

WI-CARE Impact Report

October 2024–September 2025



The [Wisconsin Child Care Advisory and Recommendation Exchange \(WI-CARE\)](#) is celebrating its one-year anniversary! This document provides an overview of the input and feedback that was shared by child care providers from across Wisconsin who served as advisors to DCF's child care programs and policies in 2024–25.

Impact

The input shared by WI-CARE members to date has

- Informed DCF decisions and actions around programs and policies
- Enhanced the user-friendliness of resources
- Guided prioritization of DCF's work
- Increased DCF's awareness of how proposed changes might impact child care providers, children, and families

Many WI-CARE members have expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to share their expertise to influence DCF. They also liked hearing the perspectives of other providers and learning more about how DCF operates. DCF accepts WI-CARE applications each summer and manages a wait list. To join the WI-CARE wait-list, send an email to dcfmbdecewicare@wisconsin.gov.



WI-CARE Agenda Topics

Oct. 2024: Online Licensing Applications

Nov. 2024: Changes to Online Child Care Finder, Reactions to the New Foundational Training Format

Dec. 2024: Wisconsin Shares Subsidy Estimator, Tuesday Talks Topics

Jan. 2025: YoungStar Staff Qualifications

Feb. 2025: Addressing Challenging Behaviors in Wisconsin's Child Care Programs

Apr. 2025: Wisconsin Shares Subsidy Usage

May 2025: Child Care Provider Portal

June 2025: Feedback on Regulation

July 2025: Time-Out Policy

Aug. 2025: Access to Training & Technical Assistance

Sept. 2025: Changes to the Business Information Form

Learn more at dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcare/wi-care





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Year-in-Review Highlights

The following are some examples of programs and policies that WI-CARE helped shape over the last year.

Online Licensing Applications: In late 2024, WI-CARE members shared their reactions to the new format. Since the launch of online licensing applications in February 2025, wait times for processing initial licensing applications have dropped from 85 days in 2023 to 41 days in 2025. Continuation application processing times have also decreased.



Child Care Finder Updates: WI-CARE members gave feedback about a proposed change to display all monitored rules for each program visit. Additionally, they discussed the shift to Child Care Finder indicating when any violation reported at a monitoring visit is serious or repeated. Members requested that we show the start and end dates of temporary program closures so that site visitors would know when programs expect to reopen. These changes were published November 1, 2025.

Wisconsin Shares Subsidy Usage Policy: In spring of 2025, WI-CARE members shared their experiences and challenges with collecting subsidy payments. As of October 2025, parents and caregivers are now encouraged to use all eligible and authorized subsidy funds to pay the provider, even if it is above the provider's billed amount. Providers can now keep all subsidy funds, even if they are above their billed amount.

YoungStar Rating Stabilization Pilot: WI-CARE members discussed many challenges related to attracting and retaining highly qualified staff. This confirmed the need for YoungStar to reduce how often programs' star ratings can be negatively impacted by staffing changes. Starting in November 2025, programs' staff qualifications are now monitored annually instead of monthly. However, if a program completes the work needed to increase their star rating, it can still go up any time!

Wisconsin Shares Subsidy Estimator: Thanks to WI-CARE members' suggestions, updates to the online tool provide clarity for families around types of income they should include to get the most accurate estimate.

Works in Progress

- With WI-CARE member experiences and needs in mind, DCF is drafting policy guidance on addressing children's challenging behaviors.
- DCF hosted an in-person Training and Technical Assistance Statewide Meeting with DCF-funded vendors in September 2025. Staff used WI-CARE feedback to create a "Provider Perceptions of the T/TA System" handout to guide the sessions.
- Child Care Provider Portal enhancement ideas from WI-CARE have been added to DCF's list of prioritized updates and will be implemented when funding/IT resources are available.

DCF is grateful for the time, experience, and expertise of WI-CARE members. Their input is helping strengthen programs and policies for other providers and families across Wisconsin!

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