



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Division of Early Care and Education
ADMINISTRATOR'S MEMO

ACTION
 NOTICE DECE 15-01

ISSUE DATE: 03/04/15

DISPOSAL DATE: None

To: County and Tribal Child Care Program Directors

From: Judy Norman-Nunnery, Ph.D.
Division Administrator

RE: Consortia and Regional Service Delivery for Wisconsin Shares

PURPOSE

This memo provides information on the manner in which Income Maintenance consortia may seek approval to consolidate the Wisconsin Shares caseload and manage the caseload on a regional basis. In addition, this memo outlines procedures that counties and tribes may use to request exceptions to Wisconsin Shares policy and provide child care case management services outside of the family's county of residence or tribal service area.

BACKGROUND

Since January 1, 2012, the Income Maintenance (IM) programs including FoodShare, BadgerCare, and Medicaid have been administered by ten (10) consortia made up of groups of county agencies. Each consortium operates a single Call/Change Center to handle customer calls and update CARES with changes reported to the Call/Change Centers.

Upon implementation, DHS provided operational instructions that the consortia could retain individual county IM caseloads in the recipients' *county of residence*; or, in the alternative, could pool IM cases and administer the combined IM caseloads on a consortium-wide basis. The Western Region for Economic Assistance (WREA) and the Northern Income Maintenance Consortium (Northern) elected to pool the counties' IM caseloads into centrally administered caseloads. All other consortia maintain individual county-assigned IM caseloads.

The Wisconsin Shares program is administered by the Department of Children and Families (DCF), and DCF programs were not included in the consortia service delivery model. The DCF Division of Early Care and Education (DECE) issued separate guidance (Administrator's Memo 11-03 and Operations Memo 12-10) to ensure that all Wisconsin Shares participants would continue to have direct access to their county's or tribe's caseworkers.

Child Care Consortia Pilot

Currently, DCF contracts with 70 counties and nine tribes to operate the Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy program. Under the terms of the contract, counties and tribes

receive funding allocations to provide Wisconsin Shares program services to the county residents or families in the tribe's service area.

In 2013, Secretary Anderson approved a request from the WREA to pilot a regional service delivery model for child care by granting exceptions to DCF policy. The WREA consortium piloted the project by pooling the child care cases from the eight WREA counties into a single child care/IM caseload that is administered by a team of child care specialists.

An evaluation of the pilot shows that WREA streamlined operations and standardized child care case management services. Under the pilot, the WREA improved performance, increased accuracy and enhanced program integrity. The WREA model demonstrated that it is feasible for a region to integrate child care cases into a pooled caseload and manage those cases effectively. Subsequently the Northern consortium also pooled child care cases and operates the Wisconsin Shares program at the consortium level.

Proposals to Consolidate Child Care Caseloads

Other consortia that want to pool Wisconsin Shares cases and manage those cases regionally may submit a proposal to the Secretary of the Department of Children and Families. The proposal must be signed by all member county agencies, and must include the following elements:

- An outline of the proposed service delivery model including how eligibility, authorizations, attendance reporting, and other Wisconsin Shares case management and customer services will be delivered.
- A proposed organizational chart that shows the management and reporting structure for workers assigned to the Wisconsin Shares pooled caseload.
- A designated, single program lead agency to manage child care operations for the pooled caseload.
- A draft inter-county Memorandum of Understanding that clearly confers responsibility for Wisconsin Shares case processing and financial accounting to a designated lead fiscal agency responsible for financial recordkeeping and cost reporting.
- A description of how each county will maintain a local presence to serve walk-in customers.

Upon approval by the Secretary, the Bureau of Regional Operations (BRO) will provide oversight and technical assistance to the consortium. The BRO will oversee the necessary automation changes and ensure that child care services continue uninterrupted during the transition. The BRO staff will also ensure that the necessary cost reporting procedures are established so child care funding can be combined under the contract.

A consortium should estimate that it will take approximately one year from the date the Department approves the proposal until planning is completed and the final automation changes are made to pool the Wisconsin Shares caseload. Combined consortium-level funding will be issued effect on January 1 of the year following the case transfer.

Exceptions to Wisconsin Shares *County of Residence* Policy

Under current DECE policy, local agencies are required to conduct most Wisconsin Shares case management services in the family's *county of residence*, including the following: Processing requests for assistance; Processing initial applications; Conducting initial interviews; Creating initial authorizations; Completing 12-month renewals; and Processing SMRF in *child-care-only* cases. Consortia and tribes may seek a waiver to centralize some or all of these case management services, *without pooling* Wisconsin Shares cases by taking the following steps.

Submit a letter to the Secretary of the Department of Children and Families which outlines the waiver request, along with a justification for the request. The letter must contain the following:

- An affirmation that Wisconsin Shares cases will remain assigned to the family's *county of residence* or the tribal service area.
- The types of case management services (as listed above) and how they will be centrally administered under the waiver.
- Planning details sufficient to ensure that child care services will continue uninterrupted during and after the transition.
- A description of how each county or tribe will maintain a local presence to serve walk-in customers.
- An affirmation that each county or tribe will remain contractually responsible for service delivery, accuracy, program integrity and for meeting performance standards for the Wisconsin Shares families who reside in the service area.

If the request is approved, the case management services may be centralized, but cases will not be transferred outside of the family's county of residence or outside of the tribal service area. The Wisconsin Shares child care cases would remain assigned to the individual county or tribe, and the county or tribe will remain contractually responsible to ensure that all required services are provided to eligible families.

ACTION SUMMARY STATEMENT

Consortia that want a single contract to operate the Wisconsin Shares program on a regional basis by pooling the caseload must submit a **Proposal to Consolidate Child Care Caseloads** as outlined above.

Counties and tribes that want to maintain individual agency contracts, but provide Wisconsin Shares case management services outside of the family's *county of residence* or tribal service area may request an **Exception to Wisconsin Shares *County of Residence* Policy** as outlined above.

CONTACTS:

Bureau of Regional Operations (BRO), Child Care Regional Coordinators. Contact information is located at: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/regionaloperations>