



## YoungStar

### Frequently Asked Questions: Family Engagement and Wisconsin Shares

September 30, 2016

*Note: Almost all questions have been revised since June 10, 2013; questions that have been substantially revised or added since the last update are highlighted.*

YoungStar is a 5 Star quality rating and improvement system that supports child care and school-age care providers in the areas of education, learning environment & curriculum, business & professional practices and the health & well-being of children. Through this rating system the state addresses several key issues in Wisconsin's child care system. YoungStar:

- Focuses on improving outcomes for children by improving the overall quality of care
- Creates multiple pathways to professional development opportunities and better quality for child care and school-age programs
- Creates a clear, understandable tool for parents to choose quality child care
- Creates incentives and provides support for programs to improve services, particularly for low-income children
- Improves accountability for the Wisconsin Shares system

#### Questions Involving Families: Family Engagement and Wisconsin Shares

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#### Answers Involving Families: Family Engagement and Wisconsin Shares

##### Family Engagement

**FAM-1. How are families informed about YoungStar?**

DCF works closely with partners to publicize YoungStar ratings using a variety of media in which families can learn about their child care options. The Department has also designed a website to assist those

searching for child care or looking for more information on a specific child care program. The **Regulated Child Care and YoungStar Public Search** website provides detailed information about YoungStar ratings as well as compliance records for licensing and certification: <http://childcarefinder.wisconsin.gov>

To serve families, DCF collaborates with a broad range of partners to ensure that families are equipped with concrete, objective information regarding quality child care. Some of these partners are:

- Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies: <http://supportingfamielsttogether.org/child-care-resource-referral-agencies/>
- Family Resource Centers: <https://supportingfamielsttogether.org/family-resource-centers/>
- W-2 Programs: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/w2/parents/w2>
- Wisconsin Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics: <https://www.wiaap.org/>
- Job Centers: <http://www.wisconsinjobcenter.org/directory/>

The YoungStar marketing campaign also provides families with clear and consistent information about quality indicators in child care settings and about family involvement opportunities.

***FAM-2. What is posted about child care programs on the DCF child care search website, and how does this help families select child care?***

All regulated child care programs are listed on the website regardless of their participation in YoungStar. YoungStar participants also have detailed information provided about their star levels and the points they have earned in each of the four quality indicator areas during the YoungStar rating process. (In addition, families who receive Wisconsin Shares are notified periodically of their providers' ratings in YoungStar.)

Families selecting a YoungStar provider benefit from having objective ratings of licensed and certified child care programs, based on quality criteria that have been proven by research to indicate higher-quality programming and better outcomes for children.

### **Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy Program**

***SHARES-1. What is Wisconsin Shares, and how is it related to YoungStar?***

Wisconsin Shares is Wisconsin's child care subsidy program that helps families pay for child care. To receive Wisconsin Shares payments from families, providers must participate in YoungStar.

To promote quality in child care, Wisconsin includes a YoungStar quality adjustment to be paid directly to 4 Star and 5 Star child care providers who have current Wisconsin Shares authorizations:

- 5 Stars = A separate YoungStar quality adjustment, for up to 25% of current Wisconsin Shares authorization amounts, will be made directly to the selected child care program
- 4 Stars = A separate YoungStar quality adjustment, for up to 10% of current Wisconsin Shares authorization amounts, will be made directly to the selected child care program

Additionally, Wisconsin Shares subsidy amounts are impacted by the child care providers star rating in the following manner:

- 3, 4 or 5 Star Provider - Programs will receive Wisconsin Shares payments directly from parents utilizing the new MyWICildCare EBT card. Each parent's subsidy amount will be calculated by first taking the county maximum or the provider's price (whichever is lower), and then the parent's copayment will be subtracted from the total. Finally, that amount will be loaded onto the card.
- 2 Star Provider - Programs will receive Wisconsin Shares payments directly from parents utilizing the new MyWICildCare EBT card. The authorized Wisconsin Shares subsidy amount will be reduced by 5% before being placed on the new MyWICildCare EBT card.
- 1 Star Provider - Families are not eligible for Wisconsin Shares subsidy amounts if they attend a 1 Star rated program. These providers' child care licenses or certifications have been revoked, denied or suspended, or their Wisconsin Shares payments have been ended due to fraud or suspected fraud.

Wisconsin Shares information and resources for parents and providers are provided at:

- My WICChildCare Program: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/mywchildcare>
- Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy Program: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/wishares>

***SHARES-2. Do programs that receive Wisconsin Shares payments from families have a choice about participating in YoungStar? Do programs participating in YoungStar have a choice about serving children from families who receive Wisconsin Shares?***

In order to be eligible to receive Wisconsin Shares payments from families, child care programs **must** be in regulatory compliance and **must** participate in YoungStar. YoungStar ratings are thus **required** for all programs receiving Wisconsin Shares payments from families. If a program is in regulatory compliance, the program may choose to have a YoungStar Automated Rating. With an Automated Rating, a program would not receive an on-site observation, and the highest star level they could attain would be 2 Star.

Also, in order to participate in YoungStar, the program **must** agree to accept children from families who utilize Wisconsin Shares. Programs that sign a YoungStar Contract must be willing to:

- Accept children from families receiving Wisconsin Shares
- Comply with the contract they have signed with DCF and with Licensing/Certification
- Complete a YoungStar rating every other year

The YoungStar Contract lasts two years. During the contract period, the rating is published on the YoungStar public child care search website:

<http://childcarefinder.wisconsin.gov>

Sometimes a program happens to have no children enrolled who are from families utilizing the Wisconsin Shares program. These programs may *volunteer* to be rated through YoungStar, as long as they agree to accept any children from families utilizing Wisconsin Shares in the future.

A program may withdraw from YoungStar only if the program has not received any Wisconsin Shares payments from any family within 6 months of its withdrawal request. If the program has received Wisconsin Shares payments from a family within the last 6 months, the program cannot withdraw and must remain on the YoungStar public child care search website through their two-year contract period.

***SHARES-3. How do programs receive their YoungStar Quality Adjustment?***

YoungStar quality adjustments are paid directly to 4 Star and 5 Star child care providers who have current Wisconsin Shares authorizations.

***SHARES-4. Do YoungStar Quality Adjustments affect the amount a program charges parents?***

YoungStar does not regulate or direct provider prices or parent payments (whether a parent is making a private payment or a payment through a MyWICChildCare EBT card), regardless of program ratings and corresponding YoungStar quality adjustments. Programs are expected to continue to collect full family co-payments and can use their own discretion when choosing how to manage the increase or decrease in payments based on their YoungStar ratings. Quality adjustments for 4 and 5 Star providers are intended to support higher quality programming.

As for prices, child care programs are owner-operated and determine their own fee structure. Programs should determine the actual business costs of providing the quality of care delivered. Funding sources should be reviewed, and costs should be prorated over the number of children being served. Marketing, business climate, eligibility for private funding sources, eligibility for public funding sources, and strategic planning are all things to consider in setting prices.

The YoungStar rating can be an important marketing tool for child care programs that have earned higher ratings, as parents are encouraged to choose programs that have demonstrated quality practices by earning points within YoungStar.

***SHARES-5. When a program receives a YoungStar Quality Adjustment, are there specifications on how that money can be used?***

No. The program may use the quality adjustment payments as it sees fit.