

CHILD CARE & EARLY LEARNING

## STATE CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE POLICIES: *WISCONSIN*

- **Income eligibility limit:** In 2017, a family of three in Wisconsin could qualify for child care assistance with an annual income up to \$37,777 (185 percent of poverty, 54 percent of state median income).<sup>1</sup>
- **Waiting list:** Wisconsin had no waiting list for child care assistance as of February 2017.
- **Parent copayments:** In 2017, a family of three with an income at 100 percent of poverty (\$20,420 a year) receiving child care assistance in Wisconsin paid \$95 per month, or 6 percent of its income, in copayments. A family of three with an income at 150 percent of poverty (\$30,630 a year) receiving child care assistance paid \$238 per month, or 9 percent of its income, in copayments.<sup>2</sup>
- **Payment rates:** In 2017, Wisconsin's payment rates for child care providers serving families receiving child care assistance were below the federally recommended level—the 75th percentile of current market rates, which is the level designed to give families access to 75 percent of the providers in their community.
  - Wisconsin's monthly payment rate for center care for a four-year-old in Milwaukee County was \$830,<sup>3</sup> which was \$270 (25 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.
  - Wisconsin's monthly payment rate for center care for a one-year-old in Milwaukee County was \$1,070,<sup>4</sup> which was \$356 (25 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.
- **Tiered payment rates:** In 2017, Wisconsin had higher payment rates for higher-quality care.
  - The payment rate for center care for a four-year-old in Milwaukee County at the highest quality tier was 32 percent higher than the rate at the lowest quality tier.
  - The payment rate for center care for a four-year-old in Milwaukee County at the highest quality tier was still below the 75th percentile of current market rates.
- **Eligibility for parents searching for a job:** In 2017, Wisconsin allowed parents already receiving child care assistance to continue receiving it while searching for a job only until the end of the month in which they lost their previous job.<sup>5</sup> The state did not allow parents to initially qualify for and begin receiving child care assistance while searching for a job.<sup>6</sup>

Source: Karen Schulman and Helen Blank, *Persistent Gaps: State Child Care Assistance Policies 2017* (Washington, DC: National Women's Law Center, 2017). These data reflect policies as of February 2017, unless otherwise indicated.

- 1 In 2017, families already receiving assistance could continue doing so until their income reached \$40,840 (200 percent of poverty).
- 2 Families with court-ordered kinship or guardianship care, foster families, and teen parents attending high school are exempt from copayments. Also note that the state revised its copayment structure as of June 2017, increasing copayments for many families.
- 3 The state has higher rates for higher-quality care; this is the most common rate level (the level representing the greatest number of providers).
- 4 This is the most common rate level.
- 5 The state planned to extend the amount of time parents receiving child care assistance could continue to receive it while searching for a job to 3 months or until the end of their eligibility period, whichever comes first, as of November 2017.
- 6 Parents can only qualify for child care assistance while searching for a job if they are participating in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or the FoodShare Employment and Training program.

