



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

DECE/BCCSA OPERATIONS MEMO

No: 21-08

DATE: 03/22/2021

Child Care

FROM: Junior Martin, Director  
Bureau of Child Care Subsidy Administration  
Division of Early Care and Education  
Department of Children and Families

**SUBJECT: Wisconsin Shares Activity Break Period Policy and Process Changes**

**CROSS REFERENCE:** [Wisconsin Shares Handbook](#) Sections:  
1.3.9.2 Activity Break Periods  
1.3.9.2.1 Eligibility for an Activity Break Period  
1.3.9.2.2 Starting an Activity Break Period  
1.3.9.2.3 Ending an Activity Break Period  
2.4.3.4 Authorizations During an Activity Break Period  
2.4.3.4.1 Authorization Assessments During an Activity Break  
Period  
2.4.3.4.2 No Increased Hours During an Activity Break Period  
2.4.3.4.3 No New Authorizations During an Activity Break Period for  
Children Not Previously Authorized  
2.4.3.4.4 Ending Authorizations During or Following an Activity  
Break Period  
4.5.2.2.1 Overpayment Period

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** April 1, 2021

**PURPOSE:** This Operations Memo announces new and revised policies for Approved Activity Search Periods (ACTS) and Temporary Break Periods (TBRK), collectively referred to as Activity Break Periods.

**BACKGROUND:** The 2014 Reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) requires states to create family friendly policies that help families maintain eligibility for child care subsidies and support continuity of care for children. Over the last six years, the department has undertaken multiple initiatives to work towards compliance with CCDBG requirements. The ACTS period (implemented in 2017) and the TBRK period (implemented in

2018) are how Wisconsin has complied with the federal requirement to allow families to continue receiving assistance at least at the same level for a minimum of three (3) months following a permanent loss or temporary break in approved activity. The changes described in this memo further the goals of family friendly policies and continuity of care, as well as help to ensure that parents receive the three-month Activity Break Period.

**PROCESS CHANGE:** The agency worker must change the parent's approved activity in CARES Worker Web (CWW) to ACTS or TBRK (based on the change reported) for the month following the change when the local agency receives a reported change of a parent's permanent loss or temporary break in approved activity. There is no need to pend eligibility or verbally confirm with the parent whether they will need child care during or after the break. Any existing authorizations should remain in place until the parent contacts the local agency to request changes.

Eligibility should only be ended due to lack of approved activity following a permanent loss or temporary break in approved activity if the parent explicitly states that they do not want to maintain Wisconsin Shares eligibility or are not eligible for an Activity Break Period. Agency workers should encourage parents to leave eligibility open with the ACTS or TBRK activity. This eliminates the need for the parent to reapply and meet the initial financial eligibility threshold of 185% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).

**POLICY:** The policy in the attachments will be added to the Wisconsin Shares Handbook with the next release. New policy is highlighted in yellow and policy that has been removed is indicated with red strikethrough. Several sections were reorganized, and new subsections were created for Section 2.4.3.4 Authorizations During an Activity Break Period. Policy that was only moved and not changed is not indicated with highlighting or red strikethrough. The following provides a summary of the changes that were made to each section.

## Chapter 1:

### **1.3.9.2 Activity Break Periods**

Existing policy from Section 1.3.9.2.1 was added to this section indicating that a parent who experiences a temporary break that will last more than three (3) months is eligible for a Temporary Break Period (TBRK) for the first three (3) months of the temporary break if all other criteria in Section 1.3.9.2.1 are met.

#### **1.3.9.2.1 Eligibility for an Activity Break Period**

Clarifying policy was added to indicate that parents who are reapplying after one (1) calendar month of eligibility ending must have an approved activity at application and are not eligible to continue a previous Activity Break Period.

Policy was revised to indicate that agency workers must change the parent's approved activity to ACTS or TBRK following a reported change as described in the **Process Change** section of this Operations Memo. Agency workers must document in case comments that the agency worker entered an ACTS or TBRK period for the parent following a reported change and any response or lack of response from the parent in accordance with Operations Memo 21-01.

Policy was further revised to indicate that if a parent completes a renewal but subsequently loses their approved activity or starts a temporary break during the renewal month, eligibility must be denied because the parent does not have an approved activity for the first month of the

eligibility period. If the parent reports the change after adverse action, eligibility must be denied, and any authorizations created for the new eligibility period must be ended or deleted (see 2.4.3.4). This is to ensure that an Activity Break Period does not begin the month following renewal regardless of when the parent completed the renewal.

#### **1.3.9.2.3 Ending an Activity Break Period**

Policy was clarified to indicate that a parent must have an approved activity for the first month of the new eligibility period following a completed annual eligibility renewal regardless of whether the renewal is completed early, timely, or late. Policy was also clarified to specify that eligibility can reopen if the parent does not have an approved activity at the end of the Activity Break Period but subsequently gains a new approved activity in the month following the eligibility end date in accordance with Section 1.2.7.

## **Chapter 2**

#### **2.4.3.4 Authorizations During an Activity Break Period**

This section was broken out into subsections to better organize the policies. Clarifying policy was added to indicate that when an authorization ends during an Activity Break Period, agency workers must offer the parent an authorization for up to the same number of hours as the child's previous authorization, unless the criteria in Section 2.4.2.1 for an authorization based on the assessment results are met. New policy was added to specify that if eligibility is ending according to adverse action due to a parent's permanent loss or temporary break in approved activity after adverse action during the renewal month, agency workers must manually delete any authorizations created for the new eligibility period (see 1.3.9.2.1).

##### **2.4.3.4.1 Authorization Assessments During an Activity Break Period**

This section was previously titled **Ending Authorizations During or Following an Activity Break Period**. That section was renumbered to Section 2.4.3.4.4. The new policy in this section includes the clarification that authorization assessments must still be completed during an Activity Break Period according to the criteria in Sections 2.4.2.1 and 2.4.2.2. This policy was further clarified to specify when authorized hours must be reduced during an Activity Break Period due to an authorization assessment that results in an authorization which must be based on the assessment results. Examples were added to demonstrate this policy.

##### **2.4.3.4.2 No Increased Hours During an Activity Break Period**

This section was created for the policy that was previously included in Section 2.4.3.4 prohibiting increased hours during an Activity Break Period. There are no changes to this policy.

##### **2.4.3.4.3 No New Authorizations During an Activity Break Period for Children Not Previously Authorized**

This section was created for the policy that was previously included in Section 2.4.3.4 prohibiting new authorizations during an Activity Break Period for children who were not previously authorized. Policy was revised to indicate that a child must have an authorization that started prior to the day the parent lost their approved activity or began an absence from their approved activity in order for the authorization to continue during an Activity Break Period. Examples were added to demonstrate this policy. The policy regarding the 24-month education time limit was removed as this is included in Section 1.3.8.6.5.

##### **2.4.3.4.4 Ending Authorizations During or Following an Activity Break Period**

This section was previously Section 2.4.3.4.1. The policy was revised to indicate that agency workers must manually end authorizations if a case is closing due to the parent not being eligible for an Activity Break Period in the month following the annual eligibility renewal after the

renewal has been completed. Policy was also clarified to specify that if eligibility closes at the end of an Activity Break Period and reopens in CWW within one (1) calendar month because the parent gains a new approved activity or returns to their approved activity, the case is ongoing and the local agency must follow the policy in Section 2.3.7 for determining the authorization begin date. Examples were added to demonstrate this policy.

Policy was further clarified to indicate that the parent's actual schedule following the break must be used for the authorization assessment that must be completed when the end of the parent's Activity Break Period is within their 12-month eligibility period (not crossing renewal). This policy also specifies that agency workers must offer the parent an authorization for up to the same number of hours as the child's previous authorization, unless the criteria in Section 2.4.2.1 for an authorization based on the assessment results are met.

## Chapter 4

### **4.5.2.2.1 Overpayment Period**

New policy was added to indicate that if a parent reported a permanent loss or temporary break in approved activity after adverse action in the month that an annual renewal was completed, and the local agency was not able to end the authorization until the following month, the parent would not be responsible for an overpayment for paying the following month's subsidy to their provider, unless it is determined that the parent committed an intentional program violation (see 4.5.4.3.1.5).

***ACTIVITY BREAK PERIOD LETTER CHANGES:*** The Activity Break Period Letter that is systematically sent when the Approved Activity Status in CWW is changed to ACTS or TBRK and eligibility is confirmed will be updated to emphasize the importance of reporting a change in child care need during an Activity Break Period. The reporting requirements that are included on other Child Care notices have also been added to this letter. The updates to the Activity Break Period Letter are tentatively scheduled for June 26, 2021.

## ***ATTACHMENTS:***

[Chapter 1 Activity Break Period Eligibility Policy Changes](#)

[Chapter 2 Activity Break Period Authorization Policy Changes](#)

[Chapter 4 Activity Break Period Overpayment Policy Changes](#)

## ***CONTACTS:***

For Wisconsin Shares policy questions outside of Milwaukee County contact your Bureau of Regional Operations (BRO), Child Care Coordinators at [BROCCPolicyHelpDesk@wisconsin.gov](mailto: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](mailto: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 Program Integrity Unit at: [DCFBPITArequest@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DCFBPITArequest@wisconsin.gov) or the [Technical](#)

[Assistance Request Page](#) on the DCF Website.

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](mailto:DCFMBCHILDCAREFRAUD@wisconsin.gov).

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