

# Western Region for Economic Assistance (WREA) Regional Child Care Service Delivery Model Evaluation Report

## Executive Summary

The Western Region for Economic Assistance (WREA) consortium includes eight counties that regionally operate the economic support programs administered by the Department of Health Services. In February 2013, Department of Children and Families' Secretary Eloise Anderson approved a pilot where WREA would consolidate eight counties' Wisconsin Shares caseloads into a single caseload of 600-700 cases to be administered on a regional basis. Under this model, designated workers from across WREA counties would become child care specialists serving residents from the eight counties.

The Wisconsin Shares caseload was pooled in April 2013. Since that time, WREA has worked in consultation with the Department of Children and Families staff to develop a regional model that might increase efficiency, improve accuracy and customer services, and streamline fiscal processes. With a caseload of approximately 650 child care cases, the WREA child care caseload is now similar in size to larger counties, such as Brown, Rock, and Winnebago Counties.

Under the pilot, WREA established teams of specialized workers. Trainers from the Division of Early Care and Education (DECE) trained WREA workers to establish uniform case management practices, and offered training to child care providers about new processes that would increase accountability and centralize attendance reporting procedures.

## Results

The pilot period lasted 15 months from April 2013 through June 2014. To evaluate results, performance and operational data from pre-pilot periods from 2012 through March 2013, is compared to data during the pilot period from April 2013 through June 2014. The periods are not the same for each of the seven criteria measured because regionalized services were phased in during the pilot period.

1. **Social Security Number Entry:** The average number of children on the Wisconsin Shares caseload who do not have a SSN in CARES decreased from 0.47% in the first three months of 2013 to 0.15% for the first six months of 2014.
2. **SMRF Processing:** The percentage of overdue SMRF decreased from 25.59% in the first three months of 2013 to 18.63% in the first three months of 2014. This performance is slightly better than counties in the balance of the state.
3. **Identify Client Overpayments:** Client overpayments identified as a percentage of subsidy issued have increased from 0.31% in CY 2012 to 1.43% for the first six months of 2014.
4. **Telephone Speed of Answer:** During July through December 2012, the WREA call wait-time was 12.09 minutes. During the pilot period from April 2013 through June 2014, the call wait time was 5.24 minutes. The WREA's call wait time is higher than the statewide average for both periods.
5. **Meeting Timelines:** In February 2013, 50% of new Authorizations had data entry errors or did not meet processing timelines. In February 2014, there were no data entry errors and 11% of new Authorizations did not meet processing timelines.
6. **Provider Reporting Modes:** In January 2013, 99% of the child care providers were reporting attendance using the weekly mode. In June 2014, only 2% of providers continue to use the weekly mode, 74% use the daily mode, and 26% use the in/out mode. The percentage of providers that report attendance using CCPI has increased from 44% to 60% under the pilot.
7. **Child Care Program Costs:** Under the pilot, in the first six months of 2014 costs increased by 14%, compared to the costs for the eight individual counties during the first six months of 2012.

## Evaluation Methodology

The Evaluation includes a narrative description of the WREA administrative approach to provide regional child care services, and several exhibits to compare performance changes, costs, and other results for the *Baseline Periods* before the pilot began and the *Pilot Periods* after the caseload was combined.

The WREA's regionalized services were phased-in over the 15-months from April 2013 through June 2014. Therefore, the *Baseline Periods* and the *Pilot Periods* for each of the seven Evaluation Criteria measured are not the same.

Due to the cyclical nature of child care program activities, the same calendar months are used to measure results for each criterion when possible. Where statewide data is available, comparison to balance-of-state performance results is shown on Exhibits. Some criteria measure only a one-month period due to data limitations. For each evaluation criterion, the most recent and robust available data was used to compile evaluation results.

## Evaluation Criteria

Seven evaluation criteria capture the differences between the Baseline Period and the Pilot Period for four state-wide performance measures and the outcomes for other areas of interest. Shown on Table 1.

Criteria 1 – 4 are state-wide child care performance standards. The fifth state-wide performance standard (Verify Authorized Activities) was not included because the data is not available to measure a full year of WREA operations.

Criteria 5 – 7 outcomes were developed for this WREA evaluation.

**Table 1: Evaluation Criteria**

# (Exhibit)	Criteria and Data Descriptions	Baseline Period	Pilot Period
1 (B)	Performance - Social Security Number Entry -- Percentage of children over three months of age who do not have a SSN entered into CARES. <i>Target: LT 3%</i>	Jan - Mar 2013	Jan - June 2014
2 (C)	Performance - SMRF Processing -- Percentage of cases with overdue SMRF. <i>Target NGT: 25%</i>	Jan - Mar 2013	Jan - June 2014
3 (G)	Performance – Identify Client Overpayments -- The actual numbers of claims established, and the total claim amount due as a percentage of total subsidy issued. <i>KidStat Target 1-3%</i>	Jan - Dec 2012	Jan - June 2014
4 (E)	Performance – Telephone Average Speed of Answer – Average customer wait-time for a telephone agent in minutes. <i>Target: LT 5 minutes</i>	July 2012 - Mar 2013	Apr 2013 – June 2014
5 (D)	Outcome - Provider Reporting and Attendance Entry Modes <i>Target: N/A</i>	Jan 2013	July 2014
6 (A)	Outcome - Meeting Timelines to Create Authorizations <i>Targets:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RFA Paper Submission to Intake Interview: 5 business days</li> <li>• RFA On-line ACCESS Submission to Interview: 10 business days</li> <li>• RFA to Eligibility Determination: 30 calendar days</li> <li>• Eligibility Determination to Creation of the Authorization: 2 business days</li> </ul>	Feb 2013	Feb 2014
7 (H)	Outcome - Child Care Program Costs – Total actual costs claimed for reimbursement for Wisconsin Shares program administration.	Jan – June 2012	Jan – June 2014

## Weighted Averages

To determine composite results for the SSN Entry and SMRF Processing performance measures, a *Weighted Average* was applied based on each county's proportionate share of the total caseload. Although analysis of the raw data for each criterion would be more precise, such analysis would require significantly more staff/time resources and delay the report; it would not substantially change the outcomes because each county's caseload has little variance each month.

During the Baseline Period, each of the eight WREA counties had individual child care caseloads. Shown on Table 2a.

During the Pilot Period, most cases were consolidated under the La Crosse caseload. However, child care cases that also included W-2 remained assigned to the family's *county of residence*. Shown on Table 2b.

**Table 2a: Caseloads for Baseline Period Jan – Mar 2013**

WREA Counties' Child Care Caseload*					
COUNTY	Jan-13	Feb-13	Mar-13	3 Mo Total	Share of Caseload
BUFFALO	16	12	15	43	2%
CLARK	59	61	60	180	8%
JACKSON	51	49	51	151	7%
LA CROSSE	420	423	431	1,274	57%
MONROE	96	95	99	290	13%
PEPIN	11	11	11	33	1%
TREMPEALEAU	45	48	49	142	6%
VERNON	39	38	38	115	5%
TOTAL	737	737	754	2,228	100%

\* The most recent three months of the Baseline Period (Jan – March 2013) are totaled to calculate each county's share of the child care caseload. With the exception of W-2 cases, these caseloads were pooled in April 2013.

**Table 2b: Caseloads for Pilot Period Jan – June 2014**

WREA Consortium Child Care Caseload (La Crosse) and W-2/Child Care Caseload**								
COUNTY	Jan-14	Feb-14	Mar-14	Apr-14	May-14	Jun-14	6 Mo Total	Share of Caseload
BUFFALO	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0.05%
CLARK	3	2	2	1	2	0	10	0.25%
JACKSON	1	1	0	1	1	3	7	0.17%
LA CROSSE	688	656	674	650	663	650	3,981	97.69%
MONROE	6	4	3	6	6	8	33	0.81%
PEPIN	0	0	1	1	1	1	4	0.10%
TREMPEALEAU	3	3	5	4	4	4	23	0.56%
VERNON	2	2	2	3	4	2	15	0.37%
TOTAL	703	668	687	666	682	669	4,075	100.00%

\*\* To capture the small number of W-2 cases that were not pooled, the final six months of the Pilot Period (Jan – June 2014) are totaled to calculate each county's share of the child care caseload.

# WREA Pilot Evaluation Report

## Background

The 2011 Wisconsin Act 10 (Act 10) amended Wisconsin Statute s. 49.78 to permit the Department of Health Services (DHS) to contract with no more than ten multi-county consortia that provide Income Maintenance (IM) services to families. The IM caseloads include FoodShare, BadgerCare, and Medicaid.

Effective in January 2012, these IM programs are being administered by ten consortia made up of groups of county agencies. DHS provides Call Center Anywhere (CCA) software for the consortia and requires that each consortium must operate a single Call/Change Center to handle customer calls and enter changes into the CARES automated system for all IM cases.

Upon implementation of the IM consortia model, DHS provided operational instructions that counties could either serve the FoodShare, BadgerCare, and Medicaid cases in the recipients' *county of residence*, or pool all IM cases in the consortium and administer the combined caseload on a regional basis. Under the DHS operational instructions, each county must maintain a local presence to serve walk-in customers and provide an option for face-to-face interviews.

The Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy program is also administered by county IM agencies, serves the same families, and uses the CARES automated system which is used for other IM programs. However, the Wisconsin Shares program was not referenced in Act 10, nor was it included in the consortia-model for program administration. Under the Department of Children and Family (DCF) policy, county agencies could not transfer Wisconsin Shares subsidy cases to the pooled IM caseload. Division of Early Care and Education (DECE) Administrator's Memo 11-03 and Operations Memo 12-10 prohibit the transfer of Wisconsin Shares cases to a caseload assigned outside the recipient's *county of residence*, and require that all intake interviews, child care-only redetermination reviews, and certain other activities related to Wisconsin Shares cases must be handled by workers located in the recipient's *county of residence*.

The Western Region for Economic Assistance (WREA) consortium serves eight counties: La Crosse (Lead), Buffalo, Clark, Jackson, Monroe, Pepin, Trempealeau, and Vernon Counties. Under DHS policy, WREA elected to pool all IM cases into a combined La Crosse County caseload. However, under DCF policy, WREA was prohibited from pooling the IM cases that also included Wisconsin Shares child care or W-2 benefits.

On August 24, 2012, WREA representatives met with Secretary Eloise Anderson seeking exceptions to DCF child care policy directives. The WREA wanted to pool the child care caseload for the eight WREA counties; centralize child care activities in specialized units; and, appoint a single child care coordinator to oversee program operations. The WREA representatives believed that the regional model would streamline fiscal processing, improve operational efficiency, and enhance customer service.

Secretary Anderson approved the WREA request and directed that the feasibility of the regional model be explored by WREA and DCF representatives. The Secretary also requested an evaluation of the WREA pilot outcomes and performance results.

On February 14, 2013, the Department granted five waiver exceptions to child care policy and contract provisions:

- 1. Wisconsin Shares Manual Chapter 1.1.6: Policy Exception - WREA to name a single CC Coordinator for the 8 counties.**
- 2. Operations Memo 12-10 and 11-69: Policy Exception – WREA to provide central processing of applications and 12-month reviews without regard to county of residence.**
- 3. Admin Memo 11-03: Contract Exception – A WREA lead county is to be contractually responsible for accuracy; the lead county will develop internal MOUs to confer responsibilities to other WREA counties.**
- 4. Admin Memo 12–03: Contract Exception – WREA to establish an expedited deob-reob process for 2013 whereby WREA fiscal agent would request movement of contract funding between WREA counties.**
- 5. Admin Memo 12-04: Contract Exception – The Department will apply performance standards to WREA’s pooled caseload, rather than individual county caseloads. WREA will ensure the reliability of performance data for all WREA counties, review performance reports and take appropriate action to correct errors for all consortia cases, and consider consortia-wide initiatives to reduce error-prone practices and policies.**

On April 7, 2013 the eight WREA counties pooled 700 child care cases into a combined La Crosse County caseload. W-2 Cases could not be transferred due to policy and automation barriers. The small number of W-2 cases that also included child care remain assigned to each parents’ county of residence, but the case activities are handled by WREA’s child care teams.

The WREA pilot period began on April 7, 2013 and ended on June 30, 2014.

*Note: As of the date of this report, WREA does not plan to centralize provider Certification activities.*

## WREA Administrative Approach

The WREA governing structure includes a Board of Directors with representatives from each of the eight WREA counties. Governing decisions are made jointly. La Crosse County serves as the lead county and the fiscal agent for the eight WREA counties. All supervisors report to a single regional manager and have cross-county supervisory responsibilities.

Since April 2013, the WREA administers Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy under the unified supervisory structure. WREA appointed a single child care coordinator, and later named an assistant consortium manager to provide technical support for the child care pilot. The WREA fiscal manager allocates costs for staff and operations across the eight counties based on 100% time reporting software.

The WREA uses a team approach to case management, and assigns individual workers to teams based on each worker's area of expertise. Under the pilot, WREA realigned activities and created three new teams; standardized Wisconsin Shares child care eligibility and authorization processing; centralized provider services; and, strengthened fraud mitigation and investigation activities. The staffing levels, functions, and specialized activities of each new team is discussed in detail in this report.

Before the pilot, in January 2012, the WREA consortium established two teams:

***The Call/Change Center*** - Change Center Agents provide telephone coverage for all IM programs. These Agents are trained economic support specialists who determine eligibility for IM programs, respond to questions from case participants, and make changes to the CARES automated system when a customer reports a change in circumstances.

***The Client Registration Unit (CRU)*** - A clerical team supports the Change Center Agents. The CRU team handles new requests for assistance, schedules IM appointments with economic support specialists, and performs other routine duties to support the Call/Change Center operations.

After the pilot, since April 2013, the WREA consortium established three new teams:

**Wisconsin Shares Eligibility and Authorization Unit** established in April 2013.

**Benefit Recovery Team** established in January 2014.

**Child Care Attendance Unit** established in February 2014.

### Worker Training

To standardize practices across all eight counties, in September 2013 DCF trainers conducted a special, two-day training for the Eligibility-Authorization Specialists, Change Center Agents, and other key staff. As part of the training, WREA standardized case management practices and mandated the use of the Child Care Authorization Worksheet, a checklist to ensure completeness of each authorization.

### Fraud Mitigation

Between May 2013 and July 2014, a WREA Fraud Mitigation Workgroup, including representatives from the DECE Fraud Detection and Investigation Unit (FDIU), Milwaukee-MECA, and the DCF Office of Legal Counsel, met regularly to identify provider fraud risks. The Workgroup analyzed each aspect of provider fraud including prevention, detection, intervention, investigation, and prosecution. The WREA implemented a fraud mitigation work plan which will be discussed in greater detail later in this report.