



**DECE Terminology/Consistency Style Guide  
and Grammar/Punctuation Resources**  
Maintained by Bureau of Operations and Planning – Updated 1/22/2024

*\*Always run spellcheck when finalizing a document!*

**Vanity URLs** – used on printed material when directing customers to CCIC, YoungStar, MyWICildCare, and Wisconsin Shares home landing pages (*do not put www in front of any of these URLs*)

- ccic.wisconsin.gov
- ccic.wi.gov
- cctraining.wi.gov (links to [Child Care Foundational Training](#))
- childcarefinder.wisconsin.gov (links to the [YoungStar Child Care Finder](#))
- childcarefinder.wi.gov
- dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcarecounts
- mywchildcare.wi.gov
- mywchildcare.wisconsin.gov
- qualitychildcare.wi.gov (goes to <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/quality-compliance-campaign>)
- wishares.wi.gov
- wishares.wisconsin.gov
- youngstar.wisconsin.gov
- youngstar.wi.gov

**A**

Administrative law judge (all lowercase)  
Agency worker  
Approved activity (all lowercase)  
Attendance-based

**B**

Backdate/backdated/backdating (one word, no hyphen)  
BC+ (BadgerCare Plus)  
BCCSA – Bureau of Child Care Subsidy Administration  
BECR – Bureau of Early Care and Regulation (child care regulation)  
BOY – Bureau of YoungStar  
**Benefits** (change to subsidy or funds per the Communications Office)  
Birth to 3  
Birth to 5 (do not capitalize “birth” unless part of specific title, like: PDG Birth to 5 Renewal Grant)  
Biweekly (no hyphen)  
Bookkeeper (one word)  
BOP – Bureau of Operations and Planning (creates training curriculum, provides communications services, and IT support for BOY, BCCSA, BECR, and MECA)  
BRITS – Benefit Recovery Investigation Tracking System  
BRO – Bureau of Regional Operations – the bureau of your Regional Child Care Coordinator  
BV (Benefits Recovery (screens where overpayments are entered on the CARES mainframe))

## C

Cardholder (one word)

Caregiver (one word)

Child Care Background Unit (CBU)

CARES (Client Assistance for Re-employment and Economic Support)

Caseload (one word)

CC (Child Care – prefer to spell out)

CCR&R (Child Care Resource and Referral (helping parents connect to quality providers))

Certification Agency

Certified Provider

Certified School-Age Child Care Program

CDPU – Central Document Processing Unit (processed documents for balance of state)

Celebrate Children Foundation (*no “s” at the end of children*)

Center Director

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Checkbox (one word)

Child care (two words – does not need to be capitalized unless it’s part of a proper name)

Child care assistance

Child Care Coordinators (all lowercase)

[Child Care Counts](#) – Emergency payment program for child care providers during COVID-19

Child Care Eligibility/Authorization Supervisors and Workers (used on Ops Memos instead of Child Care Coordinators)

[Child Care Finder](#) (see YoungStar Child Care Finder)

Child Care Subsidy and Technical Assistance Line (*new name effective 1/27/2017*)

Child care payment

Child care provider or provider (do not capitalize)

Child Care Subsidy Program (See Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy Program)

Child Care Systems

Child Care Worker or Worker (don’t need to capitalize this in documents)

Copayment (or copay) (Subsidy has chosen not to hyphenate)

Copayment Period

Copayment Stabilization Period

Coronavirus

Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESA)

Couch surf(ing)

County (capitalize only when part of proper name)

Court-ordered (hyphenate)

COVID-19

Credit-based

Cross-check (English version) / crosscheck (British version)



CSAW (Child Care Statewide Administration on the Web – authorizations and payment)  
CWW (Cares Worker Web – eligibility web application)

## D

~~Day care/daycare~~ – do not use any form of day care; instead use child care, child care program, or child care center

DCF – Department of Children and Families – state department of Wisconsin Shares

DECE – Division of Early Care and Education – the division of Wisconsin Shares in DCF

Department – use lowercase “d” in “department” – ex: “The department made payments . . .”

DHA – Division of Hearing and Appeals – see Program Integrity

DHS – Department of Health Services – FoodShare, BadgerCare, etc.

DOR – Department of Revenue – handles overpayments for public assistance across Wisconsin

Dropdown (one word)

Dually Regulated (Family child care providers that are both licensed and certified.)

MDPU (Data Processing Unit – used in Milwaukee)

## E

EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer)

EBT CSAW (component of CSAW that supports the MyWICChildCare initiative)

[ebtedge.com](http://ebtedge.com) (all lowercase; URL for FIS)

ECF (Electronic Case File)

Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT)

Email (no hyphen)

Employment plan

Enrollment-based

Entry-level (hyphenated)

Environment Rating Scales (not environmental)

EP (Employability Plan – W-2)

Error-prone profile

## F

Fieldprint (one word)

FEIN (Federal Employment Identification Number – a requirement for qualified employment and one of the 10 conditions for legitimate self-employment)

FEP (Financial and Employment Planner)

FEV (Front End Verification – verifying initial eligibility, an important aspect of Program Integrity)

Fingerprint (one word)

FIS (Fidelity National Information Services)

FIS Cardholder Phone Number – 877-201-7601

FIS Provider Phone Number – 877-201-7753

Forms and publications (always lowercase when referencing the repository)

FPL (Federal Poverty Level)



Front-End Verification (always hyphenate)

FS (FoodShare)

FSET (FoodShare Employment and Training Program)

Full time (no hyphen when used as a noun; hyphenate when used as an adjective) (Ex: The parent works full time. Full-time hours are considered to be 30 hours at this company.)

Full-time/Part-time Initiative (FT/PT)

## G

Gradual Phase Out (initial cap)

## H

Handwashing (more commonly spelled without hyphen since COVID-19)

Head Start (two words)

Homeless/Homelessness

Homeschool/homeschooled

## I

[iChildCare Portal](#) – site where individuals can manage their individual eligibility status to reside and work in a child care setting

Inclement Weather Hours

In-home provider (hyphenated)

Income maintenance agency worker (lowercase all words)

Internet (DCF Style Guide – do not capitalize)

Intranet (DCF Style Guide – do not capitalize)

IPV (Intentional Program Violation – see Program Integrity)

ISP (Individual Self-Sufficiency Case Plan (Tribal TANF)

IVR – Interactive Voice Response

## J

## K

Kickback (one word)

KidStat (one word)

## L

Lead Teacher

Learnfare

~~License-exempt provider~~ (See [Public School Child Care Provider](#))

Liquid asset

Local agency (instead of county/tribe)

Login ID (not logon) (You log in to a system. You log on to a computer.)

## M

MDPU (Document Processing Unit – used in Milwaukee)

MECA (Milwaukee Early Care Administration – child care regulation, subsidized child care, and program integrity for Milwaukee County)

Merchant services (lowercase both words)

Micro-grant (micro-grant)

Migrant Farmworker

MiES (Milwaukee Enrollment Services – manages enrollment in all public assistance programs for Milwaukee County)

MyWIChildCare (all one word – never abbreviate to MWCC on external/public documents; **never spell out Wisconsin or separate the words**)

MyWIChildCare payment card

[MyWIChildCare EBT card](#)

MyWIChildCare card Customer Service (when referring to [FIS customer service](#))

## N

Non-credit (hyphenated)

Non-marital co-parent (hyphenated)

Non-placement parent (hyphenated)

## O

OLC (Office of Legal Counsel – provides DCF with legal counsel and support)

On-call employment

Ongoing (no hyphen)

Online (no hyphen is the preferred and modern standard spelling)

On-site

Overcapacity (one word)

Overpayment (one word – no hyphens)

Out-of-state

## P

PACU (Public Assistance Collection Unit – handles overpayments)

[Parent Portal](#) (spell out Child Care Parent Portal for first use in document)

Parent Share

Part-time or part-time (hyphenate)

Paycheck (one word)

Payment agreement (lowercase both words unless referring to Provider/Parent Payment Agreement form)

Pay stub (two words)

PDG Framework – access, workforce, affordability, and quality should be lower case within sentences

PIES (Program Integrity Enforcement System – payment adjustment calculation in CSAW)

PIN – personal identification number

PLBC – (Post Load Benefit Correction – component of EBT CSAW)  
POS – Point of-Sale device  
Program (or staff or workforce when referring to people who work in a program)  
Program Integrity\_(lowercase both words unless referring to proper name)  
Provider/Parent Written Payment Agreement  
Provider Overpayment  
[Provider Portal](#) (spell out Child Care Provider Portal for first use in document)  
Provider price  
PTS (Partner Training Section – sign up for trainings and view virtual training modules)  
[Public School Child Care Provider](#)

## Q

Qualified immigrant (lowercase both words)  
Quality Improvement Plan  
Quality Rating and Improvement System  
Quarterly Subsidy Authorization Notice

## R

Recordkeeping  
Research-based  
RFA (Request for Assistance – see eligibility)

## S

SAVE (see Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements)  
School-age (not school-aged according to Merriam Webster dictionary) (always hyphenate)  
Scheduled school closed hours  
Secretary (when referencing DCF Secretary)  
Self-employed  
Self-employment  
Self-assessment  
Seven-day notice  
SFTA ([Supporting Families Together Association](#) – provides CCR&R services)  
SISO (Sign-in/Sign-out sheet – see Attendance Reporting)  
Six Month Report Form  
Six-week notice  
Sleep shift hours  
Smartphone (one word, no capitalization needed)  
“Staff,” “workforce,” or “program” when referring to people who work in a program  
Staff-to-child ratio (hyphenate)  
Star-rated (hyphenate)  
Star ratings – 5 Star provider, 4 Star provider, 3 Star level, etc.  
Statewide (one word – no hyphens)

Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE)

**T**

Technical Assistance (TA)  
Technical Consultant (TC)  
Three-Generation Household (hyphenate three-generation)  
Time line (two words if listing important events for successive years)  
Timeline (one word if referencing schedule of events or procedures)  
Time frame (two words, no hyphen)  
TMJ (Transform Milwaukee Jobs program)  
Tool kit (two words)  
Tribal TANF (Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)  
Three-Parent Household (hyphenate)  
Two-Parent Household (hyphenate)  
Two-Week Notice Template

**U**

Unbanked provider  
Username (one word)

**V**

**W**

W-2 ([Wisconsin Works](#))  
Wait-list (hyphenate)  
WAMS (Wisconsin Access Management System (WAMS ID used to login to state systems)  
WebI (Web Intelligence – creates and runs reports on child care statistics)  
Webpage (one word – AP Style Guide)  
Website (a website is a collection of web pages)  
WISCCRS (Wisconsin Child Care Regulatory System – child care regulation computer system)  
Wisconsin Registry (formerly The Registry)  
Wisconsin Shares (**not WI Shares or just Shares when referencing on a public document or webpage**)  
Wisconsin Shares subsidy (*do not use the word “benefits” per the Communications Office*)  
Wisconsin Shares Handbook (*new manual name effective 4/5/2021*)  
Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy program (can shorten to Wisconsin Shares after first use)  
“Wisconsin Shares helps pay for the cost of child care.” (common phrase that we use throughout our materials)  
Wisconsin Shares participants (when referring to people participating in the program)  
[Wisconsin Works](#) (W-2)  
Workers (also known as agency workers/local agency workers)  
“Workforce,” “staff,” or “program” when referring to people who work in a program  
Work-Study (hyphenate)

[www.ebtedge.com](http://www.ebtedge.com) (all lowercase; we do not need to use “www” portion, but it may be included)

## X

## Y

[YoungStar](#) (not YoungStar program or YoungStar QRIS)

1 Star, 2 Star, 3 Star, 4 Star, 5 Star

YoungStar Adjustment (**no longer using Tiered Reimbursement**)

[YoungStar Child Care Finder](#) (see Child Care Finder)

YoungStar Connect

**YoungStar star rating**

YoungStar Wisconsin’s Child Care Quality Rating and Improvement System

YoungStar Technical Consultant (not YoungStar Consultant)

YS (YoungStar – do not to abbreviate on public documents or web pages)

## Z

### DCF Writing Style Guide

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/brandtoolbox/writing-style-guide>

### DCF Forms and Publications Standards Manual

<https://dcfweb/files/publications/pdf/37.pdf>

### Publications Procedures and Checklist

<https://dcfweb/files/publications/pdf/402.pdf> (contains style standards and publication procedures)

### MyWICildCare Common Phrases

“Your card will only work for your approved authorizations.”

“Your Wisconsin Shares subsidy has no cash value.”

### Numbers

[4C](#) (provides CCR&R services to select counties and tribes)

10-day

12-year-old, 1-year-old, etc. (for ages, always use the number)

Six (6) months (spell out and use word for numbers under 10)

24-month time limit

**Numbers less than 10 are spelled out; 10 or greater use the number**

Times – 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (do not use :00 per AP Style Guide)

Hyphenate all written out fractions (ex: one-half)



With figures of four or more digits, use commas (ex: 4,378 or \$1,250)

1980s or 1990s

**Money** – It is not necessary to use zeros in the “cents” portion of a dollar amount if no cents are given (e.g.: \$100 – not \$100.00)

## Bullets vs. Numbers

**Use Bulleted lists** for descriptions or a list of items or paragraphs that you wish to emphasize without the implied chronology or order of importance that a numbered list might convey.

**Use Numbered lists** for instructions or listed items that need should be counted or used in a sequence.

## Other General Styles and Formatting

- **One space after periods per DCF Style Guide.** (Always do a find/replace when submitting a document so you know the document is consistent.)
- Initial cap all subheads in publications and forms
- Use a capital letter for beginning each bulleted or numeric list
- **Dates** - Do not use <sup>th</sup>, <sup>rd</sup>, or other superscripts with Arabic numbers (ex: January 1, February 3, May 19, etc.); it is okay to use superscripts when saying “the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month,” for example.
- **Bullets** – if it’s not a complete sentence, no punctuation is needed at the end of the bullet
- **Commas in a series** – use a comma before “and/or” in a series (AP and Grammar Blue Book)

## Grammar and Punctuation Resources

- [Associated Press Stylebook](#) - subscription needed, but can get some free searches (DCF preferred style)
- [Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation](#) – excellent resource for grammar, punctuation, etc.
- [www.grammarist.com](http://www.grammarist.com) – great grammar and spelling resource
- [Grammarly](#) – free grammar and punctuation checker (use Chrome, Safari, or Firefox)
- [Student’s Guide to Grammar and Punctuation](#) (Scribendi)– free articles and other resources
- [Grammar Girl](#) – quick tips on grammar, podcast
- [QuillBot](#) – grammar checker
- [The Elements of Style \(PDF\)](#) – popular grammar and punctuation resource
- [Writer’s Handbook – University of Wisconsin](#) – grammar and punctuation
- [Purdue Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#) – free writing and style information



## DCF Brand Toolbox

To get access to DCF-approved photos and logos, please login to the [brand toolbox](#).

**To access the new brand toolbox:**

Go here: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/user/login>

Use your DCF login and password.

Click on Shortcuts.

Click on Brand Toolbox.

**Note:** Please do not link to images within the toolbox when using them in documents, publications, etc. Always copy/paste the image to your document and make sure you remove any hyperlinks.