

Dept. of Children and Families: Monthly Child Care Counts program, historic Wisconsin shares rate increase coming soon

Posted on Wednesday, Nov 3, 2021

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MADISON – The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is launching a redesigned Child Care Counts payment program to support Wisconsin's early care and education community. Under the new program, regulated child care providers will be eligible to receive monthly payments through 2023, giving them the stability they need to stay open and continue to care for children. Applications for the new program will open on Monday, November 8, 2021.

To date, [over \\$238 million](#) has been paid to child care providers through Child Care Counts payment programs. This historic investment has helped significantly to reduce the number of permanent and temporary closures of licensed child care providers, with only 2.7 percent of providers (118) closed in October 2021 compared to 40 percent (1,729) in March 2020.

"The pandemic has highlighted how important access to high-quality, affordable child care is to Wisconsin families, as well as our state's economy," said DCF Secretary Emilie Amundson. "It also highlighted a looming crisis in the child care industry. This program, along with other upcoming initiatives, will help us stabilize beyond the pandemic by growing and sustaining child care providers that meet the needs of Wisconsin's working families."

A total of \$351 million in funds will be available over the next 18 months and will be distributed through two programs targeting the challenges early care and education providers are facing. Details about each program can be found below:

Payment Program A - Increasing Access to High-Quality Care is intended to ensure that high-quality care is available across the state, specifically at younger ages where reasonable alternatives to child care do not exist. Under this program, additional financial incentives will be provided to providers who offer child care during non-standard hours and care for children with additional identified needs, such as children with disabilities receiving Birth to 3 services.

Payment Program B - Funding Workforce Recruitment and Retention supports the costs associated with recruiting and retaining high-quality staff. Under this program, additional financial incentives will be provided to programs that participate in [YoungStar](#).

Child Care Counts funding will be available to child care programs that are currently open and will support expanded access to high-quality child care slots geographically, during non-traditional hours and for children who need additional support during care.

The initial application period will open November 8, 2021, and close November 19, 2021, with additional opportunities to apply each month through 2023. Additional program details will be available on the [department's website](#) starting November 5, 2021. All eligible providers are encouraged to apply.

In addition to the Child Care Counts payment program, Governor Evers and DCF Secretary Emilie Amundson, with the support of the Joint Committee on Finance and other stakeholders, are making transformational investments to increase long-term access to affordable, high-quality child care in Wisconsin. Over the coming months, the department will be:

- Making a historic increase in the **Wisconsin Shares** child care subsidy rate from 35 to 80 percent of the estimated cost of child care;
- Launching **Project Growth**, a \$20 million initiative aimed at growing innovative partnerships between the early care and education and business communities and expanding innovative, high-quality early care and education programs throughout the state.

To learn more about DCF, visit www.dcf.wisconsin.gov and follow @WisDCF on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

This press release is also available in [PDF format](#).