



Wisconsin's Response to COVID-19: Child Care Actions

Fact Sheet | January 2021

On March 27, 2020, the CARES Act was signed into law, including \$3.5 billion in supplemental appropriations for the Child Care and Development Block Grant to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus. This funding represents a 60% increase in total discretionary appropriations for fiscal year 2020, which amounts to \$9.326 billion. States were given broad flexibility for how to use this funding and have therefore taken a variety of approaches to help address needs of working families and providers through COVID-19. However, as the funds ran out during the ongoing crisis, many states began pulling from other sources to continue supporting parents and providers alike. This fact sheet explains the actions Wisconsin took to support the child care industry and working parents through 2020.

Wisconsin received \$51.6 million in supplemental CCDBG funds through the CARES Act. The state estimated that, in the spring, 40% of providers had temporarily closed. As such, several funding opportunities were offered.

Throughout May, June, and July, the state fully distributed its CARES Act funds through Incentive Pay grants that helped providers continue to pay staff, and Support for Temporarily Closed Child Care Programs grants that helped providers cover the added costs of reopening.

Recognizing the need for continued support as the pandemic persisted, Wisconsin dedicated an additional \$30 million of its Coronavirus Relief Fund federal dollars to offer another round of grants in September. Licensed or certified providers could apply for these funds through two new grant programs.

Payment Program A offered noncompetitive grants to cover the costs of PPE, sanitation supplies, and structural changes necessary for maintaining high quality care. Grant amounts included a base payment up to \$7,000 for providers that were open by at least October 19, and an additional payment ranging from \$100 to \$1,200 per child depending on the age of the child and the number of hours the child was in attendance during the first week of September.

Payment Program B provided funds to be used as incentive pay to assist providers in retaining employees. Providers received a base amount of up to \$2,000 for staff recruitment and an additional \$1,200 to \$2,000 per staff for retention. Applications for both programs were open

between September 9-18, and recipients were notified on September 26.

The state also recognized that families needed school-age care options as schools shifted to virtual instruction. To facilitate partnerships between Local Education Agencies and child care providers, the Department of Children and Families published extensive guidance on how providers could amend their licenses or relocate to work with schools. An expedited licensing process also enabled new providers to open quickly and safely to meet school-age care needs. The state encouraged families to apply for the state's existing child care subsidy if they had a school-aged child who needed child care during the virtual school day.

In early October, the state announced \$50 million of its federal Coronavirus Relief Fund dollars would support a second round both Payment Program A and B. Under Program A, providers that were open as of at least December 14 were eligible to receive a \$1,000 base payment and additional funds per child. Under program B, providers that met the same eligibility requirements could receive a base amount of up to \$1,200 and additional funds per staff to provide incentive pay. Applications were open from October 26 to November 6, and providers were permitted to apply for both grants. The state did not announce whether subsidy payments through the Wisconsin Shares program were based on attendance or enrollment through the summer and fall.

At time of publication, the state had not announced any plans to support child care into 2021