

Most relative care providers need access to child care options for day care and/or afterschool care for the children in their home. The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families provides easily accessible information on child care providers throughout the state and financial assistance for child care costs to eligible families. **Nothing in this fact sheet should be considered legal advice from DCF. Please consult with an attorney with any legal questions.**

Wisconsin YoungStar

YoungStar is the 5-star quality rating and improvement system for early care and education programs in Wisconsin. The quality rating system provided through YoungStar builds upon existing child care regulations, and helps consumers determine a child care program's compliance with those regulations.

What is the difference between ratings 1-5 in YoungStar?

All child care programs participating in YoungStar receive a minimum score of 1 star. In order to obtain 2-5 stars on the YoungStar scale, programs must be in compliance with early care and education regulations. Programs with higher ratings have demonstrated higher-quality practices in four evaluated areas:

- Educational Qualifications
- Professional Practices
- Learning Environment and Curriculum
- Health and Well-Being

How can I find a YoungStar rated program?

The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families maintains a directory of all YoungStar rated early care and education programs in Wisconsin. In order to identify a program that meets your needs in your area, you can utilize the directory at the following link: childcarefinder.wisconsin.gov.

What type of programs are available through YoungStar?

YoungStar provides families with access to regulated child care. Options for regulated child care include:

- **Certified Care**
(3 or fewer children under age 7)
- **Licensed Family Child Care**
(up to 8 children under age 7)
- **Licensed Group Child Care**
(9 or more children under age 7)
- **Day Camp**
(seasonal program for 4 or more children ages 3 & up)

The child care subsidy program, Wisconsin Shares, supports low-income working families by subsidizing a portion of the cost of quality child care while the parents or caregivers are participating in another approved activity. Wisconsin Shares is implemented locally by counties and tribes.

Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy

What are the eligibility requirements for Wisconsin Shares?

In order to be eligible for Wisconsin Shares, you must meet financial eligibility requirements. Financial eligibility is based on household income in relation to family size. If eligible based on household income, each member of your home must participate in an "approved activity" while children participate in child care. Regular employment, W-2 placement, and certain education, are all considered "approved activities."

Do I have to use a YoungStar rated program for the children in my home?

In order to be eligible to receive child care financial assistance (Wisconsin Shares), you must utilize a YoungStar rated program. If you do not plan to access Wisconsin Shares, you can utilize any child care provider that you identify. However, in addition to requirements under Wisconsin Shares, licensed foster parents are required by Ch. DCF 56 Admin. Code to use early care and education programs that are licensed or certified. This means that no foster parent may utilize an unlicensed or uncertified program for any child in foster care placed in their home.

Do all household caregivers have to participate in an "approved activity"?

Yes—all household caregivers must participate in an approved activity. If more than one caregiver resides in the home, the Wisconsin Shares subsidy will only be issued for the time when the caregivers' approved activities overlap. For example, if Caregiver 1 goes to work from 8am-5pm, and Caregiver 2 goes to work from 12pm-8pm, the Wisconsin Shares subsidy would be approved for 5 hours per day, from 12pm-5pm.

Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy

How is financial eligibility for Wisconsin Shares determined?

Wisconsin Shares uses income from work or self-employment, Social Security payments, unemployment insurance, and workers compensation to calculate your household income. Things like the money a teen earns for a job, or child support payments under \$1,250 do not count toward household income.

In addition to household income, financial eligibility is based on family size. Your family includes everyone who lives in your household; your spouse or non-marital co-parent, dependent children, and other children living in your home without another parent. If a teen child that is considered your dependent resides in your household has a child of their own, that teen and their child (your grandchild) also count toward your family size.

Financial eligibility for foster families, families with an active Subsidized Guardianship Agreement, and families receiving Kinship Care benefits is **first based on the child's parent's household income**. The child's parent's household income is tested at 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) to determine eligibility. **If the child's parent's household income exceeds that limit, financial eligibility is then based on the current caregiver's household income**, which is tested at 185% FPL. In these circumstances, the current caregiver and members of that home still must participate in an "approved activity."

For additional eligibility information, please visit www.dcf.wisconsin.gov/wishares/eligibility.

If I take placement of a relative child, when would eligibility for Wisconsin Shares begin?

Eligibility for Wisconsin Shares begins the day the child moves into your home, as long as the other eligibility requirements for the program are met. Be sure to apply for Wisconsin Shares as soon as possible after the child moves into your home to ensure there is no delay in the eligibility determination.

At what age does a child become ineligible for Wisconsin Shares?

Eligible families can continue to receive the Wisconsin Shares subsidy until the child turns 13 years old. If the child has a documented special need, they may be eligible to continue to receive the Wisconsin Shares subsidy until age 19.

How often is eligibility for Wisconsin Shares reviewed?

Eligibility is reviewed every year. However, you must report to Wisconsin Shares if there are changes to your household income or participation in an "approved activity" (employment, W-2 placement, education, etc.) whenever a change occurs.

Where do I go to apply for Wisconsin Shares?

You can apply online at <https://access.wisconsin.gov>, by phone, or in-person! To apply by phone or in-person, contact your local Wisconsin Shares Agency; information can be found at www.dcf.wisconsin.gov/wishares/where-to-apply. You can also contact Wisconsin 211 by dialing 2-1-1 for assistance!

What information will I need to provide when applying for Wisconsin Shares?

Applicants for Wisconsin Shares will need to provide **proof of income**, **proof of employment** and **work hours**. If the caregiver is not employed, but does participate in another "approved activity" (i.e. W-2 Placement, education, etc.), they should provide verification of participation and hours for the activity. Additionally, applicants must provide a valid **Social Security Number** for all children that need child care assistance.

Do I need to claim the funds I receive through Wisconsin Shares on my taxes?

Yes—the funds you receive through Wisconsin Shares must be claimed on your taxes and reported as income.

What if the Wisconsin Shares subsidy amount does not cover the full cost of child care?

The amount of your Wisconsin Shares subsidy will vary based on a number of factors, including your family situation and county of residence, and may not cover all of your child care costs. In this situation, you will be responsible for covering all child care costs beyond what the Wisconsin Shares subsidy covers.

If the child in your home is placed in foster care, you may be eligible to receive additional child care assistance through the monthly foster care rate—talk with your foster care licenser about your options related to your portion of child care costs.