


To: DCF/DMCPS Administrator
DCF Area Administrators
Child Placing Agency Directors
Child Welfare Agency Directors
County Departments of Community Programs Directors
County Departments of Human Services Directors
County Departments of Social Services Directors
Group Home Providers
Tribal Social Service/Indian Child Welfare Directors
Private Child Placing Agencies
Residential Care Center Providers
Shelter Care Providers
Tribal Chairpersons

From: Fredi-Ellen Bove 
Administrator

Re: Caregiver Substance Use-related Documentation in eWiSACWIS

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to inform local child welfare agencies of recent changes to and to provide guidance on documenting maltreatment allegation descriptions and removal from home reasons related to a caregiver's use or misuse of substances such as alcohol and other drugs (AODA).

BACKGROUND

Data-driven decisions require accurate information affecting child welfare involvement. Given the current strain on local child welfare agencies, most notably seen in our state's recent dramatic rise of children in out-of-home care, the impact of caregiver substance use on the child welfare system and the children and families served by our system are of increasing interest and importance. This interest is demonstrated in the September 2016 Governor's Executive Order #214 which mandated the formation of a Governor's Task Force on Opioid Abuse and the formation of Steering Committees by several state agencies and by the Governors' Executive Order #273 on January 19, 2018 directing DCF to improve documentation in the eWiSACWIS system of substance use issues in child welfare cases.

Consistent with this direction, DCF will be collaborating with local child welfare agency representatives identified by the Wisconsin County Human Services Association (WCHSA) to identify approaches to streamline and improve documentation related to how caregiver substance use affects child welfare intervention. Pending these future documentation enhancements, the following information provides direction and guidance for documentation using existing eWiSACWIS capabilities to best capture AODA-related factors more consistently within and across local child welfare agencies.

INFORMATION SUMMARY

Wisconsin's automated child welfare information system, known as eWiSACWIS, captures information related to alcohol and drug use as part of two key points of child welfare intervention; 1) child protective services (CPS) Initial Assessment (IA), and; 2) child removal from his or her family home. This documentation is used to meet federal reporting requirements related to how caregiver alcohol or drug use affects these two points of child welfare intervention. In documenting maltreatment allegations as part of the IA process, eWiSACWIS allows for the selection of up to 43 unique descriptions for a given maltreatment allegation. Prior to the changes noted below, caregiver substance use were not included as reference values to be selected to describe the result(s) of or condition(s) associated with an allegation of

maltreatment. When removing a child from the home, one or more of 16 unique reasons for the child's removal from the home are required to be documented in eWiSACWIS, which are much like the descriptions chosen when adding maltreatment allegations.

Maltreatment Descriptions

Maltreatment descriptions provide further information about allegations and can help convey the underlying challenges for families. With this in mind, DSP has updated the Description reference values that can be documented as part of the Descriptions page to both enhance and streamline this list of values to improve the availability and quality of the resulting data. Definitions for the Description reference values are now provided in eWiSACWIS and can be obtained using the Resource Flare on the Descriptions page or on the web page Access and Initial Assessment (IA) Worker Information – Additional Information section (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/access-ia>) to assist in the accurate and complete selection of the descriptions. Additionally, several of the descriptions have been consolidated under one description to improve consistency and reliability of currently available documentation.

Maltreatment descriptions that were removed or consolidated into a remaining reference value include Blunt Force Trauma, Retinal Hemorrhage, Shaken Baby/Shaken Impact, Subdural Hemorrhage/Hematoma, Traumatic Brain Injury, Other Medical Neglect, and Medical Neglect of a Disabled Infant, Lack of Care Due to Poverty, Pregnancy, and Serious Lack of Hygiene.

In addition to the above changes, two new descriptions have been added to better capture the influence of alcohol and drug use in relationship to an allegation of maltreatment. These added descriptions include Caregiver Alcohol Abuse and Caregiver Drug Abuse. Lack of Medical Care was also added to encompass multiple aspects of medical neglect as a description of a result of the neglect of a child or infant.

Removal Reasons

The Removal Reasons are documented in eWiSACWIS at the point of a child's placement in out-of-home care and are specific to the federal Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) required data elements and cannot be altered. In order to assist agencies with the selection of these reasons, definitions are now provided in eWiSACWIS under the resources flare on the Removal Address and Reasons page or on the web page Ongoing Out-of-Home Care Services – Placement Resources section (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/ongoing/ohc>). DCF strongly encourages child welfare staff to select the main maltreatment allegation, i.e. Neglect, Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, and, where applicable, in addition select the underlying factor(s) that may have contributed to the child's removal, i.e. Caretaker Alcohol Abuse, Caretaker Drug Abuse, Inadequate Housing, Incarceration of Caretaker(s), etc.

eWiSACWIS

Beginning in February 15, 2018, the above changes to the eWiSACWIS Description page will be available. The definitions of both the maltreatment Description and the Removal Reasons definitions referenced above are attached. DSP is in the process of adding Description and Removal Reason data to currently available eWiSACWIS reports available to designated local agency staff as authorized by the agency's eWiSACWIS Security Delegate.

TRAINING

DSP has developed the webinar "Guidance for Selecting Descriptions and Removal Reasons" to assist with increasing data quality and reliability, including the data available to better understand caregiver substance use in child welfare agency intervention. The Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (AODA) Information Gathering – Part 1 webinar can be accessed on the DCF Website: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/webinars>.

CENTRAL OFFICE CONTACT:

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MEMO WEB SITE: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy>

Links: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/webinars>

Attachments Child Abuse/Neglect eWiSACWIS Allegation Descriptions
<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/ewisacwis/allegationsdef.pdf>

Child Abuse/Neglect eWiSACWIS Reasons for Removal
<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cwportal/ewisacwis/removalreasonsdef.pdf>