

DCF Guidance Order #21 **Frequently Asked Questions on Wisconsin Shares Questions**

Issued Wednesday April 1, 2020

The purpose of this memo is to provide guidance on Wisconsin Shares frequently asked questions related to:

- The order issued by Governor Evers, under the authority of Wis. Stat § 323.12(4) and the public health emergency declared in Executive Order #72, [to suspend certain Department of Children and Families administrative rules and order companion directives](#).
- [DCF Guidance Order #3](#): Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy Information for local agencies related to COVID-19

Wisconsin Shares Payment Questions

- 1) **Can a child care program still charge tuition to a family when they cannot care for their child due to the executive order or when a family is unable to send their children to the program for care?**
A. Centers and parents need to review the center's written policies and the provider/parent payment agreement regarding fee payments.

- 2) **Is DCF automatically transferring payments to provider bank accounts? My program is temporarily closed, should I contact Wisconsin Shares authorized parents and ask them to transfer their EBT payments?**
A. Parents can transfer their March EBT card benefit load to their authorized child care provider even if that provider is temporarily closed. March EBT benefits that remain unspent on EBT cards in April will be deposited into the provider's bank account through an ACH deposit on or before April 7th, 2020.

Eligible parents have received their April EBT card benefit load even if their child care provider is temporarily closed. April EBT benefits that remain unspent on EBT cards will be deposited into the provider's bank account through an ACH deposit on or before April 8th, 2020. Monthly, during the emergency period, DCF will deposit any benefits that remain on EBT cards to the corresponding provider's bank account via the ACH process, this will continue for providers that are closed and those still in operation pending Department approval.

- 3) **Was there a notification to parents that they should continue to authorize payments to their providers?**
A. The Department will post this information on the Parent Portal and Provider Portal. Information has been communicated to local agencies to share this message with eligible parents.

- 4) **Will the Wisconsin Shares payments, received during this time, be required to be paid back?**
A. Overpayments will not be assessed unless the parent or the provider demonstrates an intentional program violation.

- 5) **How does the Wisconsin Shares payment for that child affect my program's payment?**
A. Providers should follow their individual payment agreements with families which include guidelines on payment practices. All additional charges beyond the Wisconsin Shares payment are the responsibility of the parent.
- 6) **Will Wisconsin Shares payments increase? Some parents will request additional hours of child care due to school closures.**
A. Eligible families that request additional hours of child care will see their EBT card benefit load increase *during this emergency period*. Any additional fees charged by the center beyond the EBT card load benefit are the responsibility of the parent.
- 7) **If a child care program has remained open, and if an authorized family is not attending, how will Shares payments be disbursed?**
A. DCF will issue any remaining (unpaid) March and April EBT card monthly loads directly into the child care program's banking account through ACH transfer. Eligible Wisconsin Shares parents will continue to receive their authorized monthly EBT card load. Families should continue to initiate payment to their child care program, even if they are on a temporary leave from their work-related activity and/or their children are not currently attending the child care program during this State of Emergency.
- 8) **Will a letter be sent out to Wisconsin Shares authorized families informing them they have to pay their provider?**
A. The Department will not send a letter informing families to pay their providers, instead the Department will post information on the Parent Portal and Provider Portal to remind parents to pay the EBT card load to their provider during this State of Emergency. Information has been communicated to local agencies to share this message with eligible parents. Child care programs can also communicate directly with their enrolled families. Child care programs can also communicate directly with their enrolled families.
- 9) **What assistance can be provided to child care programs that do not have any families enrolled that participate in Wisconsin Shares?**
A. The Department is exploring what other funding sources may be available to support child care programs that do not currently serve children with Wisconsin Shares authorizations. The [Consumer Financial Protection Bureau](#) offers guidance and resources to individuals who may experience financial difficulties during this time. To find local supports for financial and other essential needs, call 2.1.1. or visit <http://211.org/services/covid19>.

Authorization Change Questions

- 10) **What happens if a parent/child that has Wisconsin Shares subsidy needs to find alternate care during my center's closure?**
A. Parents who continue to work during this State of Emergency can request a second authorization to an open child care program to meet their child care needs and must contact their local agency or submit a child care request through the Parent Portal.

11) Will the Wisconsin Shares authorization for a program still stay in effect throughout the State of Emergency?

A. For the months of March and April authorizations will remain in place, even when the parent is absent from the child care program, or if the program is temporarily closed. Beyond April, the Department will review the payment process for temporarily closed programs and make a determination regarding payment approval on a month by month basis.

12) What happens if the parent did not ask for a second authorization while a program is temporarily closed, and the parent has asked to hold a spot for their child?

A. For the months of March and April authorizations will remain in place, even when the parent is absent from the child care program, or if the program is temporarily closed. No second authorization will be created for the purpose of holding a slot for a child.

Administrative Rule Waiver Questions

13) Was the Department of Children and Families (DCF) granted waivers to several rules related to the Wisconsin Shares program?

A. Some Administrative Rules that guide the program have been temporarily waived. These rules correspond to the following sections of the [Wisconsin Shares Handbook](#): Chapter 2, Sections 4.2.2, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.3, 2.3.4, 2.4.2, 2.4.2.1, 2.4.8, and 4.2.2. Please refer to Executive Order #72, [to suspend certain Department of Children and Families administrative rules and order companion directives](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions on Rule Flexibility](#) for more information.