



STATE OF WISCONSIN
Division of Hearings and Appeals

In the Matter of

██████ ██████████
████████████████████
████████████████████

DECISION

KIN/152757

PRELIMINARY RECITALS

Pursuant to a petition filed October 8, 2013, under Wis. Stat. § 48.57(3m)(f), and Wis. Admin. Code § DCF 58.08(2)(b), to review a decision by the Professional Services Group - PSG in regard to Kinship Care, a hearing was held on November 13, 2013, at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The issue for determination is whether the Department's agent correctly denied the petitioner's Kinship Care (KC) benefits for 2 children. Specifically, the issues are whether there is a need for the children's living arrangement to be supported by Kinship Care funding, and whether the children meets certain "at risk" criteria.

There appeared at that time and place the following persons:

PARTIES IN INTEREST:

Petitioner:

██████ ██████████
████████████████████
████████████████████

Respondent:

Department of Children and Families
201 East Washington Avenue
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

By: Stephanie Purpero, Kinship Care Assessor
Professional Services Group, Inc.
West Allis, WI 53214

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:

Nancy J. Gagnon (telephonically)
Division of Hearings and Appeals

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Petitioner is a resident of Milwaukee County.

2. The petitioner is the maternal cousin of [REDACTED] [REDACTED] (M.B.), age 7, and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] (L.R.), age 2.
3. The mother of the child, [REDACTED] [REDACTED], was living at a Milwaukee address on the date of application. She was present at the home visit on September 25, and told the assessor that she planned to leave the two children with the petitioner temporarily while she relocated to [REDACTED], Georgia, and obtained work. The mother is not hospitalized, does not have a known mental illness, and does not have known drug/alcohol issues. She does not have a stable residence, and has made no financial contribution to the care of the children since transferring them to the petitioner. Ms. [REDACTED] has one other child, who does not live with her.
4. The father of M.B., is [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. His whereabouts are unknown, and he has no contact with the child. The father of L.R. is [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. He is incarcerated and does not contribute to the support of the child.
5. The children began residing with the petitioner in September 2013. The petitioner has been supervising the children's medical and school status, and providing for all of their needs since the children moved in. The oldest child successfully attends regular education classes, and neither child has diagnosed emotional problems. They do not have medical problems, and they have been adequately immunized. The children have not been adjudicated as juvenile delinquents, and are not truant.
6. The petitioner applied for Kinship Care benefits for the children on September 20, 2013. The home visit/assessment was performed on September 25, 2013. Based on the contract agency's report, the Department determined that the children did not meet some of the criteria as children in need of a KC benefit, per Wis. Stats. §48.57(3m)(am)2. The agency did not contend that the placement was not in the child's best interest. Therefore, the Department issued a denial notice for the children to the petitioner on September 30, 2013.
7. The mother did leave for [REDACTED] in September, and has not returned. Her [REDACTED] address, telephone number, and employment status are unknown. She has made no contact with any of her children or the petitioner since her departure.

DISCUSSION

I. INTRODUCTION.

The Kinship Care benefit is a public assistance payment of \$220 per month per child paid to a qualified relative who bears no legal responsibility to support the child. In Wisconsin, this benefit replaces the former Non-Legally Responsible Relative (NLRR) Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) payment (see, Wis. Stat. § 49.19). To be eligible for the payments thereunder, the relative must meet all of the conditions set forth in Wis. Stat. §§ 48.57(3m)(am)(1-5) or 48.57(3n)(am)(1-6). See also, Wis. Admin. Code ch. DCF 58.

The eligibility/review criteria for a relative who is a guardian under §48.977 versus a relative who is not a §48.977 guardian are different. There is no evidence in the record that the petitioner is a §48.977 guardian.

For Kinship Care cases in which the relative is not a §48.977 guardian, all of the conditions listed in §48.57(3m)(am) must be met. The pertinent "conditions specified in par. (am)" here are as follows:

1. The kinship care relative applies to the county department or department for payments under this subsection and the county department or department determines that *there is a need for the*

child to be placed with the kinship care relative and that the placement with the kinship care relative is in the best interest of the child.

2. The county department or department determines that the child meets one or more of the criteria specified in s.48.13 or 938.13 or that the child would be at risk of meeting one or more of those criteria if the child were to remain in his or her home.
(emphasis added)

Id., (3m)(am)1,2.

II. “NEED FOR THE PLACEMENT”

The code elaboration on the “need for the Kinship Care placement/living arrangement” is as follows:

DCF 58.10 Eligibility criteria. Before approving an application for a kinship care payment, an agency shall determine that all of the following criteria are met:

(1) NEED OF THE CHILD. (a) The child needs the kinship living arrangement. The agency shall determine that the child needs the kinship living arrangement by determining at least *one* of the following:

1. The child’s need for adequate food, shelter and clothing can be better met with the relative than with the child’s parent or parents.
2. The child’s need to be free from physical, sexual or emotional injury, neglect or exploitation can be better met with the relative than with the child’s parent or parents.
3. The child’s need to develop physically, mentally and emotionally to his or her potential can be better met with the relative than with the child’s parent or parents.
4. The child’s need for a safe or permanent family can be better met with the relative than with the child’s parent or parents.

Wis. Admin. Code §DCF 58.10(1)(a) (November, 2008). The petitioner’s residence, per the home assessment, is suitable. She treats the children appropriately. The petitioner’s living arrangement is superior to that of [REDACTED] [REDACTED] because there apparently is *no* parental living arrangement available. Thus, there should not be a denial on the basis of “no need for the living arrangement.”

III. ELIGIBLE CHILDREN MUST FIT A CATEGORY UNDER WIS. STAT. § 48.13.

Another criterion to be satisfied is whether the child’s situation satisfies the test at §48.57(3m)(am)2 – “the child meets one or more of the criteria specified in s.48.13 or 938.13.” Section 938.13 refers to juvenile delinquents and truants; these children are not juvenile delinquents or truant.

The shopping list of §48.13 criteria are as follows:

48.13 Jurisdiction over children alleged to be in need of protection or services. ...

- (1) Who is without a parent or guardian;

- (2) Who has been abandoned;
- (3) Who has been the victim of abuse, as defined in s.48.02
- (4) Who has been the victim of abuse, as defined in s.48.02
- (1)(a),(b),(c), (d), (e), or (f), including injury that is self-inflicted or inflicted by another;
- (3m) Who is at substantial risk of becoming the victim of abuse, as defined in s.48.02(1)..., including injury that is self-inflicted or inflicted by another, based on reliable and credible information that another child in the home has been the victim of such abuse;
- (5) Whose parent or guardian signs the petition requesting jurisdiction under this subsection and is unable or needs assistance to care for or provide necessary special treatment or care for the child;
- (6) Who has been placed or care or adoption in violation of law;
- (8) Who is receiving inadequate care during the period of time a parent is missing, incarcerated, hospitalized or institutionalized;
- (9) Who is at least age 12, signs the petitioner requesting jurisdiction under this subsection and is in need of special treatment or care which the parent, guardian or legal custodian is unwilling, neglecting, unable or needs assistance to provide;
- (10) Whose parent, guardian or legal custodian neglects, refuses or is unable for reasons other than poverty to provide necessary care, food, clothing, medical or dental care or shelter so as to seriously endanger the physical health of the child;
- (10m) Whose parent, guardian or legal custodian is at substantial risk of neglecting, refusing or being unable for reasons other than poverty to provide necessary care, food, clothing, medical or dental care or shelter so as to endanger seriously the physical health of the child, based on reliable and credible information that the child's parent, guardian or legal custodian has neglected, refused or been unable for reasons other than poverty to provide necessary care, food, clothing, medical or dental care or shelter so as to endanger seriously the physical health of another child in the home;
- (11) Who is suffering emotional damage for which the parent, guardian or legal custodian has neglected, refused or been unable and is neglecting, refusing or unable, for reasons other than poverty, to obtain necessary treatment or to take necessary steps to ameliorate the symptoms;
- (11m) Who is suffering from an alcohol and other drug abuse impairment, exhibited to a severe degree, for which the parent, guardian or legal custodian is neglecting, refusing or unable to provide treatment; or
- (13) Who has not been immunized as required by s.252.04 and not exempted under s.252.04(3).

[numbering shown as in the statute]

Wis. Stat. 48.13.

The children now fit the §48.13 criteria because their mother's whereabouts are unknown and the fathers are missing or incarcerated. The mother was not candid with the assessor during the home visit on September 25. She indicated that her absence was temporary and that she was having regular contact with her children. The petitioner testified that the mother left, said she "was getting herself together," and has not been heard from since. The petitioner also testified that a different relative is receiving Kinship

Care benefits for the mother's other child, whom she also abandoned. I have no corroboration in the hearing record regarding the receipt of KC for the sibling.

Due to abandonment, these two children are eligible for Kinship Care payments pursuant to the September, 2013, application.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The children M.B. and L.R. do meet all of the Kinship Care criteria.

THEREFORE, it is

ORDERED

That the petition herein be remanded to the agency with instructions to complete the processing of the petitioner's September, 2013, Kinship Care application in accord with the Conclusions of Law above, within 10 days of the date of this decision

REQUEST FOR A REHEARING

This is a final administrative decision. If you think this decision is based on a serious mistake in the facts or the law, you may request a rehearing. You may also ask for a rehearing if you have found new evidence which would change the decision. Your request must explain what mistake the Administrative Law Judge made and why it is important or you must describe your new evidence and tell why you did not have it at your first hearing. If you do not explain these things, your request will have to be denied.

To ask for a rehearing, send a written request to the Division of Hearings and Appeals, P.O. Box 7875, Madison, WI 53707-7875. Send a copy of your request to the other people named in this decision as "PARTIES IN INTEREST." Your request for a rehearing must be received no later than 20 days after the date of the decision. Late requests cannot be granted.

The process for asking for a rehearing is in Wis. Stat. § 227.49. A copy of the statutes can be found at your local library or courthouse.

APPEAL TO COURT

You may also appeal this decision to Circuit Court in the county where you live. Appeals must be served and filed with the appropriate court no more than 30 days after the date of this hearing decision (or 30 days after a denial of rehearing, if you ask for one).

For purposes of appeal to circuit court, the Respondent in this matter is the Department of Children and Families. After filing the appeal with the appropriate court, it must be served on the Secretary of that Department, either personally or by certified mail. The address of the Department is: 201 East Washington Avenue, Madison, Wisconsin 53703. A copy should also be sent to the Division of Hearings and Appeals, 5005 University Avenue, Suite 201, Madison, WI 53705-5400.

The appeal must also be served on the other "PARTIES IN INTEREST" named in this decision. The process for appeals to the Circuit Court is in Wis. Stat. §§ 227.52 and 227.53.

Given under my hand at the City of Madison,
Wisconsin, this 30th day of November, 2013

\sNancy J. Gagnon
Administrative Law Judge
Division of Hearings and Appeals



State of Wisconsin\DIVISION OF HEARINGS AND APPEALS

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The preceding decision was sent to the following parties on December 2, 2013.

Professional Services Group - PSG
DCF - Kinship Care
DCF - Kinship Care