

# Gov. Evers, DCF: Announce plan to support early care and education providers, partners, and Wisconsin families

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers and Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) Secretary Emilie Amundson signaled their intent to submit a plan with the Joint Committee on Finance (JFC) to use the additional Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) award Wisconsin received.

Congress allocated additional funds for childcare to states through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. Wisconsin received roughly \$148.8 million in CCDBG funds to offset the continued impact of the pandemic on costs associated with providing early care and education. The proposed plan will be submitted through the §16.54 process and reviewed by JFC before funds can reach early care and education providers and partners.

“As I’ve said before, the success of our early care and education system is directly tied to the economic success of our state,” said Gov. Evers. “This plan will provide immediate- and medium-term stability to ensure families can continue to access affordable, quality care. When viewed together with our budget, it sets our state up to be a national leader in early care and education.”

Design of the plan was informed by early care and education providers and stakeholders, as well as the state’s [Preschool Development Grant Strategic Plan](#). Most of the funding will be distributed through two additional phases of the [Child Care Counts program](#). Five additional programs will also be created to address specific needs identified as crucial to the future success of early care and education in Wisconsin.

“The shovel-ready nature of the Child Care Counts program presents us with the ability to get the majority of this funding to the people who need it, and to do so quickly,” said DCF Secretary Amundson. “We successfully administered this program in 2020 and our providers are familiar with the processes involved.”

The state’s plan to expend the additional CCDBG dollars is broken into two phases that correspond to the 2021 and 2022 state fiscal years. The request being filed today covers the first phase through June 30, 2021, and the estimated overhead costs of \$2.3 million associated with implementing this plan. Both phases are detailed below.

### **Phase one**

*Expand Child Care Counts program to support providers and educators (\$106 million)*

Administer two additional rounds of the Child Care Counts program in 2021, including a \$60 million program in Spring 2021 and a \$46 million program in Summer 2021. Funds would support open providers for quality programs and staff, as well as temporarily closed providers who are providing support services to children and families.

*Fund critical technology infrastructure (\$10 million)*

COVID-19 has underscored how critical reliable internet access and technology is for childcare providers to continue learning, access state services, and connect with the families they serve. This program would provide funding to reduce the cost of technology for providers.

*Invest in workforce recruitment and retention (\$10 million)* Early childhood educators make on average \$10 to 13 dollars an hour and have a 40% turnover rate. This program will supplement low wages and minimal benefits and require compliance with federal and state background check requirements.

*Create and expand shared services networks (\$5.5 million)* With childcare operating on razor thin margins, shared services networks aim to maximize resource efficiencies for administrative functions. Funding will support expanding existing models or create new networks as needed.

### **Phase two**

*Incentivize private sector partnership (\$10 million)*

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored how critical childcare is to Wisconsin’s economy. This new program will offer funding to businesses to purchase infant and toddler childcare slots for their employees. It will require matching funds from businesses, which will allow them to transition to a sustainable childcare support program for their employees.

*Invest in workforce training and communications (\$5.5 million)*

Recruitment and retention of new workforce is critical to ensure that quality childcare programs remain in communities beyond the COVID-19 public health emergency. This program would modernize the required training curriculum to implement best practices, including health and safety, translate programs into multiple languages, and allow trainings to be accessible online so they can be available across Wisconsin.