

Foster Care Licensing Updates

**Division of Safety & Permanence
Bureau of Permanence & Out-of-Home Care**

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Wisconsin Department of
Children and Families

Wisconsin Act 119



“Like-Kin Legislation” became effective January 1, 2025



Expanded definition of “relative” under s. 48.02 to include “first cousin once removed”



Created definition of “like-kin” under s. 48.02



Expanded placement options for children placed in out of home care through s. 48 or s. 938 with like-kin.

Wisconsin Act 119

Like-kin is defined as “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 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.”

Wisconsin Act 119 changes **do not** supersede placement preferences as required by the Indian Child Welfare Act and the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act.

Prioritizing Placement with Family



Mitigates trauma associated with separation from parents



Increases placement stability and permanency



Maintains connections to their community and culture



New Federal Rule



Agencies are allowed to **create a kin-specific licensing** or approval process.



Must be “reasonably in accord with **recommended standards of national organizations** for foster family homes”



Allows agencies to determine **their own definition** of kin (or who this applies to)

Recommended Standards Include:



Background Checks

- Fingerprint-Based Check
- Child Abuse and Neglect Checks
- Name-Based State/Local Check
- Sex Offender Registry Check



Caregiver Assessment

- Section 1) focused on the caregiver's ability to meet the child's needs
- Section 2) focused on evaluating safety and needs of the home

***It is not recommended to include any other requirements to license kin**

Chapter 56 Revisions

Foster Care Licensing Rule

Opportunity to **update and align** with federal model standards:

- Create a new licensing pathway specifically for relatives and like-kin
- Providing clarity in areas that are unclear or duplicative
- Removing requirements that are no longer relevant or outdated



Rule revisions went into effect December 1, 2025



Notable Revisions

- Increased flexibility and authority for local agencies to make decisions
- Reduced administrative burden on the applicants and the child welfare workforce
- Decreased barriers for applicants to apply for and become licensed

Notable Revisions



Physical Environment



Sleeping Arrangements



Firearms & Other Dangerous Weapons



Foster Home Capacity



Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard (RPPS)



Childcare



Respite

Licensing Requirements



Relative & Like-Kin

- Relative and Like-Kin Foster Home Application
- Relative and Like-Kin Foster Home Licensing Checklist
- Relative and Like-Kin Assessment
- Background Checks Initiated within 5 working days
- Licensing Decision due within 10 working days after receiving all necessary information



Nonrelative

- Agency-specific Application
- Nonrelative Child Foster Home Licensing Checklist
- SAFE (Structured Analysis Family Evaluation) assessment tool and Multipurpose Home Study Report
- Background Checks Initiated within 10 working days
- Licensing Decision due within 60 working days after receiving all necessary information

Pre-Placement Training

- CPR/First Aid training
 - Required per Family First legislation, February 2019
 - Added to DCF 56 in December 2025
 - All non-relative foster parent applicants and at least one relative/like-kin foster parent applicant must complete a CPR/First Aid course
 - If already licensed, then you must complete it during your current licensing period
 - Counts toward your ongoing training hours
 - Certification is not necessary, no need to re-certify
 - Talk with your licensor about how to complete CPR/First Aid training

Initial Licensing Training Curriculum



Nurturing Connections is the approved training curriculum required for initial licensing for foster and adoptive parents.



Effective August 2025



[Nurturing Connections](#)



Adoption Updates

- A SAFE Home Study Assessment is required for all families adopting through the public adoption program.
 - 25 Hours of pre-adoption training is required for all adoptive parents prior to adoption finalization. 6 of those hours must be child specific.
 - Relative & Like-Kin Transition to Public Adoption
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What have we seen thus far?



Relatives and like-kin are being licensed faster



Relatives and like-kin are getting more financial support faster



Child welfare workforce spending less time on paperwork and more time engaging with families



Decreased reliance on congregate care



Wisconsin Department of
Children and Families

Questions?

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