Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

DCF Provider News: A Resource for Wisconsin Shares & YoungStar Providers

YoungStar is Changing to Less Frequent Ratings

Beginning in 2017, programs participating in YoungStar will only need to be rated every two years. This will give programs more time to improve their quality between ratings. All currently participating program sites will be divided between even-year and odd-year rating groups. Programs will be divided through a computer-generated system that will take a variety of factors into consideration. Due to the challenge of dividing more than 4,000 programs, the process will be completely random, and programs will **not** be able to choose (or change) which rating group they are placed in.

All programs will be notified of their assignment (even-year ratings or odd-year ratings) before September 2016.

- Programs that are in the odd-year rating group will get a new two-year renewal contract 120 days before their anniversary month in 2017. This two-year YoungStar renewal contract must be completed and returned to a program's local YoungStar office by the program's 2017 anniversary date in order to continue to receive Wisconsin Shares payments. Programs in the odd-year rating group will receive YoungStar renewal contracts, which must be submitted to continue participation, every two years (2019, 2021, 2023, etc.).
- Programs that are in the even-year rating group will get a one-time, one-year only YoungStar contract in 2017, as the YoungStar contract signed in 2016 is only valid for one year. This contract will be required, even though programs in the even rating group do not need to complete a rating in 2017. Then, programs that are in the even rating group will get a new two-year renewal contract 120 days in advance of their 2018 anniversary month. This two-year renewal contract must be completed and returned to a program's local YoungStar office by the program's 2018 anniversary date in order to continue to receive Wisconsin Shares payments. Programs in the even rating group will receive renewal contracts, which must be submitted to continue participation, every two years (2020, 2022, 2024, etc.).

YoungStar Transition

In May 2015, the Department of Children and Families issued a Request for Proposal for the administration of the YoungStar Quality Rating and Improvement System. Multiple bidders responded and the Department has selected Supporting Families Together Association (SFTA) to administer all YoungStar services beginning July 1, 2016.

We are actively working to make this transition for YoungStar participating child care providers as smooth as possible. More detailed information will be available in the near future. Visit the YoungStar website for complete details. http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/transition.htm

YoungStar Support Available During "Off" Rating Years

Although ratings will not be required every year, programs are encouraged to receive free YoungStar support services during their "off" rating years. On these "off" years, programs will receive a "Request for Off-Year Services" application 120 days before their anniversary month. This application will allow programs to request services, if desired. Programs can receive just technical consultation and a micro-grant, just a rating, or all three services! Note that programs that choose to be rated on their "off-year" will stay on the same even or odd rating track. This means that the program will receive a rating at least three (3) years in a row (on-year rating, off-year rating, on-year rating.

The change to less frequent YoungStar ratings has been requested by multiple programs and early education associations in Wisconsin. It also allows YoungStar ratings to be more similar to accreditation rating timelines. Now that YoungStar is an established program, we are hopeful that this change will better support programs as they focus on long-term quality efforts.

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Tribal WMELS Pilot

In the fall of 2015, a First Nations Train-the-Trainers Pilot Project was developed in collaboration between Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, Collaborating Partners, and WECA; and funded with dollars from Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant. This pilot included eight early childhood tribal professionals from five First Nations from Wisconsin who volunteered to be a part of a cohort to re-envision the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) training through a culturally-responsive lens. The First Nations represented in this cohort were Ho Chunk, Menominee, Red Cliff, Stockbridge-Munsee, and Oneida.

This training was restructured to embrace the cultures of First Nations educators, allow for mentoring each participant, and included two webinars to reduce the travel barrier for many participants. All eight First Nations participants successfully completed this 16-hour training and are now being mentored as they offer this training in their communities and becoming recognized trainers with The Registry and the WMELS Steering Committee.

The core concepts of the training did not change, as the trainers understood the importance of fidelity to the WMELS curriculum. However, many of the training slides were replaced with images, words, and ideas that would resonate with Native Americans and bring those core concepts into meaningful relationship with practices, traditions, and ideas important to First Nations people. Some of the delivery of the training was also adjusted to conform to Tribal norms (participants seated in a circle, for example, rather than seated with backs to others) and some activities/handouts were adjusted. Native American artisans and keepers of traditional practices were highlighted and included in the visual presentations. Images and concepts were carefully researched and vetted with the First Nation participants to ensure cultural fidelity.

Each Tribal member that participated in this pilot felt that the coaching helped answer questions on how to fully implement the standards with their early childhood staff, as well as brainstorming ways to build collaborations in their communities to deliver WMELS trainings and events. This training was so well received, it is hoped that it will be able to move from the pilot stage to a fully available First Nations Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards. The WMELS trainers for this cohort would like to offer their deep thanks and gratitude for the insights shared and the warm relationships built during this process. The First Nations cohort's insights, comments, and participation made this event truly successful and something special.

What are the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards?

There is much talk about the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) - what are they? What age of child would be included in these standards?

The WMELS specify developmental expectations for children from birth through entrance to first grade. The standards reflect what a child should know and be able to do as they learn and develop from birth until they enter first grade. The standards divide a child's learning and development into five specific domains. The domains include:

- Health and Physical Development
- Social and Emotional Development
- Language Development and Communication
- Approaches to Learning
- Cognition and General Knowledge

Each domain is divided into sub-domains, which include developmental expectations, program standards, performance standards, and developmental continuum. Samples of children's behavior and adult strategies are also provided.

Why do we have WMELS?

Based on research and supported by evidence-based practices, the WI Model Early Learning Standards provide a framework for families, professionals and policy makers to:

- Share a common language and responsibility for the well-being of children from birth to first grade
- Know and understand developmental expectations of young children
- Understand the connection among the foundations of early childhood, K-12 educational experiences, and lifelong learning.

What Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards Training is Available Throughout the State?

The training provides participants with an opportunity to understand the WMELS so that they will be able to use the WMELS to build a foundation for high-quality care and education for all children from birth to the beginning of first grade. Participants learn how to apply the WMELS Performance Standards to determine what children should know and be able to do, plan learning experiences, provide supportive environments, and collect data to ensure that all children are learning and making progress.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) and Child Care

One of the 2016 YoungStar Evaluation Criteria changes now being implemented in child care programs statewide is the recently added optional point for Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) (Learning Environment and Curriculum, B.1.3), which replaced the Additional Work on a Quality Improvement Plan. YoungStar Technical Consultants (TCs) are working with providers to incorporate this point into their daily practice, or identify what they already have in their program that meets the requirements.

The point requirements read as follows, and all five must be met to earn the point:

1. Written program philosophy includes a statement regarding how the program believes children learn AND how teachers teach, reflecting developmentally appropriate practice. The program philosophy is available to families and staff in the parent handbook and employee handbook.
2. Staff provides care that is engaging, comforting, culturally sensitive and compassionate. Interactions must be positive or neutral at best. Teachers use language that the children understand and help children communicate appropriately. Teachers foster relationship building between teachers and children, and peer to peer.
3. Exploration and play for children is supported by the environment. Learning occurs best when opportunities are created in natural and authentic contexts.
4. Children have routines and consistent schedules. Teachers adapt schedules and experiences to individual children's needs within the group setting.
5. Reciprocal relationships with families exist between program and families. Programs must make an effort to get to know children's families.

*(*Taken from DCF YoungStar website, PowerPoint Overview of 2016 Evaluation Criteria)*

Mary Sue Voights, a trainer and YoungStar TC with Child Care Resource & Referral, Inc.has already worked with both group and family child care programs on earning the DAP point.

"It's interesting because I find that family programs have less difficulty with this one," said Mary Sue, referencing her own experience with DAP thus far. "Family providers work with mixed age groups so they are already used to making the materials and activities available to varying ages and abilities."

Mary Sue has found ways to make this point more accessible to both group and family programs. She tailored a DAP training to be a one-on-one consultation tool to support individual programs in meeting the specifics of the point, has compiled handouts on DAP, and uses a video clip about DAP from National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) to show providers how they can effectively implement DAP.

An example of this is supporting group centers to incorporate enough small group and individual free play activities. Mary Sue reviews the schedule with them and shows them where they might eliminate some of the whole group play activities, instead, "setting up experiences and materials in the centers and then just going through them with the children, playing with them to support their development."

"Everybody really wants to do the right thing [by incorporating DAP]," noted Mary Sue, "but we have lost sight of what DAP are for children, which is putting play back in and being there, guiding that play with them."

In working with infants and toddlers, said Mary Sue, this means bringing content back to what is DAP for an age range where children, especially toddlers, appear to be more capable than they actually are emotionally. Understanding DAP means providers know what to expect for typical behavior from the children in their care, and use that to better support each child's needs.

Carrie J. Steinke, Quality Improvement Specialist at Childcaring, Inc., said that TCs at her agency are also in

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full swing to support programs in earning the DAP point. "We are talking about both the DAP and the Family Engagement (FE) points early and often in our work with programs," said Carrie. "We are encouraging providers and programs to engage with those points by the second TC visit, if at all possible, if they are planning to earn them, because we really need to have a good amount of time to cover all of the details of those points—both in consultation and at rating time."

Carrie said they are asking programs to look carefully at their current practices to see where changes to policies or procedures could be made to meet the requirements of the point, while still meeting the philosophy of the program and the needs of the children.

"These points; [DAP and FE], are both a nice opportunity to talk with programs about best practice in a new way," added Carrie.

For more resources on DAP

- NAEYC: Recommended Professional Development Library for DAP http://tinyurl.com/profdevlibrary
- Q&A with the editors of Developmentally Appropriate Practice http://tinyurl.com/devapprpract
- DAP Frequently Asked Questions http://www.naeyc.org/dap/faq
- 10 Effective DAP Teaching Strategies http://tinyurl.com/dapteachstrat
- The Activity Idea Place: Developmentally Appropriate Practices with Young Children http://123child.com/website-share/D.A.P..pdf

Registry Coupon Update

In order to increase from a 2 Star rating to a 3 Star rating, child care providers need to obtain a Career Level from The Registry. The initial cost of The Registry application to obtain a Career Level is $50, which is a barrier for many providers. In 2014-2015, Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant funds were used to provide "coupons" that covered the cost of The Registry application for YoungStar-participating child care providers.

In order to be eligible for a Registry Coupon, a provider must have been participating in YoungStar, earned a 2 Star rating, and been ready to increase her/his YoungStar rating. Registry Coupons initially became available in April of 2014. Coupons were scheduled to be available until October 2016 or until the funds ($45,000) were depleted, and the funds were depleted in January 2015. A total of 1,048 coupons were issued and 401 distinct programs utilized coupons.

Milwaukee County had the highest number of coupons used at 41 percent. Of these, 587 were new applications, 449 were renewals and 12 were 'other'. The majority (81%) of coupons were used by providers at licensed group centers (781), followed by licensed family providers (77). In addition, 134 day camp counselors used coupons, which is significant because 2014 was the first year that Licensed Day Camps participated in YoungStar.

During a scholarship contract, if a student needs to renew or apply for a Registry account T.E.A.C.H. will provide the funding to do so. The Department of Children and Families will continue to work towards eliminating all barriers to the quality improvement process for child care providers in the state.

Training Corner

SFTA Training Opportunities
Supporting Families Together Association offers a variety of trainings and consultations to help you sharpen your professional skills. See their training calendar here: http://supportingfamiliestogether.org/wp-content/uploads/Annual-Training-Calendar.pdf

WECA Training Opportunities
In addition to many in-person training opportunities, Wisconsin Early Childhood Association offers a free online training – *Cultivating Childhood Wellness Through Gardening*. See a full calendar of upcoming training opportunities here: http://wisconsinearlychildhood.org/training/

The Registry Training Opportunities
Visit The Registry training tab to find the current class listings in your region of the state. You'll find in-person and web-based learning opportunities here: https://www.the-registry.org/myregistry/

Farm to Early Care and Education

What is Farm to Early Care and Education?

Farm to early care and education (ECE) is a natural extension of the farm to school model, and works to connect early care and education settings (preschools, Head Start, center-based programs, programs in K-12 school districts, and family day care homes) to local food producers with the objectives of serving locally-grown, healthy foods to young children, improving child nutrition, and providing related educational opportunities. There are some resources that refer to Farm to ECE as "Farm to Preschool".

Farm to early care and education implementation includes the same core elements as Farm to School. Farm to ECE differs by location but always includes one or more of the following:

- **Procurement:** Local foods are purchased, promoted and served at mealtime or as a snack or taste test
- **Education:** Children participate in education activities related to agriculture, food, health or nutrition
- **School gardens:** Children engage in hands-on learning through gardening

Why Farm to Early Care and Education?

Offering hands-on activities and serving local foods in your early care and education setting can increase a child's willingness to try new foods. Farm to ECE is an opportunity to increase access to healthy environments which can improve early eating habits and help to prevent obesity in ECE settings.

Visit the WI DPI Community Nutrition Team's Farm to Early Care and Education webpage http://dpi.wi.gov/community-nutrition/cacfp/farm-2-ece for more information and resources on Farm to ECE including *Tips and Getting Started; Find a Farmer; Guidance, Updates & Grants; National Resources; Procurement;* and *Wisconsin Resources*!

Positive Solutions for Families Training a Success

In April, Race to the Top, Supporting Families Together Association, and CESA 11 sponsored a Positive Solutions for Families training event in Neenah, Wisconsin. This event focused on the updated Wisconsin Positive Solutions for Families content. The training materials provided information for families on supporting children's social and emotional skills, understanding their child's challenging behavior, and using positive approaches to help children learn appropriate behavior.

The Positive Solutions for Families content is designed to be delivered in 5-6 weeks of face-to-face parent networking sessions. While the parents attend each session, their children will be introduced to the same lessons through specially selected children's books and teacher-led activities. The content aligns with Wisconsin's Pyramid Model training for teachers, and has been updated to align with other Wisconsin information. This training was intended for anyone who has a responsibility of providing parent education and availability to facilitate parent groups. Participants who attended will be able to train parents in evidence-based practices to

Ten specially selected children's books were handed out as part of the training.

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Learn How Child Care Providers Like You Can Get Between $200 and $900 Annually

Did you know that as a family or group child care provider you may be eligible to receive money from the REWARD Wisconsin program?

We recognize those providers, whose education is so important to young children, with annual stipends based on your Registry level. This means you!

The higher you go, the larger your stipend.

If you're eligible for the program there's even better news. Through June 30 an additional $300 is added to the REWARD stipend.

Apply online today: Family Child Care Provider Application / Group Child Care Provider Application

Questions? Call 800.783.9322 or email reward@wisconsinearlychildhood.org

For more information about REWARD, visit http://wisconsinearlychildhood.org/programs/reward/

For more information about T.E.A.C.H., visit http://wisconsinearlychildhood.org/programs/teach

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The participants who attended the training were extremely grateful to receive a toolkit from DCF-RTTT of all the children's books from the children's sessions! DCF staff put together "books in bags" for the training event.

promote social emotional development and therefore decrease challenging behavior.

"The Positive Solutions for Families Facilitator's Training was excellent," said Connie Dunlap, the Family Engagement Specialist at Supporting Families Together Association. "Updating the content to be Wisconsin-specific and creating children's activities that correspond with what the adults are learning promotes the parallel process of learning," Dunlap added.

"Through this training, parents and other adults will be able to implement their newly learned strategies with their children at home, and the children will have a basic understanding, as well, since they are learning similar strategies at a developmentally appropriate level. This parallel learning will enhance the relationship building between the parents and children," said Dunlap.

Here's the list of books handed out at the training:

- Have You Filled a Bucket Today
- Fill a Bucket
- Peanut Butter and Cupcake
- Knuffle Bunny
- David Gets in Trouble
- Glad Monster, Sad Monster
- Tucker Turtle
- Tucker Turtle coloring book
- Going on a Bear Hunt
- The Going to Bed Book

MyWIChildCare Updates

The MyWIChildCare EBT (Parent Pay) Initiative is on track for implementation of phase 1 in the La Crosse area WREA consortia for October of 2016. Phase 1 includes providers located in Buffalo, Clark, Jackson, Monroe, Pepin, Trempealeau, Vernon, and La Crosse counties. Phase 2 is also on target in Milwaukee County and the Balance of State outside of WREA for February of 2017. The Parent Pay Initiative has been re-named MyWIChildCare (MWCC).

DCF has contracted with Fidelity Information Services (FIS) to handle the processing of payments, card issuance and maintenance, financial reporting, and provider enrollment. **Providers that serve Wisconsin Shares families are required to sign an agreement with FIS that includes the Provider's Tax ID and also their bank account information.** MWCC payments are deposited directly into the Provider's bank account by electronic funds transfer.

FIS is a national leader in the Electronic Benefits Transfer industry. They have many years of experience, including processing EBT business for Wisconsin's Foodshare and WIC programs. FIS will contact phase 1 providers in July 2016 with online contracting or paper contracting methods. Phase 2 providers will be contacted beginning in September 2016. Paper checks will no longer be an option for payment under MWCC.

Please visit our webpage for the latest information, to obtain contact information, or if you have any questions: http://mywichildcare.wi.gov

MyWIChildCare will replace the current payment process for Wisconsin Shares eligible families where providers directly bill the state for child care services. The new system will issue MyWIChildCare EBT cards to Wisconsin Shares families, who will initiate payments to providers for child care services provided to their children.

There are many advantages to the new system:

- Providers will no longer have to submit attendance report forms (ARFs) to get paid for services.
- Providers will be paid for days when the child is absent.

- Payments to providers will be provided prior to service being rendered to closely mirror private pay practices.
- Payments will be deposited to provider's bank accounts within two days of initiation by the parents.

Online training and contracting will be available in July 2016. Contracting and training for providers will be available on the FIS website: http://www.ebtEDGE.com.

What can a child care provider do to prepare for the new MyWIChildCare EBT card?

1. **Child Care Providers *must* participate in YoungStar to be eligible for a Wisconsin Shares authorization**. Make sure you return your YoungStar contract prior to your anniversary date.
2. **Review the language in your agreement or contract with parents.** It should be updated to reflect your payment policies, rates and payment date expectations, hours of service, and your notice of termination policy. Payment frequency under MWCC can be monthly, biweekly, or weekly. Providers may use whichever option works best for them and their customers. Providers should give the same options

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to Wisconsin Shares parents as they do with private pay customers.

3. **Have a discussion with your parents who receive Wisconsin Shares to inform if your policies are going to change and when.**
4. **Complete your FIS contract and get it back to FIS quickly.** Providers who have Wisconsin Shares authorizations, and do not sign the contract online or on paper, will see those authorizations end when MWCC goes live. The phase one go live dates are October 3, 2016 for La Crosse, Buffalo, Clark, Jackson, Monroe, Pepin, Trempealeau, and Vernon counties. Providers located in other counties not listed in phase one will go live February 3, 2017. Phase one contracts will be available in July of 2016. Phase two contracts will be available in September of 2016. FIS will send a postcard to providers to inform them the contracts are ready. **Keep the postcard! It will have your FIS provider number on it. The FIS provider number must be entered on the FIS provider contract.**
5. **Providers who want the optional Point of Sale (POS) device should consider if it will benefit their business.** FIS charges providers a fee of $14.50 per month to have a POS Device. There are three ways for parents to pay providers under MWCC. They can use a POS Device if the provider has one. They can use any telephone to access FIS's Interactive Video Response (IVR) or they can use the FIS website at http://www.ebtedge.com. The telephone and ebtEDGE website methods are free.
6. **Review your full time and part time weekly child care rates and report them to the local child care agency**.
7. **Go to the FIS website http://www.ebtedge.com and explore the child care provider area.** Providers will be able to view the payments made to their account in real time.
8. **Obtain a checking account if you don't have one.** FIS contracts require child care providers to have a checking account. The account is necessary to receive electronic funds transfers from FIS. Providers who are unable to obtain a checking account **may** be able to obtain a loadable debit card that has a routing number and account number that meets the FIS requirements.

MECA Corner *(Milwaukee County Providers Only)*

Now is the Time to Re-Authorize for Summer Child Care

Providers – please remind your families to re-authorize for child care now – don't wait until their authorization ends! The sooner families do this, the better! Our busiest times in the child care unit are the beginning of any month, mid-June and the first couple of weeks of September. To avoid long wait times in the lobby and on the phone, please inform your families the best time to get an authorization is the middle of April, the middle of May and the middle of July.

Also, remind your families that obtaining a child care authorization is a two-step process.

1. Contact MiLES (Milwaukee Enrollment Services) to obtain eligibility either by phone, or by coming in to the first floor of the Coggs building.
2. Contact MECA (Milwaukee Early Care Administration), 2nd floor of the Coggs building, for their authorization once all verification has been submitted and family is found to be eligible for child care.

Many families think that once they renew their eligibility, it automatically renews their authorization; however, that is not the case.