



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

April 15, 2025
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Attendees

Attended	First and Last Name	Location	Attended	First and Last Name	Location
	Amanda Kight	Kenosha	X	Kishaunda Ransaw	Milwaukee
	Annette Willburn	Milwaukee	X	Leighton Cooper	Milwaukee
	Bianca Hill	Milwaukee	X	Liz Tittle	Little Chute
X	Carol Jackomino	Rhineland	X	Lynda Nelson	Middleton
X	Cassie Koch	Madison		Margarita Ugalde	Madison
X	Christine Larson Salerno	Milwaukee	X	Rose Catlett	Middleton
	Corrine Hendrickson	New Glarus	X	Ryann Counce Barnes	Milwaukee
X	Courtney Zwick	New Glarus	X	Sarah Smith	Racine
X	Cynthia Reineking	La Crosse	X	Sheri Bishop	Pulaski
X	Jay Martinez	Green Bay	X	Suzette Mayotte	Ashland
X	Joahna Shelton	Spooner	X	Thanh Bui-Duquette	Eau Claire
X	Jolynn Wendt	Arcadia	X	Tricia Peterson	Juneau
X	Kahlila Fennel	Milwaukee			

DCF Staff: Andrea Cammilleri (tech/notes), Sydney Den Hartigh (facilitator), Daria Hall (facilitator/notes), Justin King (tech), Laura Knott (facilitator), Cassidy Peterson (tech), Glennetta Stockdale (facilitator) Christa Thao (notes), David Timmerman (facilitator)

Meeting Notes

12:00 – 12:10 p.m. Welcome, Reminder of Meeting Norms, Updates

Daria Hall, Policy Initiatives Advisor

DCF Division of Early Care and Education

Notes: Daria shared the meeting norms, meeting agenda, and talked about DCF's actions to prevent recurrence of the Zoom bombing that interrupted our March meeting.

12:10 - 1:55 p.m. Wisconsin Shares Subsidy Usage Presentation & Discussion

David Timmerman, Director

Bureau of Child Care Subsidy Administration

*DCF Division of Early Care and Education
+
All WI-CARE Members*

Notes

- Wisconsin Shares shifted in October 2023 from hourly to full-time/part-time authorizations for families.
- The Program Integrity unit ensures the subsidy program rules are followed.
- Some Program Integrity policies and procedures are still focused on tracking hours of need and attendance; they need to be updated.
- BCCSA is currently exploring possible changes to subsidy usage pertaining to attendance, enrollment, and Wisconsin Shares payment practices.

Question 1: How long do you hold a slot for a child who is absent or not attending your location for more than one day a month?

Breakout Room 1 Notes

- I hold slots for about 3 weeks without payment or communication. I send a notice if the child is absent without payment or explanation. I apply the same policy for families using Wisconsin Shares and those who don't.
- I don't hold spots due to high demand and a long wait list. Parents provide 2-week notice, then the spot is filled immediately. I already have slots that will open up booked well in advance.
- In our Head Start program, after 2-3 days of absence, teachers initiate contact or referral. A family service worker reaches out to assess the situation and offer support. If absenteeism continues, a written attendance agreement is required. Child may be dropped after approximately 8 days of non-response, but we haven't dropped a child in the last two years.
- Parents pay a flat weekly rate and can use care as much or as little as needed. I will contact families if absences become frequent. I try to connect families with resources before considering removal.
- I have a small cohort and no formal policy. I use 2-week notice if needed and only work with private pay families.
- **DCF Follow-up Question:** Have any of you ever had to notify the Wisconsin Shares agency that someone has been gone for 30 days?
 - Rarely—only 1-2 times, typically only when we're ending a child's authorization with my program.

- o I had a case where a parent with pregnancy complications gave up her spot due to inability to pay during her leave from work. The parent gave official notice in advance to end care at the end of the month.
- **DCF Facilitator:** perhaps we could look at a policy change to extend the 30-day absence window and/or exceptions for medical/maternity leave to continue holding the spot and allowing family to making payments to the provider throughout that time.

Breakout Room 2 Notes

- Two weeks, then will end authorizations in portal if there's not just cause, this is true of private pay families, too.
- 10 days no contact then withdrawn, if there are justifiable issues we'll hold the slot. Head Start has 85% attendance requirements.
- They pay for the position, not attendance. I require payment for the week, then they get care. I haven't really experienced no shows before. If they no show, I'd immediately contact them. If no response in 3 hours, then I call for a welfare check.
- My program doesn't have a system in place for this, but maybe we should, don't have problems with having to hold a slot or no shows.
- I haven't experienced anyone not coming, either, so don't have a procedure. I don't have many families on Wisconsin Shares (3/55 per location). I wouldn't hold a slot unless they were paying for it.
- For a program that has no shows, where does that problem come from?
 - 30% of our families work third shift jobs and can't get the kids there after work so kids will end up staying with whoever they were with overnight. It's a lot of transportation problems.
 - Yes, our issues are similar to that.

Breakout Room 3 Notes

- If they pay for the slot, we hold it. They might want it as an emergency backup or have flex/unusual schedules like nurses or firefighters. But as soon as they don't pay, they are back to the bottom of the wait list. We enroll any open slots first-come, first-served.
- Same for my program. We still have bills to pay and teachers to pay so I charge them on Monday and they must pay by Friday. If they don't, they aren't coming the next week.
- I don't have any Wisconsin Shares kiddos but I do the same with my private pay kiddos. If they haven't been attending regularly, I just ask them to give me a heads up when they're coming so I can prep if it's an infant, for example. I hold the slot for as long as they need it. I had one family pay for an open slot for 5 months of a pregnancy because they had the older child enrolled and wanted to be sure I had a slot open for them when the baby arrived.
- I also hold the spot for as long as they pay.

Question 2: What are the advantages and disadvantages of basing subsidy payments on a child's enrollment rather than their attendance?

Breakout Room 1 Notes

- We aren't affected by this due to tribal sovereignty; we don't charge fees to families.
- The enrollment-based system helps families with non-traditional schedules. I charge a flat monthly rate (weekly rate x 4.3) to help stabilize payments. It creates confusion for families during 5-week months. It's complex to explain Wisconsin Shares definitions vs. my own definition of full/part-time. Overpayments due to Wisconsin Shares timing issues are an added burden.
- I agree it's beneficial overall, especially for part-time families. It's challenging for high-attendance families with long hours. I wish Wisconsin Shares would adopt monthly averaging like some providers do. Co-pays increase unexpectedly in 5-week months.
- Hourly rate structure was restrictive; I prefer the flat part/full-time rates. I feel providers should be paid consistently regardless of child's presence.

Breakout Room 2 Notes

- I'm a proponent of enrollment and never supported the attendance-based system. Regardless of whether kids attend or not, my program is still functioning – I have the same expenditures for staff, materials, etc. It's a quality issue too, like colleges charge for enrollment, we're not babysitters.
 - I agree.
- I don't have a lot of people who use subsidy, but ratios still need to be accounted for in planning schedule because you don't know when a child will be there. We charge based on enrollment – monthly or annual contract, with 1 week "vacation". Summer camp is its own "beast."
- I still charge for holidays and professional development days because I'm still paying my team.
- [Previous responder clarifying vacation policy] Yes, we also charge for holidays and PD days, but we offer the vacation policy for the family to choose one block of consecutive days off.
- Our rate does not change for holidays or PD days, either.

Breakout Room 3 Notes

- My rate is my rate, it doesn't matter if you have subsidy or not, you pay your co-pay to make sure you reach my weekly rate. I collect payment monthly for Wisconsin Shares and private pay kids. To me, it's no different.
- There are some schools and church-based programs that aren't accountable to the same Wisconsin Shares policies and they have a funding agent they can work with. In

my opinion, it's not an equitable situation for receiving Wisconsin Shares funding. The majority of group centers in Milwaukee have switched to enrollment-based instead of attendance-based. But there may be some that are so desperate for funding, they may adjust to attendance to help families that are struggling and operate with compassion more so than a business mindset. The context is different in urban vs. suburban settings and based on the type of center that you operate.

- **DCF Facilitator:** We do still have some before and after-school programs that charge on attendance.
- Yes, I know about that, but I see that more in well-funded communities where families have a credit card on file, so it's easy to charge them for the time they attended. It wouldn't work to do that with subsidy families and it can be hard to treat families equitably in the system when you can't use the same payment system for all.
- Attendance-based makes staffing super hard, if they attend for a couple hours in the morning and a couple more in the afternoon. Unless you have a lot of college staff who want those hours. I wouldn't be able to find staff to work those hours so we go with enrollment and families don't have to use all the hours they pay for.
- Programs have said they don't care if they are out of ratio and regulation, they'll take the hit if they get caught on it when all the kids attend unexpectedly.
- I have a very small home daycare, so hearing what you're saying about attendance-based, on my end, that would be extremely difficult. When you only have 3 kids regularly and if one suddenly cuts back to a few hours a day and I don't get paid more of that, I can't manage with that, it's not financially feasible. So it's enrollment based. And this is probably why I don't have subsidy kiddos because of my rate--paying the co-pay is out of reach for subsidy-eligible families here in my area.
- We have broken it down into schedule options and ask them what they need for their work schedule. We enroll them for what they need and give them the cost for the closest option we offer. The challenge is that many families with higher need also struggle to manage finances, aren't as savvy with budgets and the cost of housing is so high, so we do a lot of hand holding. We give them our options and if they can't afford it, we seek out additional financial assistance to help them get the hours they need. DCF is making an assumption that families are able to budget and portion out their expenses, but that's really not reality. They will always come to us as the trusted provider to help them figure it out and ask for exceptions.
- I agree, the parents will fight with us, and we're in such a tough place.
- In our Head Start program, we don't do Wisconsin Shares, but I think if it's enrollment-based, attendance is required. We need policies around making sure parents need to attend. If parents don't use the slot, there may need to be some kind of modification to their authorization.

**Question 3: What is working with parents making direct subsidy payments to providers?
What areas need improvement?**

Breakout Room 1 Notes

- I don't have experience with the new payment cards. I had past issues with late payments from Wisconsin Shares.
- The process is not working well, families struggle with EBT/EDGE system. I use a third-party payment system, adding complexity. Spanish-speaking families lack adequate Wisconsin Shares support. I can't receive key details from Wisconsin Shares due to privacy rules. I would suggest offering an authorization form for families to allow the provider to speak directly with Wisconsin Shares about the family's case.
- I have a small program with one family on Wisconsin Shares. The process is smooth, the parent pays the full month in advance and on time.
- The new system is a big improvement. There was an initial learning curve with the card readers, but it's cleaner now. The funds go directly to our bank account. Challenges with overpayments still exist. I prefer the new system overall.
- The transition was stressful—I was used to knowing exact amounts/hours. I feel like I'm managing parents more than children. Frequent reminders are needed and I risk losing payment if it's delayed. I find it unfair compared to private-pay families who pay weekly. I'm reluctant to return overpayments and concerned about families' financial needs.

Breakout Room 2 Notes

- They are required to pay to receive care.
- From a family perspective, it helps them build financial literacy in a safe space. I hold them responsible and accountable for payments. On the provider side, it's a scary space. We don't know how much money they're going to get and can't ask them, they have to be willing to share. In the first month, it's a crapshoot, you hold your breath and hope you get paid. We need very strongly worded policies about what happens if a family doesn't pay. Families struggle with financial literacy and are intimidated. I could run myself in circles on this.
- It's a good thing to have expectations and set it up like private pay. But in some communities, we need to do lots of training on cards, handbooks, I feel like I've taken on a job as a subsidy worker at times. Some families want to play games with providers and hold them hostage. I'm not talking about care for your child, it becomes all about how Wisconsin Shares works in conversations with families. I can't ask how much they get in subsidy. It can be very frustrating to chase families to make a payment every month. I'm not in a situation to get non payments because of my strong policies.
- Does anyone know how other family child care providers do it? How do you know if a caregiver has transferred payment if you can't step away from classroom? Wisconsin Shares seems not geared toward FCC for that reason.

- That's the nice part of provider portal, I can see if payments were made with 3 clicks of tablet.
- Does Wisconsin Shares offer training to parents to ensure they understand how the program works?
- Is there a recorded Wisconsin Shares 101 webinar? I could include it in enrollment orientation.

Breakout Room 3 Notes

- Unfortunately, there's not much that's working. We are in a negative mindset about whether or not we will even be here in a couple months so I apologize for my negativity. We hold people's hands with subsidy. I went from 75% of my families on Wisconsin Shares to now less than 6%. My biggest struggle is I have quite a few families missing the cutoff by \$500 or less. I don't think the rates have shifted enough to address inflation and lack of wage movement. As much as I remind that payment has to come in on Monday the week before, they never get it to me. I have 6 kids from 4 families and I literally have to beg for the co-pay. I either have to eat it or find other funding to support that. No judgment of the families—they come to us for other forms of assistance for food, etc. There's a disconnect between what actually happens and what the policies say. They don't know the amount that comes to us and we don't know their authorizations, and people don't utilize the training. Directors do but the families don't. I hope that's not too negative.
- I respectfully agree and disagree on several fronts. We need to be asking what do these families need? I don't want to go back to the atrocious administrative work of attendance-based. We were previously being informed of how much subsidy families would receive in their authorization, which was a violation of the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) confidentiality. Having more categorical eligibility is going to be more helpful. We have to treat our private pay and Wisconsin Shares families the same. I think of Wisconsin Shares as if it's grandma or grandpa helping out with a payment [not the government]. The bottleneck is that we don't treat them the same because we can't do auto payments for them like we do for private pay. So already there's more work in managing it for the subsidy families. It comes down to the system putting trust in the centers and asking how the centers can be the reliable partner. There are families and providers that could take advantage and there's some complications with Head Start, too. But Head Start has policies around not being able to charge a fee from those families that other families have to pay, for example. One change that would be incredible to see would be to mandate YoungStar participation and full licensed regulation for all Wisconsin Shares-receiving providers. That accountability will provide better service to those families and we know that the quality will be managed differently.
- Has DCF talked about having a parent app? I'm thinking of Venmo where the parents and providers have an account? The parents could see how much they have in their subsidy account to transfer it to their provider who has it linked to their bank account. In my

naive mind, it makes sense. I know it's not easy to create something like that, but it seems like that could be an option to look into, to see if there's an easy way. Of course we'd have to work around issues of parents who don't have phones, for example.

- **DCF Facilitator:** That is something that we're talking about and may bring back to this advisory group. I also want you to rest assured we won't switch back to attendance-based, the feds wouldn't allow it and that's not an option we're considering.
- There is an app so families can go online and initiate payment over the phone. But sometimes watching the video isn't enough, sitting side-by-side with them makes all the difference for them. Regarding advantages of holding a slot: if we're going to treat families all the same, including those with categorical eligibility for foster and kinship, there are many who lack a village. Holding a slot with authorizations and potentially booting them off would be a failure on our part and a punishment for families that may not use the slot for a month or more but are proactively working to figure out their schedules and have a safety net for when they have to go into work and don't have anyone available. We allow it for private pay families so we should allow it for subsidy families.
- We need to go back to the old process where the agency made the payment, not the parents.

Action Items:

- Consider allowing Wisconsin Shares families to "hold their slot" by paying for as long as they need to, even if their child is not attending. Or at least extend the window of allowable absence and/or offer exceptions for cases like when the parent is on medical/parental leave and wants to hold the slot.
- Consider shifting Wisconsin Shares to a flat monthly rate (weekly rate x 4.3) to reduce inconsistency in the amount on families' EBT cards month-to-month and be more consistent with how private pay families are charged.
- Increase communications and supports in multiple formats, particularly in Spanish, to help families understand what they need to know and reduce the effort providers have to put into explaining Wisconsin Shares.
- Ensure the policy about non-payment is clear, strongly worded, and all families are aware of it.
- Adjust eligibility requirements and/or offer more categorical eligibility so that more families can access Wisconsin Shares during this time of high costs of living and stagnant wages.
- Consider mandating YoungStar participation and full licensed regulation for all Wisconsin Shares-receiving providers.

12:55 – 1:00 p.m. Wrap-Up, Public Comment and Next Steps

Daria Hall, Policy Initiatives Advisor

DCF Division of Early Care and Education

Notes

- Next Meeting: Friday, May 16 at 10:00 a.m. to discuss the Child Care Provider Portal.

English

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Spanish

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