



## Wisconsin Post-Permanency Profile

Updated: November 2024

### State Population (2023 Census estimate)

4 – 6,999,999 million

### Adoption/Guardianship Assistance Caseload (2022)

10,000 – 13,999

- Adoption assistance caseload — 9,525
- Guardianship assistance caseload — 1,742
- Total — 11,267

### State Administration Type

Hybrid

### Pre-Service Training

Pre-placement, initial licensing, and pre-adoption training is provided through the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System. The number of training hours and content is dependent on the certification level of the foster parents' license. Pre-adoption training is 25 hours, with 6 of those hours being specific to the needs of the child to be adopted. Foster and pre-adoptive parents have the ability to select the modality in which they meet the remaining 19 hours (through a combination of initial licensing training and Fostering to Forever adoption curriculum or Building Forever Families curriculum). Ongoing and child-specific training can be completed in multiple formats such as attending webinars, conferences, reading relevant books, and consulting with a child's treatment team (i.e., therapist, OT, PT, etc.).

Currently, if a relative caregiver has placement and pursues foster care licensing, they are required to complete the training requirements based on their certification level. Being licensed is an eligibility requirement for subsidized guardianship, adoption, and adoption assistance.

For more information, visit <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/fostercare/training>

### Services Offered Through the State's Post-Permanency Support Program

Post-permanency services in Wisconsin are provided through the Wisconsin Family Connections Center (WiFCC), a unified, statewide program providing services to parents and caregivers partnering to raise children and youth through kinship care, foster care, and post-permanency,





including reunification, guardianship, and adoption. WiFCC offers services for all of Wisconsin, with staff specializing in resources and opportunities for eight different regions.

Services include:

- **Assessment** — Staff complete an informal family needs assessment and parent/caregiver stress assessment as a part of case management services.
- **Case management** — WiFCC provides short-term (up to six months) case management services for families identified as having a high need of services through a program titled Giving Incredible Families Tools for Success (GIFTS). Case management services include family needs assessment and parent/caregiver stress assessment; ongoing support with an assigned case manager via phone, online, or in person; plans to work on specific concerns; individualized parent/caregiver coaching; and referrals based on the family's identified needs.
- **Support groups** — WiFCC hosts eight different support groups. The groups typically meet virtually once a month, but some occasionally meet in person. The groups offer support to the following populations: “waiting” adoptive parents, foster parents, relative caregivers, adult adoptees, birth parents, reunified parents, teens, adoptive and guardianship caregivers, parents of children with trauma histories and challenging behaviors, as well as an informal group for adoptive and guardianship parents. Those interested can attend a group anywhere in the state regardless of where they live.
- **Information and referral** — Staff are available to provide information and referral tailored to the family's current situation. Other informational supports include a resource library with books, DVDs, and instantly downloadable resources such as tip sheets, articles, resource kits, etc. Referrals can also be provided for counseling, respite, educational advocacy, and crisis management.
- **Training** — WiFCC offers a variety of trainings on topics such as Trust-Based Relational Intervention®; Circle of Security®; Trauma-Informed Parenting; A Closer Look at the Core Issues in Adoption; WISE Up® About Adoption; Supporting Non-Traditional Families & Their Children at School; Talking About Race & Transracial Families. WiFCC also hosts other interactive trainings, webinars, workshops, and conferences, including events focused on relative caregiving.
- **Events** — Each of the eight regions has a free quarterly family fun event.

Relatives can also receive support services from Wisconsin's Kinship Navigator Program, which includes grants to individual agencies to provide concrete supports, brief legal services, and other support to meet the needs of relative caregivers and the children they are raising, caregiver education resources, and information and referral services. This is available to any





relative caregiver of a minor child in Wisconsin regardless of whether they have formal child welfare intervention or not.

From July through December of 2023, 288 contacts were made with WiFCC by families seeking information, referrals, and materials. Currently, approximately eight families receive case management services through GIFTS during a quarter.

For more information, visit <https://wifamilyconnectionscenter.org/about-the-wisconsin-family-connections-center/>

### **Geographic Area Covered**

All services are offered statewide. Social events are held regularly in each of the eight regions. Support groups are facilitated virtually.

### **Eligible Population for the Overall Post-Permanency Program**

- All families who adopted from the state's foster care system
- All families who adopted from foster care in other states, territories, or tribes
- All families who adopted through private adoption
- All families who have guardianship of a child from foster care
- All families who have guardianship of child not through foster care
- Kinship families who are not adoptive/guardianship parents
- Other (listed below)
  - Families reunified with their children who were in foster care
  - Foster families

### **Variations in Eligibility for the Post-Permanency Program**

None

### **Accessibility**

The staff are required to have more than 30 hours of training on diverse populations to support the delivery of culturally responsive services. Materials must be translated when needed and available with closed captioning. Contracts require providers to seek assistance from advisors/experts and from individuals with lived experience when developing content to ensure that the materials are culturally responsive and use language that makes groups feel welcome.





Populations of particular focus include interracial adoptive families, parents of color, and LGBTQ2S+ families. The state also has a resource hub for the LGBTQ2S+ community.

## Outreach and Engagement

Outreach to families occurs immediately after adoption finalization. All adoptive families' names should be provided to WiFCC by the agency completing the adoption. Catholic Charities, WiFCC's regional service provider, is then responsible for reaching out to families at that time. There is no parallel outreach process for families who exit the system via guardianship.

## How the Post-Permanency Program Is Operated

Through contracts or grants with multiple private agencies offering different services

### Notes About Who Provides Which Service(s)

The Wisconsin Family Connections Center (WiFCC) is operated by two private agencies. The state contracts with the Coalition for Children, Youth, and Families to offer statewide services and with the Journeys Program at the Catholic Charities of the Diocese of La Crosse to offer regional support; however, there is some overlap.

The Coalition for Children, Youth, and Families is responsible for operating the information and referral line and the resource library as well as developing training and coordinating conferences. Catholic Charities has responsibility for case management, support groups, and family fun events.

## Adoption/Guardianship Assistance/Subsidy Review and Changes

Wisconsin does not do any outreach to adoption families to confirm eligibility for an adoption subsidy. State law prohibits routine outreach to families based on their receipt of adoption assistance. The state reaches out to guardianship families via a letter on an annual basis to confirm eligibility. If the guardian does not return the annual review form, the monthly subsidy is suspended until it is returned. However, subsidized guardianships are county-administered (unlike adoption assistance, which is state-administered) and some counties do not consistently suspend payments when the annual review is not completed. An eligibility review for a subsidized guardian may also occur when a change in circumstance is reported to the state and prior to the youth turning 18 to confirm if payments can continue after the youth's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

A child may be eligible for an amendment to the adoption assistance agreement if (1) the child's emotional, behavioral, or physical needs have increased and (2) it has been at least 12 months since adoption finalization and at least 12 months since a previous denial for an





amendment. An amendment is a one-year increase to the monthly subsidy. After the agency receives all the required forms, they complete a child abuse and neglect background check on the adoptive parent and an assessment on the child's needs to determine if the monthly payment amount should be increased. An amendment cannot be approved if an adoptive parent has a substantiated report of child abuse or neglect relating to the child for whom the amendment was requested. The agency is required to provide the parent with written notice of this decision and information on the parent's right to appeal that decision. If the request to increase the payment amount is approved, this will be reviewed by the agency on an annual basis to assess if the increased payment amount should continue or if a new payment amount is warranted. At least every second year, the family is asked to submit a full amendment request packet, including a parent-completed form and documentation completed by one or more professionals supporting the continuation of the increased need. On the "off" years, the family receives a letter giving them the option to continue the increased rate or to complete the full amendment request packet if they believe their child's needs have changed. Either the option to continue form or full packet must be returned for the increased rate to continue.

Guardians may request an amendment to their subsidized guardianship agreement to increase the amount of the monthly payments if there has been a substantial change in the child's emotional, behavioral, physical, and/or personal care needs. The guardian should notify the child welfare agency providing the subsidized guardianship payments to send the amendment request forms. The guardian can make this request 12 months after the guardianship was established or 12 months after a previous request for an amendment was denied.

After the agency receives all the required forms, they complete a child abuse and neglect background check on the guardian and an assessment on the child's needs to determine if the monthly payment amount should be increased. An amendment cannot be approved if the guardian has a substantiated report of child abuse or neglect relating to the child for whom the amendment was requested since guardian was licensed (i.e., they may have had a substantiation that was successfully rehabilitated through a rehab review to be eligible for licensing). The agency is required to provide the guardian with written notice of this decision and information on the guardian's right to appeal that decision.

If the request to increase the payment amount is approved, this will be reviewed by the agency on an annual basis to assess if the increased payment amount should continue or if a new payment amount is warranted. Amended subsidized guardianship agreements have to be reviewed annually. At least every other year, the guardian is asked to submit a full amendment request packet, including a guardian-completed form and documentation completed by one or more professionals supporting the continuation of the increased need. On the "off" years, the guardian receives a letter giving them the option to continue the increased rate or to complete the full amendment request packet if they believe the child's needs have changed. Either the option to continue form or full packet must be returned for the increased rate to continue.





## Tracking Adoption/Guardianship Discontinuity

County child welfare professionals enter data into eWiSACWIS, which includes a data element on “child was previously adopted.” Children who have been adopted via public adoptions in Wisconsin should always be identified as “previously adopted” in the system. It may be more challenging to know if other children were previously adopted. The same process is followed for guardianship.

## Post-Permanency Program Spending (FY 2023)

\$1 – 1,999,999 million

## Funding Sources for the Post-Permanency Program (FY 2023)

1. State funds
2. Adoption savings (reported on CB 496 Part 4 – Annual Adoption Savings Report)
3. Adoption/Guardianship Incentive Program Payments (AIPP)

