

DCF: Increases YoungStar bonus payments to attract and retain high-quality child care providers

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(MADISON) – The Department of Children and Families (DCF) announced an increase in YoungStar bonus payments today for all providers with 4 and 5 Star ratings. The changes go into effect on July 1, 2019.

“With roughly half of our zip codes classified as child care deserts, we need to be aggressive in attracting and retaining child care providers,” said DCF Secretary-designee Emilie Amundson. “Providing access to affordable, quality child care is an economic issue, a moral issue, and it’s what is best for the kids and families of Wisconsin.”

Wisconsin Shares is the state’s child care subsidy program, designed to help low-income families access affordable child care. YoungStar is Wisconsin’s Child Care Quality Rating and Improvement System which provides the public with information about participating providers. YoungStar uses a rating system with five being the highest quality. Ratings are assigned based on a facility’s staff qualifications, learning environment and curriculum, business practices, and child well-being.

Child care providers who accept Wisconsin Shares subsidies must participate in the YoungStar program. Providers who reach the 4 and 5 Star levels receive increased Wisconsin Shares payments which can be spent on improving quality, training of staff, or reducing cost for families. Previously, 4 Star providers received an 11 percent adjustment and 5 Star providers received a 27 percent adjustment. Today’s action by the department increases those amounts to 15 and 30 percent,

respectively.

The department is also interested in identifying ways to increase the number of highly rated providers throughout Wisconsin. Our stakeholders consistently report that they need additional support to increase their YoungStar ratings. Any positive change we can realize will have a tremendous impact on the children and families they serve.

“As a non-profit, public, early childhood care and education program, with over 50% of our total enrollment from low-income households, we have been so very grateful to receive the fiscal incentives for our 5 Star main center,” said Paula Koelsch, Administrator of Parkside Preschool Centers in Merrill, Wisconsin.

The additional funding to cover these costs comes from sound budgeting decisions made by DCF in implementing changes to Wisconsin Shares and YoungStar and active support of the programs by the governor and legislators.