



Wisconsin Child Care Advisory and Recommendation Exchange (WI-CARE)

January 9, 2026

12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Attendees

Attended	First and Last Name	Location	Attended	First and Last Name	Location
	Annette Willburn	Milwaukee	X	Leighton Cooper	Milwaukee
X	Bianca Hill	Milwaukee	X	Liz Tittle	Little Chute
X	Carol Jackomino	Rhineland	X	Margarita Ugalde	Madison
X	Cassie Koch	Madison	X	Rose Catlett	Middleton
X	Christine Larson Salerno	Milwaukee		Ryann Counce Barnes	Milwaukee
X	Cynthia Reineking	La Crosse	X	Shelly Boelter	Hager City
X	Jay Martinez	Green Bay	X	Sheri Bishop	Pulaski
X	Jen Kalis	Onalaska		Suzette Mayotte	Ashland
X	Joahna Shelton	Spooner	X	Tammy Dannhoff	Oshkosh
X	Jolynn Wendt	Arcadia	X	Thanh Bui-Duquette	Eau Claire
X	Jose Martinez	Statewide	X	Tricia Peterson	Juneau
	Kahlila Fennell	Milwaukee	X	William Hill	Milwaukee
	Kishaunda Ransaw	Milwaukee			

DCF Staff: Andrea Cammilleri (tech/notes), Sarah Dillinger (facilitator), Daria Hall (facilitator), Alex Gagnon (notes), Terra Klein (facilitator), Luvia Montoya (notes), Cassidy Peterson (tech), Sherri Underwood (facilitator)

Meeting Notes

12:00 – 12:10

Welcome, Reminder of Meeting Norms, Recap of last meeting

Daria Hall, Policy Initiatives Advisor

DCF Division of Early Care and Education

Notes

- Daria read through the meeting norms, meeting agenda, and shared a recap of ideas that members shared about Wisconsin Shares resources. Daria thanked a member of WI-CARE who will be leaving us after today's meeting. She also gave an update on federal

child care funding that has been in the news. She then introduced Terra Klein from YoungStar.

- Terra shared that YoungStar is Wisconsin's child care quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), which
 - sets standards for child care quality,
 - measures how programs are doing on quality standards,
 - supports providers, and
 - gives families information to use in their child care decisions.
- The YoungStar Analysis & Update Project is expected to last from 2024-29.
 - It is working to identify ways to improve YoungStar.
 - It started by listening to and learning from those who are most impacted.
 - It includes researching topics and understanding other states' practices.
- In January 2025, our project came to WI-CARE to ask for insights on staff qualifications and how we measure them, considering future possible future options to recognize:
 - Providers' years of experience
 - Providers' non-credit learning opportunities
 - Providers' ability to apply their knowledge of child development
- In order to propose and implement the level of change needed to be responsive to the feedback we heard, we need to engage with many audiences, including the legislature. This takes a long time. While we continue to work on the broader, long-term changes, we were able to address two issues in November 2025:
 - YoungStar Rating Stabilization Pilot: ratings will not decrease every month if educator qualifications go down. This will be verified annually instead of monthly.
 - Extended Rating Timeline for New Providers: New providers joining YoungStar can receive support services for up to a year prior to their first rating, to help them fully prepare.
- The current YoungStar system consists of rating, coaching and training, which is separate from regulatory compliance. The quality elements include:
 - Lead staff education
 - Learning environment and curriculum
 - Business and professional practices
 - Health and well-being
- The quality elements are assessed through evaluation criteria, high-quality practices, and environmental rating scales (ERS).
- We are rethinking and reframing the quality elements. During our first round of engagement, we heard broadly that health and safety were critical aspects of/the foundation of quality care.

- Using that feedback, we developed a proposal for updating Wisconsin Elements of Quality to incorporate health and safety expectations as the foundation of quality, along with a focus on experiences.
- The proposed WI elements of quality are
 - Health & Safety Practices: Regulatory compliance as the foundation of quality and gateway to continuous quality improvement (CQI)
 - Family Experiences: Provider policies and practices that support meaningful partnership with families
 - Child Experiences: Provider knowledge, skills, and practices that support high-quality child experiences
- Business practices are missing from this list. We prioritized the information we heard in our engagement, where business practices did not rise to the top. They will still be supported, just not through YoungStar specifically. We want feedback on this.
- Moving forward, we are proposing a coach-facilitated process including a self-assessment that covers all practices within the WI Elements of Quality. We want providers' help prioritizing how we approach this.
- Considering limitations such as budget and staff time, DCF will need to make decisions around where we focus our resources. Do we prioritize coaching and training related to identified areas of growth? OR Do we prioritize verification and reporting of self-assessment/results?

Question 1: What are your initial reactions to the Wisconsin Elements of Quality?

Breakout Room 1 Notes

- Members agreed that the proposed elements make sense and that this would be a wonderful direction for YoungStar.

Breakout Room 2 Notes

- Members asked for clarification around health and safety practices as well as social emotional learning and one member shared support for all three proposed elements.

Breakout Room 3 Notes

- One member expressed support for the proposed elements. Others asked for clarification around health and safety practices and discussed how different program types have slightly different regulation processes, which would need to be considered.

Question 2: How important is it for the self-assessments to be externally verified (e.g., by a rater or coach)?

Breakout Rooms 1, 2, 3 Notes

- Members discussed the possible pros and cons of self-assessment and external verification.

Question 3: How important is it for programs to receive a reported result (e.g., a rating/score)?

Breakout Rooms 1 & 2 Notes

- Members discussed the value of star ratings, whether or not they are relevant to parents making child care decisions, and the barriers they face in reaching for higher star ratings.

Breakout Room 3 Notes

- No time for this question.

Question 4: Where should the state focus its resources to make the biggest impact on quality?

Breakout Room 1 Notes

- Four members stated that focusing resources on coaching would have the greatest impact on program quality.

Breakout Rooms 2 & 3 Notes

- No time for this question.

Action Items:

- Continue to pursue the three categories of the Wisconsin Elements of Quality, they were well-received.
- Continue to discuss other questions in greater detail in next month's WI-CARE meeting.

11:55 – 12:00 Wrap-Up, Public Comment and Next Steps

Daria Hall, Policy Initiatives Advisor

DCF Division of Early Care and Education

Notes

- A member of the public commented that they think the Elements of Quality categories are good and as have others have said, it's more important to focus on quality improvement [than rating and reporting]. The self-assessment could be a tool for the providers to use in house. But it's important that someone outside our programs confirms that we are what we say we are. It's also important to adjust how we earn star ratings, such as lowering the staff requirements.
- Next steps:
 - DCF will meet with other providers and families across the state to discuss these questions.

- YoungStar project team members will return to WI-CARE with more detailed questions or proposals.
- Changes resulting from the work could be implemented in 2027-29.
- Next meeting: Feb. 10, 2026 at noon; Topic: Continuation of YoungStar Analysis & Update Project discussions

English

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