



## **Wisconsin Early Learning Coalition**

Celebrate Children Foundation ♦ Disability Rights Wisconsin  
Madison Area Accredited Early Childhood Association ♦ Milwaukee Child Care Alliance  
Parents Plus ♦ School Administrators Alliance ♦ Supporting Families Together Association  
Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health ♦ Wisconsin Association of School Boards  
Wisconsin Child Care Administrators Association ♦ Wisconsin Council on Children and Families  
Wisconsin Council for Exceptional Children - Division for Early Childhood  
Wisconsin Early Childhood Association ♦ Wisconsin Family Child Care Association  
Wisconsin Head Start Association

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***Working Together to Advocate for All Wisconsin's Young Children to Get a Great Start  
...by providing all Wisconsin children access to high quality early learning experiences and  
nurturing care so they are happy, healthy, eager to learn, and prepared to succeed***

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### ***Coalition Response to Early Care and Education Provisions of the 2011-13 Budget Passed by the Legislature***

#### **YoungStar**

The Wisconsin Early Learning Coalition is pleased that a version of the YoungStar quality rating and improvement system is continuing in the 2011-13 budget. This program will help transform child care programs across the state into more effective early learning programs that nurture and teach the young children they serve, and sustain programs that already meet high standards. YoungStar brings a quality assurance component to Wisconsin Shares that is long overdue that we believe will bring strong dividends over time. We strongly believe that getting the YoungStar details right is crucial in this initial roll-out.

We were disappointed that the tiered reimbursement system, initially intended to reward programs that improve quality, was changed to also penalize programs that don't yet meet new quality standards. We don't believe there is any evidence that penalties will enhance quality; we strongly prefer an incentive approach rather than punishing programs that meet all regulatory requirements. We were relieved that the final budget gives programs a year to meet the first level of quality standards, but concerned that higher payments to higher quality programs will also be delayed.

#### **Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy Program**

The Coalition was pleased that cuts to the Wisconsin Shares program were reduced in the final budget, hopefully avoiding the need to deny child care assistance to working families or further reduce payment rates that have been frozen since 2006. However we are particularly disturbed by the statutory language that gives the Department of Children and Families sweeping authority to decide what cost saving measures can be applied to Wisconsin Shares—including changes in eligibility, copays, payment rates, and the establishment of a waiting list-- without a rulemaking process or holding so much as a single public hearing.

#### **Head Start and 4K**

We are worried about cuts to Head Start and 4-year-old Kindergarten (4K) start-up grants. These are excellent investments to help prepare children for school and beyond, particularly children who are most vulnerable, at-risk and low-income. These cuts reduce early education opportunities for our children at a crucial point in their development. Decades of research have shown that effective pre-kindergarten programs have a substantial return on investment.

***We continue to believe that early childhood development and education are keys to Wisconsin's competitive growth and long-term prosperity. The first five years sets the foundation of intelligence and social skills that are essential for success in school and beyond.***

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