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

May 16, 2025
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.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
X	Bianca Hill	Milwaukee		Liz Tittle	Little Chute
X	Carol Jackomino	Rhinelander		Lynda Nelson	Middleton
	Cassie Koch	Madison	X	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
	Jay Martinez	Green Bay	X	Suzette Mayotte	Ashland
X	Joahna Shelton	Spooner	X	Thanh Bui-Duquette	Eau Claire
	Jolynn Wendt	Arcadia	X	Tricia Peterson	Juneau
X	Kahlila Fennel	Milwaukee			

DCF Staff: Jason Bierbrauer (facilitator), Andrea Cammilleri (tech/notes), LeeAnn Chambers (notes), Daria Hall (facilitator/notes), Justin King (tech), Pirkko Moilanen (facilitator), Cassidy Peterson (tech), Brandilin Schoonover (facilitator), Laura Utech (facilitator), Praveena Venigalla (notes)

Meeting Notes

10:00 – 10:10 a.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 reviewed the outcomes of our April 15 meeting.

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10:10 - 10:55 a.m. **Child Care Provider Portal**
Presentation & Discussion
Jason Bierbauer, IS Business Automation/Consult Admin
Bureau of Operations and Planning
DCF Division of Early Care and Education
+
All WI-CARE Members

Notes

- The Division of Early Care and Education (DECE) uses a Service Level Agreement (SLA) process to plan for web application and reporting work each year.
  - DECE sets priorities to benefit families and providers, and our staff efficiency.
  - Ideas are collected from bureaus, agencies, workgroups, and providers.
  - We complete estimates of work and discuss with DECE leadership.
  - Decisions are made on what to include in the annual budget, prioritizing federal and state requirements, maintaining functionality of existing systems, and then choosing high priority items.
  - Once the state budget is passed, we finalize our SLA.
- The Provider Portal connects with several internal systems: Licensing & Certification + Background Checks (WISCCRS), Child Care Finder, Individual Background Checks (iChildCare), Wisconsin Shares (CSAW), and the YoungStar CMS. These internal systems also interface with external partners like FIS (EBT Edge), Wisconsin Registry, and Shine Early Learning.
- The Provider Portal handles financial information, allowing providers to view Wisconsin Shares authorizations, report a child no longer attending, view/export Wisconsin Shares payments, View/export YoungStar/Child Care Counts payments & Voluntary Repayments, Update prices and fees for Wisconsin Shares, view licensing and certification fees, and pay fees online.
- The Provider Portal keeps record of child care facility details, allowing providers to view YoungStar and accreditation details, view Wisconsin Registry details used by YoungStar, manage text messaging and email options, update website listing on Child Care Finder, update temporary closures, manage staff access to the Provider Portal, enter/view individuals for background checks, and view info from the Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) Business Information Form (BIF)
- The Provider Portal offers other features to allow providers to apply for and view Child Care Counts records, view electronic documents and mailings, messages, and contact information for DCF programs, and will soon allow providers to complete applications like licensing continuation and recertification.

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Question 1: What parts of the Provider Portal are most user-friendly?

Breakout Room 1 Notes

- It's very easy to use.
- Most parts are very user-friendly.
- The majority of it is user-friendly and self explanatory.
- Most of it is user-friendly.
- Early on it was not user-friendly. Now it is very user-friendly.

Breakout Room 2 Notes

- The first page where you have boxes is user-friendly, you can click on them to get to other aspects of the portal.
- I click on any one of the headers across the top to search for items.
- It reminds you that you need to go to letters, communications, texting. The first page is user-friendly and texting is really helpful.
- I'm so grateful and happy that DCF is talking to providers before making changes and decisions. We value and appreciate it. The changes at upper leadership of DCF are felt.
- I'm bragging up DCF and WI-CARE about how empowering it is and how valued we feel.

Breakout Room 3 Notes

- The financial section is user-friendly. I often look to see how much each location brought in from Wisconsin Shares over time--being able to look at how much they received by month or quarter has been helpful.
- I go in there all the time to do authorizations and check the money part and that part is easy. I messed around in it and figured it out; it's a user-friendly app over all.
- As a family provider, I go in to verify that parents were paid their Wisconsin Shares amount. Once you have children in there, it's easy to go in and add or delete children. I'm fairly computer challenged so if it is easy for me, it's probably an easy system.
- **DCF Facilitator:** Do you ever reference the user guides for the Provider Portal? When you have questions do you reach out to other providers, your licensor or certifier, or someone else?
    - I used to reach out to my old licensor but now I have a new one and haven't met her yet. I haven't had questions since then, though.
    - I have looked at user guides in the past. Making sure they're accessible and easy to find is important. I didn't initially know they existed. I assign permissions for other folks in our organization so getting familiar with that took a couple times, so making sure to really highlight manuals and tutorials could be helpful, particularly for new users.
- I don't have child care subsidy but I find entering background check info is pretty simple. Overall, if you follow the prompts on screen, it's pretty easy to use. If I've had questions, I've contacted the number available and have been able to resolve it pretty quickly.

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- I'm a family provider and I don't usually have families with Wisconsin Shares so I just go in for Child Care Counts.
- I think it's pretty user-friendly. I have been able to navigate and find what I'm looking for. I use Google to search and the link to what I'm looking for always pops right up.
- All the features work as they're supposed to.
- I like the update email that comes to me when a new message appears since I'm not in the portal every day.

Question 2: What parts are difficult to use or what do you wish you could do in Provider Portal?

Breakout Room 1 Notes

- When uploading documents for Child Care Counts there is no way to delete wrongly uploaded documents.
- Yes, we should be able to remove documents if they are no longer relevant or need to be replaced. The document title doesn't save/display. When many documents are uploaded, it's hard to know what has already been uploaded because the document only shows the type and not the document title. There's redundancy in clicks that could be simplified. For example, any time you make a change to a one child you have to start over. In the Child Care Counts application, when there are many children and the children are sorted, selecting the Edit button allows modifying the child, but once the child is modified, the sort and page information reset and the process must begin again to sort and find the next child from a list of children the provider has at the center. I've experienced lot of glitches with the Provider Portal. I have some security concerns--clicking on an individual, I was directed to totally different person not attached to the facility. I've clicked on a site and it took me to a different provider and location ID. In the Classroom section – Licensing approves a particular number of children for each room. This approved number of children for a room is not stored anywhere that the provider can access in the Provider Portal. I would like it labeled that this room is approved for this number of children from an age group. If there's any turnover in organization, that info is not captured or visible here for the next person who takes over. If the Provider Portal showed the information, a new director could easily know what is allowed. Being able to upload required documents like delegation of authority and insurance would be helpful. It is unclear to me how assigning a role to an individual will affect or communicate changes to others, such as my licensing specialist. Need clear guidance on what can be updated in Provider Portal instead of communicating to licensor via email or phone. For License renewal – It would be nice to update the name of the director and mailing address when needed– this info is not shown and/or updated in the Provider Portal for us to verify it's correct. I prefer to have everything mailed to my office. Shared staff models make using Provider Portal difficult. Staff are going across multiple locations. It should be easy to add staff to many locations for the same provider. Make Provider Portal mobile friendly.

- Yes, navigating on the phone is very difficult. It's not formatted properly on your phone—hard to find the tabs. Zooming in and out is difficult. Maybe make an app? Removing a staff member is difficult. I suggest a way to merge individuals between the Background Check module and the Classrooms module. I couldn't attach an employee because it's confusing where to go. The Provider Portal has Registry individuals (connected to classroom data) and Individuals (for background checks). It would be helpful if these sources were connected to each other. Deactivating an individual is not taking them out of the Registry, so they have to be removed from both, which is easy to forget to do. I'm not receiving funding for one employee because they are still connected to a previous program. Licensing had to contact the previous center to get that person off, even though it has been four months. Updating rates is difficult—I have always had to call to do that. I need clear direction. I'm trying to streamline my online processes—is there a way I can have the employee perspective to fill in their request form for a background check iChildCare, then make the payment? I would like some way the provider can pay by credit card to pay for a background check of an employee.
- The email and snail mail for all my locations comes to me, which is complex to manage with multiple locations. In the Head Start program national database, we can post all correspondence with a program specialist. My emails were not getting through to licensing staff when I tried this with DCF. I needed another way to communicate. A firewall update caused problems with the Provider Portal.
- Please make it mobile friendly. For those with multiple sites, Provider Portal is cumbersome, especially with shared staff working across multiple locations. It's a hassle to enter them into every site they may sub at. I want to add them to other providers quickly.

Breakout Room 2 Notes

- Add a search bar. For example, to look to see when the last background check was. It takes a while to find that. If someone's new to this whole process, it gets intimidating beyond the first page. Navigation is hard.
- I agree that a search bar could be helpful, especially for new folks.
- When entering the Child Care Counts application, I would love for the system to remember where I was. For example, if remove a child on page 11, it takes me back to page 1. I want to be able to come back to page 11.
- When you enter a new employee for background check, you have to scroll down and then there's a little tiny thing that says "add an individual." Could it be a box on the main menu to add someone for initial background check?
- I have an employee who was already background checked at another center. I was told she was okay, but didn't get the letter. I got differing feedback on what to do from background check staff and licensing.
- Licensing regulation doesn't require paperwork as long as you can go into Portal to pull up records. Some of the old-school licensors aren't tech savvy so we end up printing out our Portal information for them.

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- It makes no sense to me we're required to put fees/tuition into the system but state subsidy still overpays people.
- What documents can be retrieved from the Provider Portal? Can physical paperwork be a backup for what can't be retrieved from the Portal?

Breakout Room 3 Notes

- This may be because we have a lot of locations, but finding the sites right away is hard, I'd like to be able to search for the site on the home page. I use Control+F but if there was a search function, that would be helpful. Sometimes the facility temporary closure is awkward to use, again because it's school-based. So if school is closed for a day, we have to go in there. It would be nice to be able to enter all the future closure dates at once. Looking at the notices/documents that come through, I have to go in to every site. Would be nice to have a "provider view" so I don't have to touch every site to check if there are notices for them.
- Yes, I agree, that sounds very helpful. I'm in the same boat, I have 9 centers in my account. When I have to pay outstanding fees, I have to pay 9 separate small amounts (like $10 for a background check), it would be nice to pay all outstanding fees by the provider number.
- I 100% echo that, that has been a challenge to handle the fees. We used to send one check and attach all the invoices, which was easier for me. It was difficult for the background check unit so we transitioned to the online payment option but it takes a long time to go through every invoice and pay all of them.
- In the Individuals tab for background check: if I have staff who move from one site to another, I have to delete them and add them to the new site. It would be nice if I could transfer them from one site to another within the provider. I have to end the employment period in one location and reenter them in the new location with the new employment dates. I understand people sometimes move to another provider entirely, that would be a little bit more challenging.
- We have individuals who work in multiple programs (floater type positions) so we have defaulted to have them at one host location and when they go elsewhere, we make sure they bring their physical files and have that on site. I've always advocated for a central employee listing within Provider Portal to allow them to move from location to location. I think we had some conversations about this with DCF several years ago.
- I don't know if it's relevant to this conversation and may be even bigger, but historically, before the child care background check unit, back in 2017-18 when DCF started to centralize all the background checks instead of having us do it. I've always advocated for the provider to have a copy of that background check, instead of having to run a separate background check that we pay for as an additional expense if we want to have a copy of that on file. As a school district, we have additional hiring requirements from our HR department, so we have to make sure that what DCF approves on the background check is ok with our district requirements.

  - **DCF Facilitator:** We couldn't make decisions on that because there are rules/regulations/statutes regarding who owns the results and who is able to access/view the results. These regulations are outside of DCF's control.
- I am with Head Start and work with a school district grantee. They learned that the DCF background check is actually more extensive than DPI's background check requirements.
- I'm also a former Head Start director and in some cases, that was also true for us, but at the school district where I currently work, some of our requirements are actually a little more stringent than DCF. Typically, DCF is more extensive but depending on the organization, that may vary.
- In the home screen, My Facilities list, if a site was opened and closed, it keeps them there because it's a numeric list. In some instances we have sites that have been closed for many years and are not reopening but they're always showing up near the top and it would be nice to hide it or have it shifted to the bottom of the list, that would be helpful.
- I've had no difficulties as a family provider. I don't have to deal with multiple staff or locations. I have no issues.

Question 3: What might help providers learn what the Provider Portal has to offer?

Breakout Room 1 Notes

- Is there any how to info out there? Is there a webinar? People don't know where to look. I need help figuring out how do I get to places in the Portal?
- Offer a review about using Provider Portal on authorizations, Child Care Counts, and background check results. I like the security part in the user guide.
- Add a Resource tab in the Provider Portal where we can find the user guides and other training documents/recordings.
- Having to click 'More' in the menu is not helpful. Display everything on the same page. The updating rates section is not very helpful.

Breakout Room 2 Notes

- Spanish speaking providers would benefit from more training. More Spanish language materials/training
- You could offer monthly meetings for providers interesting in learning more about the portal.
- Recruit a cohort of program directors who are willing/able to be a mentor on the Provider Portal, as well as licensing, staff files, etc. Reaching out to DCF can be intimidating, especially for folks who are new – family providers, owner/operators, etc. Regularly promote the Provider Portal user guide on the listserv, etc
- I'd like prerecorded trainings every month on target topics you can reference as needed. For example, target topics like background checks, how to view authorizations, etc. One of the things I struggled with was when I had to report new rates in the Provider Portal, I

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still had to get a hold of my county and get them to upload them to CSAW activate them. I just changed them numerically, but that wasn't enough. They wanted a document.

Breakout Room 3 Notes

- I think Provider Portal is mostly geared toward programs who are receiving Wisconsin Shares and Child Care Counts. An occasional workshop with user tips and tricks would be helpful. There are some things in there I see but never use, and others on my team are working through it. There are probably some things in there I've never used that could help me. Someone recently showed me some history parts that I had never seen, that was helpful.
- I agree. I wonder...I read the newsletter and attend Tuesday Talks. Maybe a small section could be added to that email to highlight a small section and do a snapshot of each section to remind and showcase what it can do.
- **DCF Facilitator:** Before continuation/renewal letters go out about licensing/certification renewals, what is the best way we can communicate that providers are now able to complete them online?
    - It would be nice if licensors would talk about it when they come out to visit us.

Action Items:

- Make sure the Provider Portal User Guide is easy to find and use (e.g., add links to the user guide and training in the Provider Portal).
- Make it possible to remove previously uploaded documents (e.g., that were uploaded in error or that are outdated).
- Make the Provider Portal mobile device friendly and/or develop a mobile app.
- Find a way to connect/reconcile individuals from the Background Check module to the Classroom module (pulled from the Registry).
- Offer more support and guidance on updating rates in the Provider Portal, this is particularly challenging--or make the updating of rates in Provider Portal easier to use.
- When uploading, display the document title of documents already uploaded to reduce potential for providers to make mistakes.
- In Child Care Counts, when editing lists of children, retain the sort order and return user to the page they were on after finishing with one child, rather than returning them to the first child on the list of children page.
- Verify/fix bugs that cause providers to mistakenly see unaffiliated individuals/ programs.
- In classroom module, display the number of children and ages for which the room is currently approved.
- Create guidance showing what changes can be made in Provider Portal vs. which ones need to be sent to the licensor.

- Enhance iChildCare and the Provider Portal so that someone can complete their background check request form in iChildCare. Then, the provider can make a payment for this background check in Provider Portal.
- Display the name of the director and mailing address currently on file for a program, allow for that to be edited in Provider Portal.
- Allow individuals (e.g., floaters, subs) to be quickly added to multiple locations within the same program.
- Add a search bar.
- Increase the accessibility and visibility of the 'Add an Individual' button/link in the background check module.
- Make it easier for school-based programs to enter many future closure dates (e.g., holidays/inservice days) at once and apply to multiple locations.
- Verify that all licensors conducting visits are willing and able to check the Provider Portal for records that are allowed to be kept online, rather than asking that they be printed.
- Offer a multi-site program leader view so they don't have to check each site for new messages or make separate payments for each site.
- If a location has closed within a multi-site program, hide it or move it to the bottom of the list to reduce having to scroll past it.
- Add links to the user guide and training in the Provider Portal, so they are easy to access.
- Offer more Provider Portal support materials and trainings in Spanish.
- Consider offering additional trainings and tips on using the Provider Portal (e.g., in Tuesday Talks).
- Consider adding a regular section to the listserv message with a brief reminder or tip related to Provider Portal.
- Consider recruiting veteran providers to serve as mentors on the Provider Portal, licensing, etc. to support newer providers.

10:55 – 11:00 a.m. **Wrap-Up, Public Comment and Next Steps**
Daria Hall, Policy Initiatives Advisor
DCF Division of Early Care and Education

Notes

- Next Meeting: Tuesday, June 3 at 12:00 p.m. to discuss Potential Regulation Rule Revisions.

English

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Spanish

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