



Provider News: A Resource for Wisconsin Shares & YoungStar Providers

December 2019

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New/Updated Child Care Rules

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) has recently made changes to child care administration rules in DCF 202, DCF 250, DCF 251, DCF 252, and created DCF 13. The rule changes were made to ensure that the department’s rules affecting child care programs comply with the health and safety requirements in federal regulations based on the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 by September 30, 2019. The changes also regroup rules that address the same topics in different places and clarifies language where needed to ensure proper implementation and administration of the health and safety requirements.



DCF 13 - Background Checks for Child Care Programs, is based on the existing requirements under s. 48.686, Stats. The newly created DCF 13 includes provisions on submitting a background check request to the department and the required appeal process. Additional information regarding background checks is located at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cbqcheck>.

The department has mailed provider memos to all regulated child care programs informing them of the rule changes. Forms, publications, and DCF web pages have been updated to reflect the changes. The emergency rules went into effect September 30, 2019, and the permanent rule will be effective March 1, 2020. For more information regarding the rule changes visit: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcare/ccadminrule>.



DCF is on Twitter! Follow @WisDCF for helpful child care information.

Training Corner

Sharpen your professional skills with new training opportunities!

SFTA Training Opportunities

<https://supportingfamiliesaltogether.org/early-care-education-professionals/sharpen-your-professional-skills/>

WECA Training Opportunities

<http://wisconsinearlychildhood.org/training/>

The Registry Training Opportunities

<https://www.the-registry.org/myregistry/>

Provider Vacations and Wisconsin Shares Payments

The Wisconsin Shares Policy and Process Handbook, Chapter 2, section 2.4.10 Provider Closure Policy, currently allows parents to utilize their subsidy funds to pay their child care provider during a one-week shut-down once per calendar year. This policy will be changed in early 2020 and will be replaced with a policy that the authorization shall not be reduced to account for the following holidays: New Year’s Eve, New Year’s Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, George Washington’s Birthday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Thanksgiving Day, Veteran’s Day, Christmas Eve, or Christmas Day. This change is being



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Provider Vacations continued from page 1

made because the current process pays the child care benefit prospectively rather than based on attendance.

Your dates and times of service, closure dates, and notification policies should be clearly spelled out in the required written agreement between you and the families you serve. If you choose to close your business for vacation(s), the family may need to contact their local agency for assistance with child care closures.

For more details, please see the Wisconsin Shares Child Care Policy and Process Handbook.

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/manuals/wishares-cc-manual/chapt2-authorizations/2.4.10-provider-closure-policy.htm>

If you choose to close your business for vacation(s), the family may need to contact their local agency for assistance with child care closures.

Changes to School Closed Hours



Effective for the 2019-2020 school year, parents who have a Wisconsin Shares authorization for their school-aged children will need to request additional child care hours for weather-related school closures. An additional 10 hours per month from November-March will no longer automatically be added to cover unexpected weather-related school closures. If parents need child care for school closed days in order to work or participate in their approved activity, they need to request the additional hours within 10 calendar days following the school closure.

Parents may request the hours through the Parent Portal or by contacting their local child care agency. If they have questions regarding school closed hours, parents should contact their agency.



Providers – please consider sharing this information with families utilizing Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy.

REWARD Stipend Program:

Are you missing out on a financial reward?



Wisconsin's young children depend on high-quality and consistent child care. Yet, the early childhood profession offers low wages and few benefits, causing many professionals to struggle financially in a job they love, or to leave the field all together. When this happens, children's development is negatively impacted.

The **REWARD Wisconsin Stipend Program** is working to change this. The REWARD program provides salary supplements based on educational attainments and longevity in the field. By doing so, we hope to recognize those who have committed to higher education to improve the quality of care that they provide, while encouraging them to remain in the field. This reduces the turnover that is so harmful to Wisconsin's children. We invite all professionals to visit the REWARD website to see if you or your staff are eligible for the program.

Eligibilities and our live chat feature are available at wisconsinearlychildhood.org/programs/reward

For more information, email reward@wisconsinearlychildhood.org or call 800-783-9322, extension 7249.



DCF-Run Background Checks Now **Required** on All Caregivers and Noncaregiver Employees

Over the last year DCF has slowly phased individual groups of people into compliance with the new background check requirements. These phases are now all complete. This means that all certified and licensed child care providers are now required to have all household members, caregivers, and noncaregiver employees, active at their location undergo a DCF-run fingerprint-based FBI background check to establish eligibility to reside or work in a child care setting. The definitions of caregiver and noncaregiver employee can be found at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/ccregulation/background-check>.

Individuals Fingerprinted Prior to 10/1/2018

Just because someone has had a fingerprint-based background check in the last five years does not mean they meet the new background check requirements. For a background check to establish an individual's eligibility to work in child care, DCF must have been the agency that received the results and made a full determination. If any of the following is true about a background check, it DOES NOT meet the new background check requirements:

- The background check was not performed through Fieldprint.
- The background check results were provided to the child care provider.
- The background check results were provided to a certification agency, or other third party.
- Someone other than DCF made the determination about whether an individual's background check made them eligible to reside or work in a child care setting.

These requirements mean that almost all *caregivers* and *noncaregiver employees* who were employed or residing at a child care location prior to October 1, 2018, will need the new DCF-run fingerprint-based background check.

Background Check Process Improvements

In response to feedback to provider surveys, many improvements have been made to the background check process this last year. These improvements are all available in the Child Care Provider Portal (CCPP). More information about the CCPP can be found at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcare/provider-portal/info>.



These improvements include:

- **Same Day Fingerprint Letter** - Fingerprint letters and instructions are now available immediately upon submittal of a Background Check Request Form in the Child Care Provider Portal.
- **Documents Now Sortable by Individual** - Under an individual's "Details" section, any document uploaded in regard to their background check can be found by selecting "Individual Documents."
- **Search and Sort by Name** – Individuals can now be searched for in your portal by selecting the arrow next to the "Name" column in "Individuals" list.

Individuals can now request and manage their own DCF background check eligibility to reside and work in child care.

The iChildCare Portal is Now Available

Individuals can now request and manage their own DCF background check eligibility to reside and work in a child care setting. By making an iChildCare account, a person can obtain eligibility **before** applying for licensure, or **before** entering the child care field. Eligibility established through the iChildCare portal can be checked and transferred to the CCPP by a provider by selecting "Add Individual" in the CCPP and entering a person's name, date of birth, and social security number. For more information about the iChildCare portal please visit <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcare/ichildcare/portalinfo>.



Clear Rules and Expectations: An Opportunity to Teach

“When a child doesn’t know how to add or subtract, we teach. When a child doesn’t know how to read, we teach. When a child doesn’t know how to behave, we _____?” In many early learning settings, educators have a set standard about how children should behave. These standards are often referred to as rules. The rules educators have for children help them know what to do during specific activities and routines throughout the day. When promoting positive behavior, an educator thoughtfully considers whether each rule is:

1. **Developmentally appropriate and reasonable**
2. **Positive and clear**
3. **Created to promote learning**
4. **Respectful of family and cultural values**
5. **Responsive to individual children**



Educators also hold expectations for children’s behavior, which are a bit different than rules. Expectations are the qualities or characteristics that we aim to instill in children. Common expectations might include being kind, safe, respectful, or helpful. Rules are then developed to support children in learning how to achieve the expectations. For example, in a child care program that has an expectation of being safe, a rule that supports this could be, use walking feet inside. This rule supports teaching children how to be safe.

Just like it is not expected that young children will come to learning environments knowing how to read, write, or do math, it cannot be expected that they will come knowing how to meet behavior expectations. What can be expected is that each educator will intentionally teach children how to meet the behavior expectations and rules. With the guidance of a nurturing and responsive educator, children will learn how to meet behavior expectations.

Teaching children how to meet expectations and rules includes:

- Visually posting rules and expectations and referring to them throughout the day to support children in knowing what they are supposed to be doing.
- Among staff there is consistency in upholding the rules and language they use.
- Modeling the rules yourself, so children can see examples of the expectations regularly.
- Providing opportunities for children to practice each rule.
 - For example, when a child kicks down a peer’s block structure, resist the need to punish the child by removing them from the situation, and instead focus on teaching the child, by staying close by to support them in learning how to fix the situation and to try again. Or, when a child is running in the hallway, remind them to walk **and** later when all children and teachers are calm, plan a small group activity where children can practice the skill.
- Reviewing the rules together regularly during short, large and/or small group times, and individually as needed.
- Reinforcing acceptable behavior by noticing when the child is successful at meeting the expectation and giving them positive descriptive feedback.
 - For example, when a child is walking in the hallway, acknowledge them by saying, “You’re walking in the hallway, that helps us to all stay safe.”

Keep in mind that children, just like adults will make mistakes, particularly when learning something new. How you respond to a child’s mistakes can have a lasting effect on their social emotional development as they grow into adults. By using this opportunity to teach, a calm, regulated adult can help children learn that mistakes can be opportunities to learn.

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What to Expect When the Bureau of Program Integrity Comes to Visit—An Update for 2020

The Department of Children and Families' Bureau of Program Integrity (BPI) and local agencies routinely visit child care providers to review attendance records, billing information, and written payment agreements for the Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy Program. BPI does this to make sure all Wisconsin families have access to quality care for their children. You'll know when BPI or the local agency is visiting, because they will introduce themselves and show identification.

Make sure you are prepared for a visit by reviewing the following recommendations.

Daily Attendance Records

Accurate record keeping is essential for child care providers. When recording attendance, use the full name, date of birth, and age for each child. Parents are responsible for reviewing their child's attendance and signing their name. Records must be kept for three years. BPI or local agency staff may collect your records. They will provide you with a receipt form that tells which records were collected. Copies of your records will be sent to you from BPI or the local agency.

Written Payment Agreements

Child care providers are required to keep a signed written parent/provider agreement with each family receiving Wisconsin Shares at the location where care is provided. A copy of the agreement must be kept for at least three (3) years after the child's last day of attendance at a location, where it can be made available within 24 hours. Providers may utilize the Provider/Parent Payment Agreement form that is available on the DCF website at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/forms> by selecting DCF-F-5224-E. If you create your own form it must include the following:

- Provider's monthly or weekly child care price
- Days and hours of operation
- Any discounts or scholarships available to the parent, and what discount the parent is receiving
- Parent's payment schedule



- Payment dispute policy
- Provider's anticipated closure dates and policy for payments during closures
- Payment expectations for the child's anticipated/unanticipated absences
- Parent procedures for termination of a child's enrollment
- Provider procedures for termination of a child's enrollment

List of Wisconsin Shares Authorizations

This information can be found in the Provider Portal or in the authorization list that is mailed to you. Child care providers are required to notify the local agency if a child of a parent receiving Wisconsin Shares has not attended within the previous 30 days. If you are a provider who has multiple locations, pay close attention that care is being provided at the location for which the child is authorized. *Authorizations are written for a specific provider location, and payment received for care provided at a location other than where the authorization is written may result in a provider overpayment.* If you have a child authorized to the wrong location, or a child has not attended in 30 days, contact your local agency immediately.

Registry Program Profile

Do you have multiple staff members and classrooms? Make sure your staff are accurately listed, and your Registry Program Profile is up-to-date to reflect current roles and classrooms. An inaccurate Registry Program Profile can lead to an inaccurate YoungStar rating, and overpayment. To make updates in your profile, please visit <https://www.the-registry.org/>.

YoungStar is Moving to the Third Edition of the Environment Rating Scales (ERS)



For the first time since 2005, three of the four Environment Rating Scales (ITERS, ECERS, and FCCERS) have received a major revision and update. What does this mean for programs participating in YoungStar? Beginning in 2021, YoungStar will be replacing three ERS-R tools with the newly revised and updated ERS-3 tools. The third editions have the following broad changes:



- ITERS and ECERS have updated age ranges
- ITERS-3 will be used for children up to 3 years of age
- ECERS-3 will be used for children between 3 and 5 years of age
- They eliminate teacher/provider interviews and consider only what is observed during a 3-hour observation
- There is a significantly increased emphasis on provider-child interactions and less concentration on hand-washing and sanitation procedures
- The emphasis has changed from counting materials to a focus on how materials are used with, and accessible to, children
- Additional items and indicators promoting language, literacy, child engagement, and math experiences have been added

Knowing that new tools would impact formal rating scores, a pilot study was done to compare the ERS-R and the ERS-3 tools. Based on the study, the average scores required for a 4 or 5 Star rating will be changed in the 21/22 Evaluation Criteria to the following:

- **Family Child Care**
 - For 4 Stars, an average score of 3.25 on the FCCERS-3 must be achieved
 - For 5 Stars, an average score of 4.25 on the FCCERS-3 must be achieved
- **Group Child Care**
 - For 4 Stars, an average score of 3.5 on the ECERS-3, ITERS-3, and/or SACERS-U must be achieved
 - For 5 Stars, an average score of 4.5 on the ECERS-3, ITERS-3, and/or SACERS-U must be achieved

- No changes have been made to the School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS-U) or the Track 3 score requirements (4 Star = Average score of 4 and 5 Star = Average score of 5)

Over the next several months, we will be providing you with more specific information about the changes that have been made to each ERS tool, as well as updates on new resources and trainings that will be offered through YoungStar. We anticipate both online and face-to-face trainings on each ERS tool will begin to be offered in the Summer of 2020.

DCF is Going Green!

This will be your last print copy of the DCF Provider Newsletter. You can continue to find copies of the newsletter on our website at: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/providers/newsletter>.

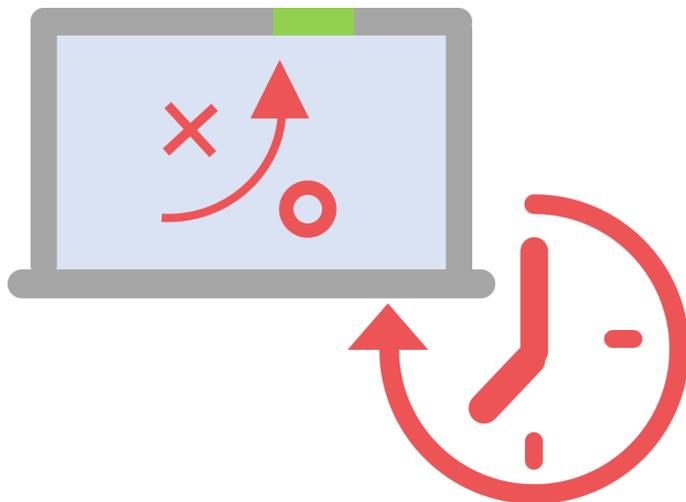
In 2020, look for newsletter notices on our Child Care listserv and in the Provider Portal. Make sure your email and other contact information is up-to-date in our system so you continue to receive notices from DCF.



Be Strategic About Your Time and Your Future



Are you so busy dealing with day-to-day issues that your to-do list rarely includes planning for the future? Strategic planning may seem like a “pie-in-the-sky” waste of time, but it can actually make everyday decisions easier and more in line with your program’s values and budget. Taking a collaborative approach to writing a strategic plan by including staff (if applicable) and parents may additionally benefit your program by fostering a deeper sense of commitment. Finally, having a strategic plan will not only be helpful in making decisions and planning, but it can also help you tell your story.



When you include others in the process of writing your strategic plan, you learn what’s most important to them. While you might not want your entire program involved in every detail, including them in the big picture items like mission, vision, and goal setting is necessary. Next, create a smaller committee that encompasses people with the right skills to help complete research, gather additional feedback, and write the plan. Lastly, bring your larger group back together to review and celebrate the final product. Once completed, you will be able to use your strategic plan in all decision making by asking yourself: if I made this choice, would it align with our strategic goals?

Key Components of a Strategic Plan

1. Your mission - why do you do what you do?
2. Your vision - what are your goals for the future?
3. List of program values - what are your guiding principles?
4. A brief history of your program
5. Program goals and strategies - what are you trying to achieve and how will you do it?
6. Action plan - establish “milestones” by choosing a realistic time for reaching each goal. Include what you will need to reach each milestone (money, people, other resources, etc.).

For more information, check out these articles about strategic planning.

Leadership for Sustainable Organizations by Margie Carter in Exchange Magazine January/February 2014
<http://opportunities-exchange.org/wp-content/uploads/Leadership-for-Sustainable-Organizations.pdf>

Discovering Purpose: Developing Mission, Vision & Values by Rich Horwath of the Strategic Thinking Institute
https://www.strategyskills.com/Articles/Documents/Discovering_Purpose-STI.pdf

Sample Strategic Plan, The ABC Service Agency by the Early Education Training and Technical Assistance System
<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/sample-strategic-plan-abc-service-agency>

Free Online Child Care Training: Business Practices Tutorial
<https://wisconsinearlychildhood.org/training/>

weca Wisconsin Early Childhood Association

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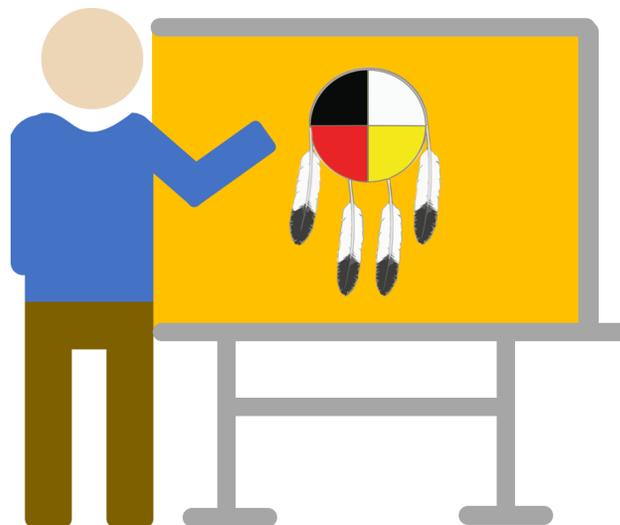


American Indian and Tribal Resources for Education

Did you know Wisconsin has 11 federally recognized tribes? Or that teaching children from all backgrounds about American Indians can promote learning, growth, and development?

By integrating tribal curriculum and activities into your program, children can gain an understanding of different value systems and cultures, all while learning about our rich Wisconsin history. Teaching children how to respect other cultures by recognizing their similarities and differences can foster cultural understanding, acceptance, and appreciation. Below are free resources to make your program fun, tribal-infused, and appropriate for children of all ages!

- Browse our Wisconsin Child Care Information Center Library catalog (CCIC) for various children's books centered around American Indians and tribes. <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/ccic/library>
- Find materials, select lesson plans, engage in professional development, and view videos related to Wisconsin First Nations that can support both teachers and providers. <https://wisconsinfirstnations.org/>



- Watch webinars, use toolkits, and see what successful programs are doing to infuse tribal curriculum at the Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/programs/article/tribal-language-culture-materials>

Staying Current with Rate Updates



Every year or two, the Department of Children & Families (DCF) conducts a market rate survey to determine the prices of child care in the private market among regulated care providers. This information can inform the department as to how the Wisconsin Shares maximum subsidy rates compare to the private market. The department can use this information to adjust those rates.

The market rate survey is sent to all regulated providers in Wisconsin each year. You might remember seeing an online form called the Business Information Form (BIF) or receiving a paper document from your Child Care Resource and Referral Agency (CCR&R). In 2018, 26% of regulated child care providers reported updated rates on their BIF, which were then analyzed for the market rate survey.



The department encourages child care providers to regularly update their rates as part of the survey. The department uses the information from the survey to understand the cost of care. **To ensure parents and providers are receiving the highest possible subsidy amount, the**

department needs information on rates from as many providers as possible. For example, the 2019 rate increases were determined based on reported provider prices to the market rate survey.

Provider Next Steps

- ✓ Report 2019 child care rates to your local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency (CCR&R) through your online or paper Business Information Form (BIF)
- ✓ Report your current rate to the Child Care Provider Portal
- ✓ Ensure rates in the Child Care Provider Portal are updated after any rate changes in your program

