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**State of Wisconsin
Governor Scott Walker**

**TO: Income Maintenance Supervisors
Income Maintenance Lead Workers
Income Maintenance Staff
Training Staff
Child Care Coordinators**

**FROM: Kath McGurk, Director
Bureau of Early Learning and Policy
Division of Early Care and Education
Department of Children and Families**

DECE/BELP OPERATIONS MEMO

No: 17-26

DATE: 06/01/2017

Child Care

SUBJECT: The Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy Program as it Relates to Foster Parents, Interim Caretakers, Subsidized Guardians, and Relatives who have both a Court Order under Wisconsin Statutes Chapters 48 or 938 and who Receive the Kinship Care Payment

CROSS REFERENCE: Emergency Rule DCF 201.039(10)(a)2a and b; Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy Policy Manual sections 1.3.2, 1.3.2.2, 1.3.7, 2.2.3, 2.2.4, and 2.2.5

EFFECTIVE DATE: June 1, 2017

PURPOSE: This Operations Memo informs local Child Care agency and state staff about an alternative method to initiate the application process for the Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy Program for foster parents, interim caretakers, subsidized guardians, and relatives who have both a court order for placement of a child under Wisconsin Statutes Chapters 48 or 938, or substantially similar Wisconsin tribal law, and who receive a Kinship Care payment.

In addition, this Operations Memo provides information about a policy change that allows the Child Care subsidy authorization begin date to start prior to the RFA date in limited situations for relatives who have both a court order for placement of a child under Wisconsin Statutes Chapters 48 or 938, or substantially similar Wisconsin tribal law, and who receive a Kinship Care payment.

Finally, this Operations Memo provides information about the long-term plan between the Division of Early Care and Education (DECE) and the Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) to enhance eWiSACWIS and CARES Worker Web (CWW) to share information related to families served by both Divisions.

BACKGROUND: The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is currently approaching the final phase of MyWiChildCare implementation across the state. This initiative enables Wisconsin Shares participants to pay their child care providers using an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card. As part of implementing MyWiChildCare, DCF Chapter 201 was amended to limit the authorization start date to begin no earlier than the RFA date, with limited exceptions.

In accordance with the changes to DCF Chapter 201, the Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy Program Policy Manual was updated and Chapter 2 section 2.2.3 currently limits the Child Care authorization begin date to start no earlier than the RFA date. As a result of this requirement, it is very important for parents to apply for Wisconsin Shares as soon as they know they will need child care.

For certain families, the ability to apply for Wisconsin Shares when the need for child care arises may be challenging, such as for foster parents, interim caretakers, subsidized guardians, and relatives who have both a court order under Wisconsin Statutes Chapters 48 or 938, or substantially similar Wisconsin tribal law, and who receive the Kinship Care payment. These families may have a child placed in their home on short notice and may have obligations related to the child's placement that must be attended to immediately, which makes it more difficult to apply for Wisconsin Shares in a timely manner. To overcome this challenge, DSP and DECE have agreed upon an alternative option for these families to submit a Wisconsin Shares Child Care Registration form (DCF-F-2835) so that the RFA date can be established without delay.

Along the same line, relatives who have both a court order for placement of a child under Wisconsin Statutes Chapters 48 or 938, or substantially similar Wisconsin tribal law, and who receive a Kinship Care payment have additional delays in applying for Wisconsin Shares because, after obtaining the court order for the placement of the child in the relative's home, it can take up to 45 days to obtain approval of the Kinship Care payment once requested. Relatives often wait to apply for Wisconsin Shares until they have both a court order and are receiving the Kinship Care payment because then their eligibility is based on Wisconsin Statutes section 49.155(1m)(c)1h, which allows their financial eligibility to be tested based on the income and household size of the child's biological parent's at the time the child was removed from the home. Once the Kinship Care payment is approved, it is backdated to the date the child was placed with the relative if within 90 days of the Kinship Care request; otherwise it is backdated to the date that the Kinship Care application was received.

To alleviate some of the out-of-pocket child care costs these relatives incur while waiting to be approved for the Kinship Care payment before applying for Wisconsin Shares, emergency rule DCF 201.039(10(a)2 was implemented and provides an exception to allow the authorization begin date to start before the RFA date in limited situations for these relatives. In accordance with this emergency rule change, the Wisconsin Shares policy has been amended to include this exception.

NEW POLICY: 2.2.3.1 Authorizations at Initial Eligibility for Relatives Who Have Both Court- Ordered Placement under Wisconsin Statutes Chapters 48 or 938, or substantially similar Wisconsin tribal law, and Who Receive the Kinship Care Payment

Once eligibility has been determined, an authorization for a relative who has both a court order for placement under Wisconsin Statutes Chapters 48 or 938, or substantially similar Wisconsin tribal law, and who receives the Kinship Care payment may begin on the later date of either the first day of the month of the RFA or the date of the child's placement, so long as the child is receiving child care services from a child care provider and the following requirements are met:

- The child care provider was regulated during that time
- The child care provider had a YoungStar or Wisconsin Shares Participation Contract in place during that time
- The child care provider was in compliance with fingerprint requirements for the backdated period of time, to be monitored by the regulatory agency
- The child care provider had a signed contract with FIS
 - If the FIS contract has not been completed, the authorization can be backdated after the FIS contract is complete
- The relative provided the necessary authorization assessment information within 30 days of the RFA date.

The authorization begin date is limited to the first day of the month of the RFA, the date of the child's placement, provider regulation date, YoungStar or Wisconsin Shares Participation Contract date, fingerprint compliance date, or the date that the child began attending the child care program, whichever is later.

PROCESS: To assist foster parents, interim caretakers, and subsidized guardians in getting an RFA date set as soon as a child is placed in their homes, DECE and DSP have agreed that these individuals may sign the Wisconsin Shares Child Care Registration form (DCF-F-2835) at the time the foster care license is issued by the Child Welfare agency. The Child Welfare agency will keep the signed form on file and when a child is placed into the home, the Child Welfare agency will fax or deliver the signed form to the Child Care eligibility agency. The RFA date is the date the form is received by the Child Care eligibility agency.

Relatives who have a court order for placement under Wisconsin Statutes Chapters 48 or 938, or substantially similar Wisconsin tribal law, may also use this option for submitting a Wisconsin Shares Child Care Registration form (DCF-F-2835). Once the Kinship Care payment is received, the Child Welfare agency will fax or deliver the signed form to the Child Care eligibility agency. The RFA date is the date the form is received by the Child Care eligibility agency.

All families may apply for Wisconsin Shares by phone, in person, or through ACCESS. However, this alternative option for getting the Wisconsin Shares Child Care Registration form (DCF-F-2835) to the Child Care eligibility agency is a way of assisting these individuals with making sure that the RFA date is established as soon as possible.

Please note that the date the Child Care eligibility agency receives the form establishes the RFA date, not the date the form is signed.

FUTURE SYSTEM ENHANCEMENTS: DECE and DSP plan to enhance both eWiSACWIS and CWW to allow information from eWiSACWIS to be shared with CWW. The goal is to simplify the Wisconsin Shares Child Care application process for families that are served by both Divisions. A timeline for all of the needed system enhancements has not yet been determined.

CONTACTS:

For assistance with Chapters 3 and 4 of the Child Care Subsidy Policy Manual, or any questions related to fraud, overpayments, or investigation, please contact the Bureau of Program Integrity at: dcfbpitarequest@wisconsin.gov

For Wisconsin Shares Child Care policy questions outside of Milwaukee County contact your Bureau of Regional Operations (BRO) Child Care Coordinator at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/regionaloperations/pdf/bro-contacts.pdf>

For Child Care CARES/CWW, CSAW and CCPI Processing Questions statewide and policy questions in Milwaukee County contact the Child Care Subsidy and Technical Assistance Line at: childcare@wisconsin.gov or (608) 422-7200.

DCF/DECE/BELP/AO