

Wisconsin Child Care Advisory and Recommendation Exchange (WI-CARE) Meeting Minutes July 14, 2026

12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Attendees

WI-CARE Child Care Provider Members

- Bianca Hill, Milwaukee
- Carol Jackomino, Rhinelander
- Christine Larson Salerno, Waukesha County
- Cynthia Reineking, La Crosse
- Jay Martinez, Oneida
- Jolynn Wendt, Arcadia
- Jose Martinez, Statewide
- Kahlila Fennell, Milwaukee
- Leighton Cooper, Milwaukee
- Rose Catlett, Middleton
- Shelly Boelter, Hager City
- Sheri Bishop, Pulaski
- Suzette Mayotte, Ashland
- Tammy Dannhoff, Oshkosh
- Tanisha Johnson, Milwaukee
- Thanh Bui-Duquette, Eau Claire
- Tricia Peterson, Juneau

DCF Staff

- Cassidy Peterson (tech/notes)
- Sherri Underwood (notes)
- Alex Gagnon (notes)
- Braxton Brown (notes)
- Sarah Dillinger (facilitator)
- Cassidy Farrey (facilitator)
- Terra Klein (facilitator)
- Daria Hall (facilitator)

Meeting Notes

Welcome, Reminder of Meeting Norms

Presented by: Daria Hall, Policy Initiatives Advisor, DCF Division of Early Care and Education

- Daria went over member logistics and meeting norms.

- Daria offered a recap of last month's meeting outcomes and presented today's meeting agenda.

YoungStar Coaching and Rating Timeline

Presented by: Terra Klein, Strategic Quality Initiatives Supervisor, Bureau of YoungStar, Division of Early Care and Education

- Terra shared feedback and research related to quality improvement
- Terra shared current practice and future possibilities
 - Current practice: Rating required every 2 years, self-assessment and quality improvement plan required for 3-5 star rating, coaching is optional
 - Future possibility: Lengthen the time between ratings from every 2 years to 3 or 4 years
- Terra shared benefits and risks of a longer rating timeline
 - Benefits: Move resources from rating into coaching, programs would have more time with their coach and space to intentionally connect support to quality improvement goals, less pressure to focus on "have to" for rating and more focus on unique program needs
 - Risks: Less public reporting, impact on quality adjustment, disengagement from coaching process
- Terra posed breakout room discussion questions

Question 1: What are your immediate reactions to a 3 or 4 year rating timeline? Why?

Breakout Room 1 Notes

- Lingering question: You said a couple of states decided to eliminate rating. Why is WI opting to keep the rating scale at 3 or 4 instead of like other states focusing more on the coaching? What I've seen is it's like a supervisor...I'm going to offer you coaching and am here for support, but the person not engaged because they don't want to be rated poorly for honest answers. We have decided to eliminate rating for coaching. We have someone else come in for checks and balances to see if we are doing what we should for quality with ERS. We saw more staff wanting to sign up for coaching. If other states have seen that or is there a way that instead of being the same entity if those responsibilities could be separated out. Could hear someone saying there have to be checks and balances. I have seen programs that have achieved rating drop off b/c of concern about rating. Look for happy medium.
 - Facilitator: We are still undergoing review and analysis. Some things our team has authority to do. Rating extension is one of the things. Critical things would have to happen for us to remove rating. Example: rule making authority, statutory changes. This would free up some coaching resources.
- Would providers still have the opportunity to be rated outside of the 3-4 year option?
 - Facilitator: Yes, that would not change. Folks might request rating if it could go up. We would not remove that opportunity.

- Agree with previous comment, would love to go away from rating and focus on coaching. I have two sites on different schedules. Having extended timeline would be helpful. Two years goes so much faster than we can fathom, especially in our industry where we are already stressed.
- Facilitator: Do you have a preference between 3 or 4 years? No. Want to say 4 to give myself more time, but 3 makes more sense for me. 4 years is too hands off.
- I would be excited about 4 years if I were doing YoungStar rating. My accreditation just switched to a 4-year cycle. We've got licensing and DPI, etc. updates to do. To not have to do YoungStar every two years...with my NAC accreditation, this is the 2nd year. There have been a few hiccups, but overall it's helpful and I wouldn't change it b/c there are too many things to do all the time. Getting ready to be evaluated is a lot, stressful for staff. No one needs to do that every 2 years.
- Would that still include doing similar self-reports or doing your own ratings and turn them in, or would it be here is your rating and hands off?
 - Facilitator: There will be programmatic pieces to figure out but one of the things we are looking at is timeline for things like self-assessment and quality improvement plan.
- I agree with prior comments, especially about coaching. Licensing holds us accountable. YoungStar is meant to improve quality; the best way to do that is educating/supporting those on front line. With rating, feels like doing steps to get to that rating. For 3 or 4 years, as long as providers have option to be rated at any point. I will say that turnover with coaches can also be a challenge. Wonder how that would look across more years in terms of handoff, how to pick up what we were working on with one coach...something to consider.
- 4 years

Breakout Room 2 Notes

- Personally I think that is a great idea; I'm currently accredited and we have a system where our accreditation is years out, but this was my first year getting an administrative review during those ratings and visits and it was amazing to me to be able to go in and answer questions. If we had things we felt like we needed to work on and have coaching assistance with, it helped myself and my team to help what we want to focus on and strengthen our program, it allows us to do that. A great idea that is being proposed.
 - Facilitator – do you do a self assessment each year?
 - Yes, we do self assessments, parent surveys, still ongoing during that process; if we have things, one of our big ones was making sure our teachers were focused on child-teacher engagement piece. So that is something was focused on during this most recent review for coaching. So those assessments do play a big role, as well. Able to support staff with what they need coaching on
- I agree, the fact that we could go 4 years, goes with that accreditation cycle. But if you know every four years, to keep YoungStar rating, that is when you go for it. I live in Northern WI and I think it was last year, did YoungStar for a three rating. I'm so far north, you do not travel so far. But I like the idea of going to a four star or with a quality

improvement and support with a zoom meeting, which may be helpful for those way up North.

- I think generally that I'm in agreement with increasing the timeframe between ratings, I'm just not sure if 3 year or 4 year is better. We are seeing a large influx of staff who are less familiar with core child care principles. Our staff are always actively engaged and coaching, monitoring, and mentoring staff so any additional support could be helpful in that. I just don't know if 3 year or 4 year would be better. What would four year allow that three year wouldn't? And tie back to finances, how does this not impact our finances? Could there be an off-ramp where we are good with coaching and rating and try to be selected for a higher rating – opt for this for a formal rating so that financially it would not be financially overbearing.
- Facilitator: It would be helpful to hear, even if you don't have a clear 3 or 4 – think about the tradeoffs of 3 vs 4:
- Any increase in that timeframe is helpful having such a large number of centers it is such a revolving door; keeping those ratings in process; allowing more time helps to focus on specific strategies for centers. But not sure what separates what they couldn't do in three vs four. Really likes the option to self-request a rating. Especially if you've done a lot of coaching and work, wouldn't want to wait that long before an increase. Any increase from the two-year would be an improvement.
- Head Start has gone to five year project periods. Extending out to be more in alignment would make sense. But as far as the application process, would be nice not to do so so frequently.
- Facilitator: Head start expanded to five years, what was it prior?
 - Annual
- Facilitator: could you just share on any reflections on the shift from annual to five?
 - I think there was less redundancy and repetition. It gave us more time to focus on strategic goals and have time to work on that as opposed to every year to try to re-do that. There's still lots to do annually, but there is greater ability to measure progress, maybe, but in a five year project you're going to see some growth in programmatic changes that need to be addressed.
- Set five year goals for your own program; every year you are assessing how you are achieving that goal through self-assessment. And we also know we do get three federal reviews to assess how we are being monitored throughout. So when we plan ahead in dev our program goals, we are always thinking ahead with what we can achieve. Every year we are still re-visiting to see if we need to make any modifications. So the timeline is clearly defined which supports short-term and long-term planning.

Breakout Room 3 Notes

- Wonderful, one of the reasons people go to NAEYC accreditation. Already doing more paperwork in rating so feel like 2 years wasn't enough. Trying to align more with NAEYC and think it's a better move. More moves need to happen but this is a good one.
- If you really want to do this you're going to do it. This isn't to move forward, it's the point of the mindset and this is why change needs to happen. We want quality care, something that's meaningful and for parents to get something and see value. County shares is getting less, and don't feel we are being supported in the way we need to be

supported. We all feel quality is different, and we need to meet people at their level of care. We do ASQs in the beginning and get to see in the spring where the growth happens. We use pieces of this to see where are training needs to happen. Can we add to the portal an app for YoungStar or for quality care and we go on their and add to this. When the observer comes in, we can't fake that. Wish coaching was more meaningful and met me where I am. Hope to be in the field where the change happens. Headed in the right direction.

- Currently in 4th year of reflective supervision and get to bring issues to the table, helps bring issues that are occurring in the program and would highly recommend.
- Moving forward, when do you foresee this as an option? How will you differentiate between quality and how does the money play a piece in that?
- So many of us are in panic mode right now and wondering if in terms of YoungStar, are we going to survive.
- Would say longer than three years. Seeing people and all the things they need to do to maintain the requirements and what they need to do to put things into practice. Really have to weigh it.
- Choose to get coaching but she doesn't call me. I just filled out my form back in April and haven't been contacted since. She's now my 3rd or 4th coach and I feel like the last 2 haven't really grown with us a center. Everything we were offered we had already done, and she said, "I don't really know how to help you". A lot could have gained more respect than just ignoring.
- I don't have the extra time to get paperwork done so trying to get to 2 to 3 star can be very tricky depending on what's going on in personal life. Want this to be a good quality improvement so don't want to just check boxes. As long as it is done in a way that things aren't getting back-burnered since deadline is coming up. Having gameplan or guideline of year one being really focusing on eval, year 2, so on and so forth. Having a springboard to jump off of.
- If you require it people might not take it as seriously as if it is optional. Optional but really encouraged and can be beneficial bot just for your program but also for staff. Required feels like more just checking the box, optional being things that you really want to do.
- At some point life will be less chaotic, is there an option want to improve your rating later and not having to wait that 3 to 4 years?
- If it's 4 years, it's tricky because my certification and YoungStar are in the same range. Certainly could make a difference. Gut reaction is that 4 years is a long time and that 3 years isn't enough. Especially for new programs. Trying to figure out in's outs of the business, so trying to figure that out down the road is a long time. 3 years could help jump start and really keep the ball moving. We're always growing learning, finding out new things. 3 years seems to keep the momentum going.
- Agree with points on how it could be beneficial, but know some providers that only do it when they HAVE to do it. Worry that timeline could be too long. For people that are in YoungStar because they want to do it I think it's great but have a concern with that other aspect.
- Even the best programs have days that aren't great. Hear a lot about the coaching, so I don't know if it's better coaching or accessibility to a coach or someone when you need help, maybe periodic check-ins but I know when people come in it can take many years

for licenser to come and not be scared. I know a few people that are in YoungStar and they're not doing what they need to be doing, there isn't a lot of money added on so why not just do with you're supposed to be doing.

- Continuous piece until you get to the point of your actual evaluation, do like the idea of an annual assessment.
- Agree with the three years.
- Am accredited, going through that process again, won't say that it's "easy" but once you go through that first process you have most of the pieces. Can be fairly easy to renew.

Question 2: If we move to a longer timelines between ratings, how do we mitigate risk and keep coaches and providers engaged?

Breakout Room 1 Notes

- We do an annual report around things we scored lower on and put together a plan, also show data and improvements (ex: staff training).
- One of the things we've embedded with coaching is health and safety. If coach is out there and sees health and safety risk, they notify the center manager and make sure they are aware of the risks. Thinking about risks to child. What is our purpose? Quality care for children. Want to make sure staff has all the skills they need to create a safe and nurturing environment. One of the things the coach is looking at is environment. Is it safe for the child? If health and safety risk, make sure everyone involved knows. We have a lead manager for coaching. Conversations between coaches and mentors are private. There is the creation of action plans, to increase skill sets. Plans are reviewed by the manager. This provides the checks and balances. If something is concerning, this is how it gets elevated. Also like to look at interaction between the teacher and parent/adult in addition to child. What is documented, what is health and safety, in terms of mitigating risks, think of how to avoid harming child or anyone. In terms of rating, if this is how providers get funded, if that continues, folks do need that option to get rated. When licensing comes in and gives thumbs up, that's an indicator that program is working toward quality. One factor is not enough staff. Need to focus on building skills of those we do have to ensure parents and community when they come in they are getting quality care because we have a system that comes in through coaching and investing on building skills instead of rating. When we focus on the rating too much we get the rating and forget about the quality in between. Let's maintain it all the time by eliminating rating and focus on that. Let licensing come in and be the checks and balances.
- Would the coaching be something that would be occurring ongoing with the rating being every 3-4 years?
 - Facilitator: Yes, one thing we want to get at is what current self-assessment and quality improvement plan cycle looks like.
- Coaches and providers could have check-ins via emails between the rating times and meet via zoom if/as needed to connect to make sure on track.
- Agree, virtual check-ins could be helpful. Because we are in rural area, we don't get a lot of coaching. Have to beg for it. We struggle with building and improving our systems ourselves for leadership to also coach staff. Coaching needs to improve in rural areas. Frees up coaches...what does that mean? On site, more virtual? What's that going to

look like? Continuing education options are great but not the same as one-on-one coaching with a coach. That's really all we are receiving right now.

- Facilitator: What are things you want to see from us to make sure coaching is more oriented toward needs. What would make it actually happen?
- Hard to say because we were overlooked for a few years. We have a new coach but have only met her once. Can't say you can reach out to our YoungStar Coach. They say they can come to a staff meeting but that's only if it fits the schedule. Can't close the center for a day for coaching b/c we are in a low-income area and parents can't afford that. Only coaching we've gotten was for the rating, so can't really say. A recurring schedule that we can count on might be helpful. A lot is put on us to schedule, say what we need, etc.
- We as an organization have tried to say we are working on this core stuff. Something I've tried to do is pull YoungStar into that process to create face time and relationship and not just when there is a rating. Not just in one site but creating a CoP across multiple sites to create peer learning. Both creating the quality but also building camaraderie to support peer to peer. Worked well for a while, then things shifted and now we're being told we can't do that. Not my understanding of what YoungStar was trying to do, especially with group coaching. It has become more like group training. Option for not only individualized opportunities but also group sessions, on our terms. Now several times in a row I have planned a year in advance and the coach confirmed, but suddenly it's "another program needs us." Now there are some barriers and seemingly silly barriers like only working with one site. Opportunities to strengthen coaching.
- I don't have an active YoungStar coach either – it would be nice if they reached out on email/phone to just check in at times vs us providers having to always connect with them, to know their support is available and they are able/willing is a huge part.

Breakout Room 2 Notes

- It would be best to make it a requirement. For accreditation it's required. If you don't do that you lose your accreditation standard. Like you said, that was optional coaching, of course people are busy and having staffing issues, don't want to be bothered. But if you make it required, they will ensure it's something they're doing and ensures they are getting the tools needed to support their program.
- I come from a small family child care, only 8 children, just recently went to accreditation. So just once a year for self-assessment for YoungStar, and when can I come out (from coach). I'm my own boss, I don't have to deal with a lot of other paperwork. Will still have other children, a lot of my policies and practices will remain the same after the year. But even option of going two years if you wanted to. For a smaller center like mine, four years is a great thing, but still have the self-assessment.
 - Facilitator: Yes, yearly self-assessment.
- Facilitator: How can we make coaching more engaging towards what providers need?
- Yeah I think like we always say the devil's in the details. Hiring the right folks is always important. Need to build those bridges and relationships; when we're talking about coaching and mentoring, how do we get at what we feel programs really need? Survey to see what programs are struggling with and needs assistance with? We have approximately 100 after school programs – folks are really struggling with youth mental

health and how to support them uniquely in classes. So how do we really get at what staff need to really support? So if programs don't find it helpful they won't utilize the service. So it needs to be self-identified or co-identified. What we need, not just what someone else says is needed.

- I am part of my own coaching program. A big part of that with coaching is people really getting what they need since no program is the same. It's important to make sure that the needs are met for what people need coaching on (e.g., business strategies; budget; kids with special needs), so I think sending something out that is related to each program. And it could go to teachers and owners of this program.
- Coaching is a huge part. The reason I left Youngstar is because of my coach; wasn't very useful to me. Wasn't very available to sit with me and review my rating. Handed me my paperwork that you are a five star, come see to me if you have any questions. Others had good experience, I did not. So I went to accreditation. Relationship with that person. We're not best friends but I can call them and ask them questions.
- To stay engaged annual virtual meetings with a self-assessment with goals.
- Relationship building is very important and individualization. Not everyone needs the same. So doing that program assessment is important with how to support that specific center and really focusing on relationship building. And everyone receives information differently and need to modify information differently for how they are able to receive that information. So relationship building is very important and the need to modify to the individual need. Family providers vs big center with 100 kids, for example.
- Facilitator: One of the themes we heard was "I don't know what I need in terms of coaching. Please just tell me something that's helpful." I'm feeling this tension. How do we meet programs needs – this is what I need – and the needs of programs who are in a different place, less experience, different situation.
- We are having the same exact conversation about mental health conversation. We want you to come in to fix the behaviors. We don't want more training. And that's not the purpose of mental health consultation. We now have new people coming in. So we ask our staff what would be helpful to support them and give them better understanding. Working on developing an easy to understand document about what a mental health consultant is supposed to do (and not do). Help build your own capacity to support children in a classroom. So we are kind of developing a menu to choose from. We have the same feedback. And that's okay. So we are giving some examples of the things you can ask. Or if you need modeling in the classroom, observation, give some examples to build in – to give them a better understanding – and for our consultant to give them a better understanding as well. They are just starting to test this out.
- I wonder if there's different tracks – for new employees/individuals; covers the basics, e.g., interactions, policies are in place, modeling; appropriate budget, all the things that a quality program needs to be successful. Another track with more experienced professionals. Seeing some challenges with family, community or with students, etc. So maybe there are different tracks to opt-into based on where they are at.
- I like the fact that you're asking what you're struggling with. I've been in family child care for over 25 years. If a coach came to me and said you need to do [xyz] then I wouldn't take it well. Somebody who is brand new into my center, I'm going to have a hard time

accepting that. But if they meet me where I'm at, I'm going to be more receptive to it. More of a relationship with the coach, not someone trying to change everything.

- We've talked about the coaching piece. But there is something to be said about mentoring relationships. Some folks may not know what quality programming looks like, so a YoungStar coach could be helpful in managing relationships with multiple centers and they could help pair folks. Encourage connections and visits. We tend to be very fragmented, instead of being collaborative and working together and building community.

Wrap-Up

Presented by: Daria Hall, Policy Initiatives Advisor, DCF Division of Early Care and Education

- Next meeting: Thursday, August 13 at 12:00p.m.; Topic: Wisconsin Early Learning and Development Guidelines

English

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Spanish

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