



TO: **Income Maintenance Supervisors**
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DECE/BELP OPERATIONS MEMO

No: 20-14

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Child Care

SUBJECT: Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy for the 2020-2021 School Year

CROSS REFERENCE: [Wisconsin Shares Child Care Policy and Process Handbook](#), Section 2.3.8 Authorization End Dates, Section 2.4.4.3 Authorizations for Children in Grades K through 12, Section 2.4.4.4.1 School Closed Hours, Section 2.4.4.2 Co-located Head Start and 4K School Programs, 2.4.8 Maximum of 75 Authorized Hours Per Week, 2.4.9 Changing and Ending an Authorization During a Month
[Operations Memo 19-27](#)
[Education Forward: Reopening Wisconsin Schools](#)

EFFECTIVE DATE: Immediately

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Operations Memo is to provide local agencies with guidance for authorizing child care for school-age children during the 2020-2021 school year.

BACKGROUND: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, local school districts need to re-envision their educational delivery plans for the 2020-2021 school year and this has a direct impact on child care needs for school-aged children. Local school districts determine the operations of their buildings and the learning environment. The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has created a [resource](#) to help school districts determine which educational delivery method might be best for their district.

The three standard educational delivery models are: all in-person instruction, physically distanced or blended instruction (in-person and virtual/analog), and all virtual/analog instruction. Analog means that instruction is provided through paper packets, phone calls, or other means when technology for virtual school may not be available. School districts may choose one model

and then need to change abruptly depending on their local health circumstances. The following Wisconsin Shares policy applies to each model to help local agencies quickly adapt to changes in educational delivery models.

POLICY: The following policy is effective for the 2020-2021 school year.

Current Policy: Wisconsin Shares Child Care Policy and Process Handbook Section 2.4.4.3 Authorizations for Children in Grades K through 12:

The Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy Program does not allow authorizations for time during the typical school day for children in grades K through 12 while the school year is in session, in accordance with 45C.F.R. s.98.56(c). The typical school day is determined by the local agency after a review of the school district hours of operation and school district calendar for schools within the particular county or tribe.

Part-time or full-time authorizations for children in grades K through 12 can be made for times outside of the typical school hours during the school year and for times when school is not in session, (e.g. summer break, planned holiday breaks, or other planned school-closed times).

Children who are homeschooled, truant, or suspended from school are not eligible for an authorization during the typical school day. Children who are homeschooled, truant, or in out-of-school suspension from school are also not eligible for an authorization for school closed hours.

Expelled children who are considered dis-enrolled may be eligible to receive an authorization during the typical school day. The parent will have been notified by the school if the child is expelled and dis-enrolled. If a child's enrollment status is questionable, the parent must provide verification of the child's school enrollment status.

New Policy: The policy remains the same; however, the "typical school day" is defined as the time that the child receives in-person instruction from a teacher employed by the school district located at the school or other socially distanced school location. This policy currently only applies to the 2020-2021 school year.

Time that a child receives virtual/analog instruction outside of the school location is not considered to be part of the "typical school day." Time that is not part of the "typical school day" can be authorized for child care. Therefore, school-age children can receive authorizations during the day for time when they are attending virtual/analog school at the child care facility and the parent is participating in their approved activity. If both virtual/analog and in-person instruction is available and the parent chooses virtual/analog instruction, the parent is eligible for an authorization to allow their child to attend virtually or through analog instruction at the child care provider if care is needed for the parent to participate in their approved activity.

Children who are homeschooled, truant, or suspended from school remain ineligible for an authorization during the typical school day. Because children may be participating in classes from home, there may be some confusion regarding whether the child is being homeschooled or receiving virtual/analog instruction at home. The best way to differentiate between the two is to ask who is providing the instruction. If the parent decides the curriculum and has registered with DPI as homeschooling their child, then it is homeschooling. If the child is receiving

instruction from a teacher employed by the school district while at home or at a child care facility, then it is virtual/analog school. Parents may not receive an authorization if their child is participating in virtual/analog school at a location other than the child care provider or for times when the parent is not participating in their approved activity.

Head Start/4K: For the purposes of co-location of the child care provider and the Head Start or 4K program as described in Section 2.4.4.2, the location where the virtual/analog instruction will occur is considered the location of the Head Start or 4K program. If the child is typically at a different location for Head Start or 4K, but is attending virtual/analog school at the child care facility, the co-location requirement for including Head Start or 4K hours in the authorization is met. If the child is attending in-person Head Start or 4K at a different location, the education hours must not be included in the authorization. All other criteria in Section 2.4.4.2 regarding how to decide whether to include Head Start or 4K hours in the authorization still apply.

PROCESS: The following sections provide instruction related to specific aspects of the authorization.

Authorized Hours: Agencies should follow the standard school year process to only authorize for before and after school care (based on the parent's needs) when the child attends in-person school. Agencies must review the school district calendar to determine when school will be offered in person and ask the parent if they will be sending their child in person to school on those days or if they will be having their child attend virtually (when available). If the parent is unsure whether they will send their child in person on days when it is available, workers should enter before and after school care only (if needed) and not authorize during the school day. Parents can receive additional hours on days when a parent or school district needs to change from in-person to virtual instruction. The policy for school closed days has not changed (see 2.4.4.4.1). Agencies workers must request verification of the need to change authorizations if the request is questionable.

Authorization End Dates: Per Section 2.3.8 and Wis. Admin. Rule DCF § [201.039\(1\)\(b\)](#), an authorization must be ended on either the parent's annual renewal date or the date of an expected change that may affect the assistance group's child care needs during the parent's 12-month eligibility period, whichever comes first. If a school district's plan includes transitioning to in-person instruction, agency workers must consider the transition date to be the next expected change (if there are no other case-related changes or renewals that come before the transition date). For example, ABC Elementary will be starting virtual instruction on September 1. The school district plans to transition to two days per week in-person, three days per week virtual after the school's Quarter 1, then to all in person instruction starting with Quarter 3. The authorization should be written to the end of Quarter 1 with the parent's need for child care during all virtual school. Agency workers must verify the dates of a school district's transition plan when creating authorizations.

Because the in-person attendance requirement could begin prior to the planned transition or be delayed, agencies have discretion in deciding whether to write subsequent authorizations preemptively. Writing subsequent authorizations could create additional work for agencies when school plans change abruptly, and it is ultimately the parent's responsibility to report changes in child care need. Alternatively, writing subsequent authorizations could reduce the increase of parent requests that would result if school attendance requirements change as planned and ensure continuity of benefits for the parent. Agencies must determine whether they will write subsequent authorizations and be consistent in its application. Whichever option

agencies choose, workers should encourage parents to use the Parent Portal to request changes to their authorizations.

Continuity of Care: Per Section 2.4.2.1, authorizations must be based on the assessment results when a school-age child transitions from the summer break to the fall school year. This is to ensure that authorizations do not include time when a child attends school in person during the typical school day. When an authorization is written to the expected change of a school district's plan to transition to in-person instruction, authorizations must be written to not include times when the child will receive in-person instruction. This could result in reduced authorization hours and the new authorization must be based on the assessment results and not continuity of care.

Maximum of 75 Hours per Week: Per Section 2.4.8, a child cannot be authorized for more than 75 hours per week unless the parent is granted a hardship authorization. Wis. Stat. s. [49.155\(6g\)\(a\)3](#). states that a child cannot be authorized for more than 16 hours per day. Therefore, this policy has not changed. Agency workers may not authorize a child for more than 75 hours per week unless a hardship authorization has been granted.

Hardships: Section 2.4.9 and 2.4.9.1 describe circumstances when a parent may receive a new authorization during a month after an authorization has already been created. Several of these situations could relate to COVID outbreaks at the provider that would cause a hardship for parents. Because these situations could already apply to COVID, there is no change to current policy. If a provider closes due to COVID-related reasons, agency workers are not required to contact the provider. This is because the provider may be difficult to contact when their center is closed and the parent may need a new authorization immediately in order to go to work. However, if a parent requests more than one change in provider during the same month due to COVID-related reasons, the request should be submitted to the Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy and Technical Assistance Line (childcare@wisconsin.gov) to review and approve or deny the request.

When a school or child care provider closes due to positive COVID cases, the children who may have been exposed should be quarantined at home. However, the parent may decide that they need child care in order to attend their approved activity. Parents should be reminded of the need to quarantine children who may have been exposed to COVID, but the worker may still write new authorizations if the hardship criteria are met or increase existing authorizations if the school transitions to all virtual instruction due to a closure.

COMMUNICATION: Providers are being informed of this change through emails from the Division of Early Care and Education Administrator and via the DCF website and social media. The email will also instruct providers to ensure that they do not duplicate or supplant the academic program of any public or private school. This means that providers cannot provide the main instruction but may assist with school work as they would any other homework

Parents are being informed of this change through a one-time mailing to parents who have open eligibility for Wisconsin Shares with school-age children, through a message in the Parent Portal, and via the DCF website and social media. The information is also being sent to Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) agencies to further disseminate to parents, providers, and other community partners.

School districts will be notified by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

CONTACTS:

For Wisconsin Shares Child Care policy questions outside of Milwaukee County contact your Bureau of Regional Operations (BRO), Child Care Coordinators at BROCCPolicyHelpDesk@wisconsin.gov.

For Child Care CARES/CWW and CSAW 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.

For investigation, overpayment, and program integrity internal procedure development questions; written resource and subject matter expert requests; and VPAs and Retractions, please contact the Bureau of Program Integrity (BPI) at: DCFBPITArequest@wisconsin.gov or the [Technical Assistance Request Page](#) on the DCF Website.

For Wisconsin Shares Child Care Chapter 3 and 4 policy questions outside of Milwaukee County contact the Bureau of Regional Operations (BRO) Child Care Policy Help Desk at BROCCPolicyHelpDesk@wisconsin.gov.

For referrals regarding alleged client or provider child care fraud or other program integrity concerns, please submit a referral to the Child Care Fraud Mailbox at DCFMBCHILDCAREFRAUD@wisconsin.gov.

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