



Providing all Families with Access to Affordable, Quality Early Care and Education Opportunities

Making foundational investments in Wisconsin's early care and education system to support families, child care providers, communities, and the economy.

Governor Evers' 2025-2027 biennial budget proposal is the most pro-kid budget in state history and includes several smart investments in the early care and education system. Decisions about what will be included in the final budget, which is typically announced in June, will be made by the Legislature as well as the Governor.

Supporting Families in Accessing Affordable, Quality Care

The average price of center-based care for **one infant is over \$11,900 per year. That's 16% of the median household income** in Wisconsin and equivalent to a year at UW-Madison. The Governor's proposed budget supports both working families through the Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy and private pay families in accessing quality care.

Four vital proposals are funding to allow DCF to **raise Shares maximum rates** to cover the price of 75 percent of slots, **capping Wisconsin Shares copayments** at 7 percent of household income, **waiving Wisconsin Shares copayments** for families under 150 percent of the federal poverty level, **and establishing presumptive eligibility** so families can start to receive benefits while their application is being reviewed, eliminating the lag time between when a job or school starts and when child care subsidy is available, and making it easier for families who receive a foster or kinship care placement to begin receiving subsidy.



Investing in the Early Childhood Workforce and System Infrastructure

The Child Care Counts program offers providers the financial stability they need to keep the lights on, pay their staff competitive wages, and prevent price hikes for families. The budget provides a foundational investment of **\$480 million** for **Child Care Counts** throughout the biennium to continue this critical program.

Additionally, the budget **invests in our early childhood workforce** including:

- Over \$4 million to cover the costs of entry level trainings for child care workers.
- Over \$1 million to continue the Early Childhood Health Consultation (ECHC) program.
- \$12 million to support out-of-school time programs through a dedicated fund and training and technical assistance.
- \$10 million to support the child care workforce and build child care capacity.
- \$1 million to support recruitment and retention of child care providers in tribal communities.
- Over \$7 million to support child care providers in accessing safe drinking water in Milwaukee County, and continued funding to support the child care workforce and affordability in economically disadvantaged communities in Milwaukee.

Lastly, the budget proposes the transfer of the Head Start State Supplement from the Department of Public Instruction to DCF to better align this program within the early care system.



Building Thriving Communities and Supporting the Economy

Child care is the work that enables all other work. The budget invests over **\$5.5 million** over the biennium to support a **new employer grant program** aimed at supporting employers in responding to specific employee and community needs, such as **on-site child care, child care subsidies, and employer contributions** to a Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account for employees.

Improving the Framework for Community-Based 4-Year-Old Kindergarten (4K)

Having a strong mixed-delivery system where 4K is delivered is by school districts, community-based child care providers, and Head Start programs is good for Wisconsin's early childhood system, families, and economy.



The budget increases the per-pupil count for full-day, full-week 4K to 1 full-time equivalent (FTE) for purposes of general school aid and revenue limits. This is an increase from the current 0.5 or 0.6 FTE.

The budget also requires the Department of Public Instruction, in partnership with DCF, to establish standard per-pupil payment amounts for community-based 4K programs and to establish a model contract for district agreements with community-based 4K providers.