

Wisconsin Child Care Advisory and Recommendation Exchange (WI-CARE) Meeting Minutes May 8, 2026

12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Attendees

WI-CARE Child Care Provider Members

- Bianca Hill, Milwaukee
- Christine Larson Salerno, Waukesha County
- Cynthia Reineking, La Crosse
- Jen Kalis, Onalaska
- Joahna Shelton, Spooner
- Jolynn Wendt, Arcadia
- Jose Martinez, Statewide
- Kahlila Fennell, Milwaukee
- Kishaunda Ransaw, Milwaukee
- Leighton Cooper, Milwaukee
- Margarita Ugalde, Madison
- 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

- Jason Bierbrauer (facilitator)
- Andrea Cammilleri (tech/notes)
- Pirkko Moilanen (facilitator)
- Daria Hall (facilitator)
- Sherri Underwood (notes)
- Cassidy Peterson (tech)
- Nicole Schneider (facilitator)
- LeeAnn Chambers (notes)

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, meeting norms and the meeting agenda.

Child Care Finder Enhancements

Presented by: Jason Bierbrauer, Bureau of Operations and Planning, Division of Early Care & Education

- We talked to you in November 2024 about the last round of changes. Some of your feedback was implemented, such as the temporary closure display and adding icons for serious and repeat violations.
- The 2026 Preschool Development Grant provided funding for another round of changes this year.
- We gathered feature ideas from the federal review of the Child Care Finder, past WI-CARE input, staff ideas, partner organization input, and through the YoungStar statewide engagement process.
- Jason named many items that could be updated that we think are most helpful to parents:
 - Updating text and messaging to help parents use the site
 - Increasing usability and accuracy of Head Start locations
 - Fixing bugs
 - Improving listing of vacancies and waitlists
 - Adding filters for Get Kids Ready-participating programs and those that are eligible to accept Wisconsin Shares
 - Enhancing the violation listing on the Facility Details page to include the same icons as the Summary Report page
 - Adding 'First licensed on' or 'First certified on dates
 - Defining each regulation type
- Jason then listed several items we might be able to do in this round of changes:
 - Adding more search features for before/after school and faith-based programs
 - Adding more language filters (Chinese, Arabic, Russian, Vietnamese, Burmese, Somali)
 - Displaying monitoring visits as announced or unannounced
 - Improving readability and fonts
 - Displaying and updated date for provider reported features
- Finally, Jason shared some features that we can't do now and the reasons why
 - Search for closed programs
 - Search along your route
 - Display staff years of experience
 - Show that non-compliances are resolved
 - Provider pay and benefits
 - More details from the Business Information Form (BIF) around program philosophy, school-age summer care filter, program and policy practices, community partnerships, experience accommodating children with disabilities or developmental delays

Question 1: What Child Care Finder features in the first group do you think would be most helpful to parents/caregivers and why?

Breakout Room 1 Notes

- Wisconsin Shares and Get Kids Ready filters will be beneficial. Icons around the repeat violations in the last two years, will it also be indicated as serious violations? For example, I've had a repeat violation for health forms since I have no control of when parents bring it back vs if I happen to have a repeat chemical violation.
 - **DCF Facilitator:** If you go into your provider page in the Child Care Finder, you can see how they appear now. This enhancement will work the same way.
- For suggested increase usability and accuracy of Head Start locations and filters, this will be helpful to families around specific programs. I know sometimes we have a lot of information, and sometimes having all of these filters feels too cluttered.
 - **DCF Facilitator:** We could group the filters into categories like "Languages" or "Program Types."
 - I like that idea. Our experience is that these filters are where families get caught. Families are specifically looking for Spanish speaking centers. It might also help other families if it's easier to filter.
- Serious violations (such as the chemical example shared earlier) can be deceiving as it can be a hand sanitizer tied to a diaper bag in a hallway cubby. This can be misconstrued and drastically different than hard chemicals in a lower cabinet. I would agree that the Wisconsin Shares filter is important, spelling out Head Start and Early Head Start is important. I like being able to indicate the ability to serve School Age and doing so seasonally is important. Sectioning off filters in a variety of ways may be helpful.
 - **DCF Facilitator:** Tell me more about how you would set up the ages filters since we have an infant and toddler filter plus a before/after school option.
 - Some parents think their 3-year-old is a toddler, so it would just be more clear on ages. Adding school age as a breakout, additionally 3K or 4K, or seasonal provider offerings (school year only or summer camp only).
- For the YoungStar ratings, is it captured anywhere to determine "I just want 2-star ratings" - is there a way to filter those with automated 2-star ratings vs. if they are rated through the full process? These are common questions from parents looking for providers close to their other children, close to home, or close to school.
- What if you see something on your profile that is no longer accurate, how do we update that?
- How do we add things that are missing? Like Program Philosophy.
 - **DCF Facilitator:** This can be updated via the BIF. I suggest reaching out to your licensing specialist if you'd like support.
- Temporary closures including dates is definitely helpful to understand who is truly closed or short-term closed when trying to contact the provider(s).

Breakout Room 2 Notes

- On the main page, it says something like regulation but doesn't define regulated care. I know what regulated care is because I've been in the business for a while, but a parent



may not know what is regulated care. Maybe something short but descriptive. I don't know if by that description they would know what regulated care is. I give my parents the form if they are interested, but some parents may not get that. Maybe a snapshot on the first page that shows differences (between regulation types). I don't know where that would come in at, but to make it easier for them.

- Good point.
- Differences between program types are great, but also the benefits of why to choose regulated care. For some, it's just daycare, why does it matter if regulated or not? Not crazy detailed, but a snapshot of why they'd want to go with regulated.
- I feel one of the biggest reasons parents go on here is either to find a child care or to look up a child care they are interested in, so vacancies and waitlists are important.
- I do feel that parents being able to see if there is a waitlist is important. One thing parents ask me if I don't have room is "do you have a waitlist?"
 - **DCF Facilitator:** Is there something we should be displaying differently for folks who respond but don't have vacancies vs. those who don't respond?
 - If you could put in bold on program pages that don't have vacancies that they don't have any, that would help. I get calls from folks asking if I will have vacancies soon. This will help parents streamline who to call.
 - I work in a small, in-home daycare; when I tell parents I don't have an opening, also tell them I won't have one for 2-3 years. Could we add potential opening dates? Then they would know what might be an option.
- Can we put in group sizes at the program? Like ratios/the max number of children you can have.
 - **DCF Facilitator:** That is currently available on each provider page.
- I think the Get Kids Ready and Wisconsin Shares filters are a pretty big bonus; Get Kids Ready is new and this is a bonus for the parents. That one benefitted me.
- I think the icon is important; do we have anything for a good site visit?
 - I think that's already in there. It will show no violations.
 - So maybe a green icon or something for that?
 - **DCF Facilitator:** Maybe we could use the same green check?
- I like that you are adding in the years they were regulated. A lot of times, parents don't know and want to go to someone who is more seasoned. You can look at the time they've been in the field and their visits if they've had violations. That history falls off after 3 years; don't know if that can change? Folks might want people to be able to look at everything, not just the past 2 or 3 years.

Breakout Room 3 Notes

- I have some comments on the vacancies update screen. If programs aren't regularly completing the BIF, is there an opportunity to encourage parents to contact the program for that information instead of leaving it blank? I would encourage that detailed language refer parents to contact the provider, to make sure it doesn't look like the program was negligent. We have so many sites that completing the BIF is a major effort and we don't always get them updated for every site. We have a large number of programs that are closed for the summer so I like that feature showing the range of dates that programs



are closed. It's a lot of effort and we have one person assigned to go in and close the program in the spring, then reopen programs in the system. It would be nice if it automatically handled more of that for seasonal programs. I like the features differentiating different types of programs from each other. Sometimes parents just want to find programs at their child's school and will search for it by name. What is trending is more information on non-compliances and so forth, but at what point does it skew toward a negative reflection on the provider? There are huge discrepancies even between licensors because some enforce things more than others so out of two programs doing the same thing, one might have a violation for it and the other may not. I want to be sure we are helping child care providers with the Child Care Finder, not putting them in a different light.

- I represent a school district as a preschool program coordinator. When I was looking at the page that breaks programs out as Head Start, 4K, and he mentioned a Get Kids Ready filter as well. From experience, I can tell you parents are extremely confused about what all these 4K programs are. I would like to see a DCF tab that says "I have a four-year-old" and then it would explain the various options available. When I see 4K, I think of 4K licensed partner sites or 4K Community Approach, maybe not the school.
 - **DCF Facilitator:** There is also a way for them to search for programs based on the age of their child. It's redundant with the 4K filter but some may recognize one more than the other.
 - Will there be a description tab to help them understand the difference?
 - **DCF Facilitator:** We're adding more links. When a parent is looking at a Head Start filter, they can click the words Head Start to learn more about what it is.
 - I appreciate that. Clear is kind.
- I have a comment on the vacancies and doing the BIF form. I don't have any openings for probably the next 3 years. Is that going to send a signal if I keep filling it out the same each time?
 - DCF Facilitator: It will show the most recent 'updated on' date.
- I am from a Head Start Program with Early Head Start as well. I was searching for our program. One of the thing I noticed, many of our programs are only open Monday through Thursday but we are licensed for Fridays in case we ever need to make up days for a snow day, for example. When I search the Child Care Finder, it shows up that we are open on Friday but in reality, we don't operate on Friday. I feel that's misinformation for families. We always put our actual hours out publicly. I wonder if there could be a better explanation that these are licensed hours, not necessarily real operating hours.
 - **DCF Facilitator:** Should we add the hours of operation?
 - Yes, I think you have to allow Head Start programs to display their actual hours working with children. Otherwise it's misleading.

Question 2: Which items in the 'might-be-able-to-do list are most helpful to parents/caregivers and why?

Breakout Room 1 Notes

- Font is key sometimes. If there is money for the improvement, my eyesight isn't what it used to be, maybe you could make the font size larger. Also making the color of the text clear to help being able to see it. For example, the Child Care Finder small red text - "Special Types of Care Available", "Vacancies", "Waitlists", etc. is harder to see.
- Nothing new to add but I agree 100%. Make it all as simple as possible so families are able to get to what they need without thinking deeper. Parents want to see what they want to see. Until I had to make my own website, I didn't realize having to take into consideration the color and font, and I noticed how important it was.
- Maybe add a 'First accredited on' date, too?

Breakout Room 2 Notes

- Before and after school filtering is good; if parents are looking for that, that's one less call they have to do.

Breakout Room 3 Notes

- I'm curious about the announced and unannounced visits. I've never had an announced visit.
 - DCF Facilitator: We are hearing from some parents that they imagine that visits are often announced and providers have time to quickly clean up and prepare everything just for the visit. In reality, many visits are unannounced and as you know, you have to be ready at any time. This could help convey that.
 - I value transparency and any information that will genuinely be helpful for parents. If it's helpful for a parent group...how many folks are they really speaking for? How do you weigh making the change based on what you hear from a small group of people who may or may not represent the whole state? From my perspective, I do not necessarily see identifying the type of visit (scheduled vs. unscheduled) as a priority. Ultimately, it is not a deal breaker for me if it is listed; I simply believe those resources could potentially be utilized elsewhere.

Question 3: What features not listed would you recommend DCF consider adding to the Child Care Finder?

Breakout Room 1 Notes

- I would like to see how everything comes together once it goes into production and doing follow up feedback once these changes are done. A lot of parents never knew about the Child Care Finder. Finding a way for parents to know about Child Care Finder and making sure parents know it's out there would be helpful.
 - **DCF Facilitator:** How do we get this information out to parents?
 - Have a QR code that we can share with parents looking for care.
 - I have experienced many schools/school boards/etc. were not aware that the Child Care Finder existed even for their own school-based programs, too.
- It can be a bit cumbersome for providers to ensure all materials are updated with licensing, with the Wisconsin Registry Org Profile, and remember how to access/keep

the BIF updated. Is there a way that some of these components can be consolidated and updated in Child Care Provider Portal and pulled from that to update/inform this page? Such as Philosophy, enrollments, waitlists, etc.?

Breakout Room 2 Notes

- Is there a way for parents searching and they find multiple places they want to call, like a checkbox if they were “shopping” to compare or print out or email that list.
 - That would be nice.
- Parents should be able to access event listings without providing their email address and joining a listserv. I can see how parents would think, “I don’t know if I want to give my email address again.”

Breakout Room 3 Notes

- I would recommend an overall general refresh to make it more inviting and easy for families. It starts by talking about different types of care. How could that be restructured? The first fields are about location and then goes into child care needs, but I don’t think it’s laid out the best. Many times parents know of a program, but typing in the program name is way down at the bottom—it would be nice to have that moved up. Also I’d just take a larger look at accessibility, navigation, and how it flows for families.
- I’m thinking about my perspective as a parent, I would like it to show the cost (tuition). Add that to the Provider Details section.
- I prefer that it show how many things were reviewed and how many violations they had. It’s important to show the full number of items reviewed that there were only 3 violations out of 100 reviewed, for example. That’s important for someone to know.
 - **DCF Facilitator:** We agree! The Summary Report shows that.

Next Steps

Presented by: Jason Bierbrauer, Bureau of Operations and Planning, Division of Early Care & Education

- DCF will do technical work on the Child Care Finder from July – December 2026.
- In January 2027, we expect to release the next round of updates.

Wrap-Up

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

- Next meeting: Jun. 12, 2026 at 12:00p.m.; Topic: Helping Families of Children with Disabilities Navigate Systems

Action Items

- Prioritize adding filters for Wisconsin Shares acceptance, Get Kids Ready participation, and before/after school care, as well as rewording the Head Start/Early Head Start filters. Make sure the age group filters are clear around what age children are accepted and during what times/seasons.
- Consider organizing/grouping the filters to be less overwhelming or cluttered.

- Briefly clarify what regulated care is and why it is important. Prioritize helping parents understand the different types of regulated care.
- Update what is displayed for provider vacancies. Consider allowing programs to add when they anticipate future vacancies. When the vacancy information has not been updated, add a note suggesting they contact the provider for vacancy information. If possible, state that a provider has no vacancies when the provider has indicated no vacancies in the BIF, so that parents don't need to call the provider to find this out (same with the waitlist).
- Add a positive icon for visits with no violations.
- Prioritize adding the 'First regulated on' date field.
- Prioritize font improvements.
- Consider creating a section of the website for parents of 4-year-olds to help them understand the different options for that age child.
- Help parents/caregivers understand the difference between licensed hours and hours of operation—give providers an option to make that more clear (e.g., Head Start programs that are licensed to operate on Fridays but are not open that day).
- Distinguishing between announced/unannounced visits may not be a priority investment for providers. If it will be added, consider whether scheduled/unscheduled is easier to understand.
- Consider adding a 'First accredited on' date for accredited providers.
- Move the search by program name box higher up so it's more noticeable.
- Create simple communications for families with a QR code to the Child Care Finder.
- Allow providers to update details in the Child Care Finder via the Child Care Provider Portal and/or the BIF.
- Consider a future enhancement to allow parents/caregivers to compare multiple programs side-by-side.
- Consider adding tuition to the Provider Details section.
- Conduct an overall accessibility, navigation, and simplicity review to make the Child Care Finder more parent-friendly and modern.

English

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Spanish

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