



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

September 5, 2025
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	Kishaunda Ransaw	Milwaukee
	Bianca Hill	Milwaukee	X	Leighton Cooper	Milwaukee
X	Carol Jackomino	Rhineland		Liz Tittle	Little Chute
X	Cassie Koch	Madison	X	Lynda Nelson	Middleton
X	Christine Larson Salerno	Milwaukee	X	Margarita Ugalde	Madison
X	Corrine Hendrickson	New Glarus	X	Rose Catlett	Middleton
X	Courtney Zwick	New Glarus	X	Ryann Counce Barnes	Milwaukee
X	Cynthia Reineking	La Crosse		Sarah Smith	Racine
X	Jay Martinez	Green Bay	X	Sheri Bishop	Pulaski
X	Joahna Shelton	Spooner	X	Suzette Mayotte	Ashland
X	Jolynn Wendt	Arcadia	X	Thanh Bui-Duquette	Eau Claire
X	Kahlila Fennel	Milwaukee	X	Tricia Peterson	Juneau

DCF Staff: Andrea Cammilleri (tech/notes), Sarah Dillinger (facilitator), Tessa Freedberg (facilitator), Daria Hall (facilitator/notes), Justin King (tech), Katie Pergande (facilitator/notes), Sherri Underwood (facilitator)

Public: Katie Stieber, Owner of Mama Bears Childcare, Marshfield

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 the topic of child care regulatory ratios, age groups, and rules.

12:10 - 12:55 Changes to the Business Information Form & Discussion

Katie Pergande, Data Analyst

DCF Division of Early Care and Education

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All WI-CARE Members in breakout rooms

Notes

- The Business Information Form (BIF) is
 - A DCF-funded survey of all regulated child care programs in Wisconsin
 - Administered through Thriving Wisconsin and local Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) agencies
- Response is optional. 70-80% of providers fill out the BIF annually.
- Providers can complete and update information at anytime using their personalized survey link from their CCR&R
- This year, DCF partnered with Thriving Wisconsin to look at each question on the BIF and be intentional about the questions, incorporating feedback we've heard over the years. It's an attempt to respond to the changing child care industry's needs.
- We are committed to using the information collected and only asking questions when there is a clear "why" behind it.
- We recognize the burden on programs to share information frequently.
- The data collected is used by CCR&Rs to offer referrals to families, child care providers, and community support.
- It's also used for DCF-led analyses and reporting to ensure that Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy payment rates are sufficient for families to access child care, it deepens our understanding of families' ability to find child care in their area, and highlights critical needs around wages and overall compensation for the child care workforce.
- It integrates with the Child Care Provider Portal (CCPP) to display data collected.
- It integrates with the web-based Child Care Finder to display information about programs to the public.
- Changes to the BIF in 2025-26 include:
 - a. Clarifications
 - b. Removed several questions
 - c. Changed some questions
 - d. Added questions about program staffing and capacity, and wages

Question 1: How can we communicate about the Business Information Form (BIF) to encourage providers to complete the BIF?

Breakout Room 1 Notes

- When I get it, it comes through an email with a general intro, asking us to fill it out for our program, right? I have forgotten to complete it in the past. We need a reminder

because the information is super important. I believe back in the day, it used to come through the mail.

- **DCF Facilitator:** Yes, that's correct. I believe that's a possibility to request it via mail. Would you prefer a follow-up email reminder or a different format?
- Online is easier but having any reminder is helpful.
- I get the email request and I could use a physical copy to remind me to fill it out. I get around that by printing the email and sticking it on my fridge with the date that it came in, so when I have a few minutes, I can go back to it. An email or text reminder (if possible) about a week later would be great.
- I've noticed that younger people tend to use more texting than email, so giving that option as a preferred method of contact might help. I like the email, too, though. I have the same problem as everyone else, just need occasional reminders.
- Text messages would be great, and a gift card incentive if possible.
 - I was thinking that, too, but don't know how budgets work.
- I thought I remembered getting phone calls in the past. If someone sees that you haven't completed it yet, they should call with that friendly reminder, state what day it was sent, and help out those who are not tech savvy or don't use email as often.
 - **DCF Facilitator:** I'm hearing lots of formats with lots of reminders, and incentives if possible! It is also going out in the DCF listserv.
- If something is required, I usually jump on it faster. If it's optional, I have a harder time finding the time. Giving a deadline also motivates.
- The problem is not that I forget to do it, but that I don't know how to answer it as a Head Start program. I feel like the questions don't pertain to us since we don't charge fees. I feel like I need to skew information to make it fit the questions. And I don't want our wage data to shift the statewide wage data since we are able to pay more as a Head Start provider. We have 9 centers in 9 counties and filling out 9 of them is overwhelming and most of the answers are the same for every location except for our wait list and vacancies. That, too, is a little misleading since they're not child care slots—they're Head Start slots, and not everyone qualifies for them.

Breakout Room 2 Notes

- This should be completely embedded into the Child Care Provider Portal (CCPP). It is duplicative of other data that is entered into CCPP. This is a terrible time to send out at the beginning of school year. It can look like spam/junk when comes from CCR&R using their Salesforce system.
- I suggest adding an alert to the CCPP that shows its legitimacy. It's unclear how to fill this out for seasonal or changing programs (i.e., summer only or school-year only). For example, right now I'm being asked to fill it out but my summer program just ended so that data is already outdated and I have no data on next summer yet.

- I suggest requesting it be sent once a year and directly in the CCPP. Highlight the purpose of the BIF every time.
- I think we should only have to do it if something changes.
- I'd appreciate if our past responses were pre-populated so we can easily just review and edit where changes are needed.
- Child Care Counts and the Child Care Bridge Program have all of these data, too. Immunization and the BIF are two things that feel frustrating to have to redo. Our systems NEED to speak to each other. Openings on a given day change so fast – I will not go back in and update this every time I add a child to enrollment or my wait list. I admit, my BIF form is never as updated as it should be. Our summer program is big but come school year, the enrollment drops and there's no way to convey how it operates seasonally throughout the year.
- When I'm going into the CCPP for Authorization and Fingerprint functions, it would be nice if a simple pop-up check box prompted me after logging in with "Your last BIF update was _____[date], do you have changes?" Add this to the text alert system, too. Clear out data and require providers to completely re-enter all responses at a set interval (perhaps once a year?).

Breakout Room 3 Notes

- In my county we send it out and help people understand where average prices are. It's nice that it's pre-filled so it's shorter.
- I never heard of the BIF until now. Knowing the way it's used and what it impacts is really helpful. DCF should share out the results.
- I always complete the BIF but the time it takes is a barrier. For first few years, I never heard anything back from it. A couple years, I got some referrals from it.
- Correspondence is sent directly to school locations instead of our central office. Sending it to central office will help it be completed.
- Do a reminder in the CCPP. The time required to fill it out is the barrier.

Question 2: What other ways would you like to see this information used?

Breakout Room 1 Notes

- Perhaps it could be used to determine our eligibility and then communicate regarding grants available to let our programs know if there are things we might qualify for that we should look into.

Breakout Room 2 Notes

- There's nowhere to look at the overall findings of the BIF. If added to the CCPP, add an icon to each question or page that tells us the why the question is asked and where you can go to look at results. I think the BIF could skew the Market Rate Survey and the results because people don't understand how this data impacts that or is used. The definition of 4K in the survey still needs more clarity!

Breakout Room 3 Notes

- I'd like to know what other locations are charging to see if our rates are comparable. It could also help inform where we may open new programs.
- Yes, which areas are saturated with child care? I also want to know how much other programs are charging.
- I have a hard time finding rates for my area.
- We call other providers to find out what their rates are.

Question 3: Are there other changes we should make to the BIF survey questions, distribution, or usage in the future?

Breakout Room 1 Notes

- Would there be an option to have something like text box for program philosophy? I don't follow the Montessori program so I wouldn't check that box but I do nature play and integrate that pretty heavily. If it was an open-ended text box, it would be nice to communicate that on the Child Care Finder.
 - **DCF Facilitator:** That's an interesting point because there's a question about program philosophy, but I don't believe nature-based is an option, and there are only a few options. So maybe we could add more options to that list?
- Is there currently a way to show whether we accept Wisconsin Shares assistance or not? A lot of the referral calls I get are for families needing assistance and I have to turn them down right away because right now I only accept private pay.
 - **DCF Facilitator:** We need to take a look at that because I think it's on there but it would be good to revisit how that question is asked.
- Make the questions brief, instead of a long explanation.
- Is the BIF information used when advocating for government policy changes for child care?
 - **DCF Facilitator:** Yes, DCF and CCR&Rs can use it to inform our recommendations or decisions on policies and program needs. Also, outside agencies can request and use this data in advocacy work or for their research/publications.

Breakout Room 2 Notes

- Child ages, enrollment, and vacancies are ever changing so the survey only captures a point and time and then becomes outdated immediately. Asking about vacancies is not useful because it is just a moment in time and providers don't keep it updated in the BIF. I suggest collecting enrollment info solely for Bridge Payments. Providers already have to provide that data each month for Bridge Payments.
- I suggest blocking it by ratio age groups instead of individual child age and just filling the number of kids within each range. The question on vacancies and waitlists is not particularly helpful for anyone and a waste of provider time to fill out. Share this

information about the BIF at the monthly Tuesday Talks and record it. The BIF will be the first thing to get bumped off provider's plates because they don't understand its use.

- On the BIF, can providers indicate multiple ways that fees are collected or charged? For example, some charge weekly, some charge monthly, some fees are once a year. Just wanting to be sure the data provided is interpreted correctly.
- It might be good to add a question asking if programs are using the older staff-to-child ratios or if they are trying out the new trial ratios.

Breakout Room 3 Notes

- Do you have to do the whole BIF at once? Can it be broken out into shorter parts? The longer the survey is, the less responsive people are. It's harder to collect BIF responses for all program sites within organizations with multiple locations.
- Include a one pager with why it should be filled out. How is this information used? How can providers use it?
- More reminders are never a bad thing. Please include a timeline of when it needs to be done.
- Allow people to respond to questions with "Other" or add an optional comment at the end of a question to explain why none of the answer options provided apply, then allow us to give a text response. Our county sends our responses back to us which is helpful, can DCF do this by county?
- Add a question about the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to find out who is using it and who isn't.
- The information could be useful for advocacy if you asked which programs think they will close or remain open after June 2026.
- Can DCF require Thriving or all Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies to publish rates online some CCR&Rs do?

Action Items:

- Review how the BIF survey request messages show up to make sure they are clearly legitimate, not spam or junk mail.
- Offer multiple formats of reminders to increase BIF provider completion rates.
- Offer an incentive if possible (e.g., a gift card raffle).
- Clearly convey to providers why the information is being requested and how it will be used to help them see the value of it.
- Give a deadline for completion and recommended cadence for updating it.
- Consider sending out smaller segments of the BIF more regularly, rather than all at once.
- Change the timing to not be at the start of the school year.
- Explore ways to further reduce redundancies and streamline information gathering in a consistent place that is familiar to providers, reducing the total number of systems and formats of engagement in data collection about programs.

- Consider the applicability of questions to all program types (e.g., seasonal programs, Head Start programs) and offer optional space for providers to insert an “other” response or explain their answer further.
- Enrollment, wait list, and child age data is constantly evolving and therefore not very valuable to collect. Most providers are full with wait lists and do not need referrals.
- Offer a Tuesday Talks session about the BIF.
- Consider collecting additional data about:
 - Whether tuition rates/fees are weekly, monthly, or annual.
 - Whether programs are using older ratios or the new trial ratios.
 - Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) usage
 - Whether a program is considering closing
- Publish the findings of the BIF by county, by CCR&Rs and statewide by DCF.

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

*Daria Hall, Policy Initiatives Advisor
DCF Division of Early Care and Education*

Notes

- Katie Stieber commented that providers have been asked for feedback for years and years, and sometimes feel like they aren’t seeing forward motion on the things they’ve said again and again. She stated it’s really important to emphasize the ways the information collected in the BIF will be used. She noted that helping families find care isn’t a motivator to complete the BIF since providers all have long wait lists anyway, so that may have been a past motivator to fill it out but at this time, providers want to see their responses used to help make progress.

English

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Spanish

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