pass-through basis to counties to support attorneys, paralegals, clerical, and other legal staff whose positions are (in whole or in part) dedicated to performing child welfare legal actions under Chapter 48. The attached program description provides information on the legal services reimbursement program and instructions for counties to apply to participate in the program and for previously-approved counties to continue receiving funds.

IV-E Legal Services Program Allowable Costs

Budget Application Program Component	SPARC Category
District Attorney	Personnel Costs – District Attorney
Corporation Counsel	Personnel Costs – Corporation Counsel
Contracted Attorney*	Personnel Costs – Contracted Attorney
Clerical Support	Personnel Costs – Clerical Support
CW Training/Conf*	Other Costs – CW Development
Genetic Testing	Other Costs – Non-CW Development
Mediation	
Transcription	
Process Server Fees	
Mail/Postage*	

* Additional description required in the Program Application for approval.

DCF SPARC Cost Reporting

Contract Code	Line Codes	Line Code Descriptions
3554/9554	3553A	Personnel Costs - District Attorney
-	3553B	Personnel Costs - Corporation Counsel
-	3553C	Personnel Costs - Contracted Attorney
-	3553D	Personnel Costs - Clerical Support
-	3553E	Other Costs – CW Development
-	3553F	Other Costs – Non CW Development

* New in 2027: Reimbursement rates for CHIPS and TPR cases are at the same rate, thus costs are now consolidated and reported together.

Pass Through
County Match

IV-E Legal Services Program Unallowable Costs

To comply with Title IV-E regulations, the Department will not approve requests for reimbursement in the following categories:

- Court salaries and related costs: judges, clerks of courts, guardians ad litem, public defenders or other court related staff who may be involved in child welfare legal proceedings but do not represent the child welfare agency;
- Child welfare/social services staff costs (these costs are already claimed to title IV-E);
- Court operating expenses, including costs paid to reimburse the court or orders from the court – e.g., filing fees, depositions, competency evaluations, disbursements for legal action, etc.’
- Baseline office expenditures. Cost categories such as insurance, professional dues, software, office supplies, phone, and internet are fixed expenditures that are the cost of doing business – the Department will not support requests for Title IV-E reimbursement for these costs.

New Application

To be approved by this Division, proposals from counties must include the following materials:

- A proposed **program budget** showing the total planned expenditures for the current calendar year and the legal services that will be provided under the IV-E reimbursement program. The budget must be consistent with the enclosed legal services reimbursement program instructions regarding allowable costs and be outlined on the enclosed fiscal worksheet format. The budget will be used to set the IV-E reimbursement limit for the contract.
- A signed and dated **legal services program application** describing how the IV-E reimbursement will be used to support expanded legal services. The proposal must use the enclosed program plan format and include a signed assurance sheet.
- A **signed agreement** between the county human/social services department and the office (District Attorney or Corporate Counsel) with primary responsibility for child welfare legal services specifying how child welfare legal services are provided if services you will be claiming reimbursement for services provided by the DA/CC office. If services are delivered by a private provider and match is not based on services provided by the DA/CC, then the contract with the private provider will meet the need for an agreement, providing it fulfills the requirements for the IV-E agreement. There are several alternatives for how services can be provided and funded and, consequently, different contract requirements.
- If applicable, information indicating that there is **authorization under s. 48.09, Stats.**, for any changes in the scope of District Attorney or Corporation Counsel responsibilities for child welfare cases.

The State/County contract includes an appendix with programmatic and reporting instruction for the legal services program. Once an application has been approved, the Department will process an amendment with the award for that year. For new applications, the amendment will be effective January 1st of each year, but reimbursable costs may only be incurred beginning with the effective date of the agreement between the child welfare services agency and the primary legal services provider (the date the agreement is signed).

Continuing Applications

Once participating in the program, counties will continue to receive contracts for subsequent years. Counties must submit the following materials by **October 30th, 2026**, to be included in the initial state/county funding contract for the next calendar year.

- A signed and dated **legal services program proposal** describing baseline expenditures and how the IV-E reimbursement will be used to support expansion of legal services.

- A proposed program budget showing the planned expanded expenditures for the next calendar year in allowable categories.
- New or updated legal services provider agreements, if applicable.

The legal services reimbursement program instructions and budget template have been revised to clearly define expense categories that are allowable under Title IV-E. Requests for reimbursement outside of these categories will not be approved.

The net rate of IV-E reimbursement for legal services for CY 2027 is 25%.

The net reimbursement rates are different than previous years and could change in future years, depending on trends in the statewide IV-E participation rate and changes in federal IV-E fiscal policy.

Deadlines:

- Applications: October 30th, 2026
- Amendments: September 24th, 2027
- **Contracts submitted late will not be accepted**

Contacts:

For questions regarding the legal services program, please contact the Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) contact person listed below:

Title IV-E Coordinator

Division of Safety and Permanence

E-mail: DCFIV-EProgram@wisconsin.gov

The Department of Children and Families is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access services, receive information in an alternate format, or need information translated to another language, please call the Division of Safety and Permanence at (608) 266-8787. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or speech disabled can use the free Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) – 711 to contact the department.

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