



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: 26-15
DATE: 05/27/2026
<b>Child Care</b>

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

**SUBJECT: Wisconsin Shares Handbook Updates**

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**CROSS REFERENCE:** [Wisconsin Shares Handbook](#)  
Appendix II Benefit Calculation Examples  
Glossary  
Operations Memo [26-01](#), [26-09](#), [26-10](#), [26-13](#)

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** July 1, 2026

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this operations memo is to announce policy, process, and system changes related to the 12-Month Eligibility Project for Wisconsin Shares.

**BACKGROUND:** To improve accessibility to the program, stabilization of child care subsidy funding for parents and to align with federal requirements, the department is making policy and system changes. These changes will ensure a child’s eligibility renewal for Wisconsin Shares child care occurs no sooner than 12 months following the initial eligibility determination or a child’s most recent renewal by:

- Extending eligibility periods to ensure a child receives no less than 12 full months of eligibility;
- Eliminating child care early renewals;
- Extending the renewal date of existing eligible children on a case to match the renewal date of a newly added eligible child;
- No longer limiting a Temporary Break Period (TBRK) to three (3) months during the eligibility period or ending eligibility at the end of a TBRK, and
- Requiring child support cooperation only at application and renewal.

The handbook has been updated with policy changes related to this project and policy changes in Operations Memos published from January 2026 through May 2026. Additional updates have also been made for minor clarifications of policy. Local agency staff must thoroughly review the handbook updates.

**POLICY:** The changes listed below will be incorporated into the Wisconsin Shares Handbook effective July 1, 2026. Changes that do not reference an Operations Memo are clarifications and were not published in an Operations Memo. In the 'Updated Handbook with markup' attachment, new policy is highlighted in yellow and policy with red-strikethrough is being deleted.

The following are changes made throughout the handbook but not identified in the New Policy section below:

- References to 'annual' when it relates to a renewal have been deleted since a renewal may no longer occur on an annual basis.
- References to 11<sup>th</sup> month have been changed to the month before the renewal date and references to the 13<sup>th</sup> month have been changed to the month following the renewal date.
- CWW alerts have been renamed action items.
- The appendices numbers are updated to reflect the current handbook.
- Process Help Chapters were recently renumbered and handbook references have been updated accordingly.

***New Policy:***

**3.3 Interview:** Clarified that the Child Support & Good Cause Publication must be provided by the worker if not automatically generated from CWW.

**3.5 Initial Eligibility Determination:** Clarified the initial eligibility period is 13 months (the child care request month plus 12 additional months).

**3.5.1 Eligibility Determination When a Child is Added:** New policy to explain the eligibility period and new renewal date for when a newly eligible child is added to an ongoing case.

**3.8 Renewals:** Renamed section and clarified the dates of a timely renewal.

**3.8.1 Early Renewals:** Clarified that child care no longer allows early renewals.

**4.3 Ages of Eligible Children:** Updated to clarify ages of eligible children in determining eligibility for child care, in accordance with [Operations Memo 26-09](#).

**4.7 Child Support Cooperation:** Clarified child support cooperation is only required at application and renewal.

**4.7.2 Child Support Noncooperation:** The processing timeline of cooperating with child support or claiming good cause remains the same; however, clarification was added that when eligibility is run during ongoing eligibility, noncooperation will not impact eligibility until the beginning of a new eligibility period. Clarification on how the first, second and third instances of noncooperation affect child care was added.

**4.7.3 Good Cause Publication:** Updated to reflect current functionality of when the Child Support Cooperation & Good Cause Publication is automatically sent from CWW.

**4.7.4.4.1 Good Cause Denial:** Clarified that eligibility will fail only during application or renewal if good cause is denied.

**5.3 Activity Break Periods:** Added clarification of the time allowed for parents to remain eligible and keep their current authorizations during each of the two Activity Break Periods (ACTS and TBRK).

**5.3.1 Activity Break Period Eligibility:** Added that parents are not eligible for an Activity Break Period when beginning a new eligibility period following a renewal.

**5.3.1.1 Activity Break Period Eligibility at Renewal:** Clarified that a Temporary Break Period (TBRK) can cross a renewal and continue for up to three (3) months or until the next renewal if an eligible child is added during an existing TBRK period.

**5.3.1.2 Activity Break Period Eligibility at Child Add:** New policy to explain what happens to eligibility and authorizations when a parent is in a Temporary Break Period (TBRK) or an Approved Activity Search Period (ACTS) and a newly eligible child is added to the case.

**5.3.4 Number of Activity Break Periods:** Added clarification of the time period for each of the two Activity Break Periods and added the circumstances in which one Activity Break Period can follow another.

**5.3.5.1 Consecutive Activity Break Periods:** New policy to explain what happens to eligibility and authorizations when a Temporary Break Period (TBRK) becomes a permanent loss of approved activity.

**5.3.6 Ending an Activity Break Period Early:** Deleted 'a parent failing to cooperate with the Child Support Agency' as a reason to end an activity break period early since child support cooperation will only be required at application and renewal.

**5.3.8 Activity Break Period Verification:** Updated the reporting requirement for parents to report when their child care need decreases from more than 20 hours per week (full-time authorization) to less than 20 hours per week (part-time authorization), following a TBRK.

**6.1.1 Application Income Limit:** Updated to 2026 Federal Poverty Level (FPL) monthly dollar amounts, in accordance with [Operations Memo 26-01](#).

**6.1.2 Ongoing Eligibility Income Limit:** Updated to 2026 State Median Income (SMI) monthly dollar amounts, in accordance with [Operations Memo 26-01](#).

**8.1.2 Nonfinancial Eligibility:** Added clarification to the ages of eligible children in determining eligibility for child care, in accordance with [Operations Memo 26-09](#).

**10.1 Reporting Requirements:** Updated the requirement to report a decrease in child care need from more than 20 hours per week (full-time authorization) to less than 20 hours per week (part-time authorization) or no longer needs child care.

**11.1 Ending Eligibility:** Added clarification that the department must establish a sanction after completing the Intentional Program Violation (IPV) review process before a parent's eligibility is ended due to an IPV.

**11.2 Ending Eligibility After Adverse Action:** Deleted any instance of child support noncooperation as a reason to end eligibility after adverse action and clarified that eligibility can be ended if required verification is not returned within seven (7) business days, excluding when a Good Cause Claim was requested.

**12.1 Eligibility Comments:** Added the requirement to add case comments when a newly eligible child is added to a case and the renewal date is extended, and when a parent is in an Activity Break Period and an eligible child is added and the TBRK is extended to the new renewal date.

**12.2 Authorization Comments:** Updated the requirement to add case comments for the reason for the authorization end date and added the requirement to add case comments for when a newly eligible child is added to the case, the parent is in a TBRK and the authorization end date for the eligible children on the case is extended to the new renewal date.

**14.6 Prohibited actions:** Clarified the action that providers are prohibited from banking subsidy payments to apply to future months of care.

**15.2.1 Authorization Begin Dates for a Child Added During Ongoing Eligibility:** New policy to explain the authorization begin date for when a newly eligible child is added during ongoing eligibility.

**15.3 Authorization End Dates:** Added new policy that the authorization end date for currently eligible children can be extended to the renewal due date of a newly eligible child, unless the child no longer meets the age requirement for child care.

**16.1.1.3 Co-located Head Start and 4K Community Approach Programs:** Renamed section and updated to include the Get Kids Ready (GKR) program in policy, and that all hours from a Get Kids Ready program can be included in an authorization if the program is co-located with a child care provider location, in accordance with [Operations Memo 26-13](#).

**16.5 Refusal to Authorize to a Provider:** Added clarification that a local agency may refuse to issue an authorization to a provider if more than 40 percent of the children cared for are children of the provider's employees or children who live with the provider's employees, in accordance with [Operations Memo 26-10](#).

**17.1.2 Continuity of Care Authorizations:** Updated the requirement to report a decrease in child care need from more than 20 hours per week (full-time authorization) to less than 20 hours per week (part-time authorization) to reflect the updated reporting requirement.

**17.2.1 Activity Break Period Authorization Hours:** Added new policy that when a parent is in a TBRK and a newly eligible child is added to the case, the TBRK end date can be extended to the new renewal date.

**17.2.3 Ending Activity Break Period Authorizations:** Clarified when eligibility will end systematically in CWW at the end of each Activity Break Period.

**18.3 Copayment Types:** Added new policy to explain that when an eligible child is added to a case and the renewal date is extended, the date in which a new copayment type should be entered in CSAW.

**18.6.2 Authorization Changes:** Added that CSAW will continue to use the same age bracket for the Provider Price and Maximum Rates in the monthly subsidy calculation for any child with an authorization until the month after the new renewal date, to align with the new policy of when an eligible child is added to a case and the renewal date is extended.

**Appendix II Benefit Calculation Examples:** Updated examples to reflect the annual FPL updates in accordance with [Operations Memo 26-01](#) and the updated [2025 Wisconsin Shares County and Tribal Maximum Rates](#) that were effective 10/1/2025.

**Glossary:** Added acronyms for CWW, EBT, and ECF. Updated the definitions for Early Renewals, Eligibility Period, Parent Portal, Provider Portal, Renewal and Review.

**CWW CHANGES:**

- At application, CWW will set the initial eligibility period to be 13 months (child care request month plus 12 additional months).
- At renewal (timely or late renewal), CWW will determine the eligibility period to be 12 months (request month plus 11 additional months).
- A Temporary Break Period (TBRK) during the eligibility period will no longer be limited to three (3) months and eligibility will not end at the end of the TBRK period, except at renewal.
- When an eligible child is added to a case, the renewal date is extended to allow for no less than 12 months of eligibility and an eligible child on the case will have their renewal date aligned with the newly added child unless they no longer meet the age requirement for child care.
- Child Support Cooperation is only required at application and renewal. Recorded instances of noncooperation will only affect the case at application and renewal.
- Early renewals for child care are no longer allowed.
- When a parent is in a TBRK and an eligible child is added, the TBRK can be extended to the newly added child's renewal date.
- Process Help is being updated to reflect these policy and system changes.

**CSAW CHANGES:**

- CSAW will allow authorizations to be longer than 12 months.
- If the end date of an authorization does not match the review/renewal date listed in CSAW, a clock icon and a banner will appear on the case to remind agency workers that an authorization can be extended to the renewal date. A WEBI report will also be created so agency workers can review cases where an authorization end date does not match the renewal date.
- The child's age and gender and the age used in the subsidy calculation will be added to both the Calculation Details and the Case-Level PLBC Calculations Details pages.
- CSAW User Guides are being updated to reflect these policy and system changes.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

[Updated Handbook with markup](#)

[Updated Handbook without markup](#)

**CONTACTS:**

For Wisconsin Shares Child Care policy questions outside of Milwaukee County contact your DCF Area Administration, Child Care Coordinators at [DCFBAACCPolicyHelpDesk@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DCFBAACCPolicyHelpDesk@wisconsin.gov).

For Program Integrity technical assistance, Child Care CARES/CWW and CSAW Processing Questions statewide, and policy questions in Milwaukee County, contact the Child Care Help Desk at: [childcare@wisconsin.gov](mailto:childcare@wisconsin.gov) or (608) 422-7200.

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