



CHILD CARE & EARLY LEARNING

STATE CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE POLICIES: *WISCONSIN*

- **Income eligibility limit:** In 2018, a family of three in Wisconsin could qualify for child care assistance with an annual income up to \$37,777 (182 percent of poverty, 53 percent of state median income).¹
- **Waiting list:** Wisconsin had no waiting list for child care assistance as of February 2018.
- **Parent copayments:** In 2018, a family of three with an income at 100 percent of poverty (\$20,780 a year) receiving child care assistance in Wisconsin paid \$120 per month, or 7 percent of its income, in copayments. A family of three with an income at 150 percent of poverty (\$31,170 a year) receiving child care assistance paid \$252 per month, or 10 percent of its income, in copayments.²
- **Payment rates:** In 2018, 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.³
 - Wisconsin's monthly payment rate for center care for a four-year-old in Milwaukee County was \$830,⁴ 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 \$1,070,⁵ which was \$356 (25 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.
- **Tiered payment rates:** In 2018, Wisconsin had higher payment rates for higher-quality care.⁶
 - 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 2018, Wisconsin allowed parents already receiving child care assistance to continue receiving it for up to 3 months while searching for a job.⁷ However, the state did not allow parents to initially qualify for and begin receiving child care assistance while searching for a job.⁸

Source: Karen Schulman, *Overdue for Investment: State Child Care Assistance Policies 2018* (Washington, DC: National Women's Law Center, 2018). These data reflect policies as of February 2018, unless otherwise indicated.



- 1 In February 2018, families already receiving assistance could continue doing so until their income reached \$40,840. As of March 2018, the income limit to qualify for assistance was increased to \$38,444 (185 percent of poverty), and the exit eligibility limit was increased to \$41,556 (200 percent of poverty), to adjust for the 2018 federal poverty level.
- 2 Families with court-ordered kinship or guardianship care, foster families, and teen parents attending high school are exempt from copayments.
- 3 This analysis reflects payment rates as of February 2018. The state increased payment rates for care for children birth through age three by 5 percent and increased rates for infant care in all counties to at least \$5 per hour as of October 2018. In addition, as of October 2018, two-star providers receive a rate that is only 1 percent lower than the rate for three-star providers; previously, the rate for two-star providers was 5 percent lower than the rate for three-star providers. (The state's quality rating and improvement system has five levels; providers must be at least at the two-star level to serve families receiving child care assistance.) The state also increased payment rates for all age groups statewide as of January 2019.
- 4 The state has higher rates for higher-quality care; this is the most common rate level (the level representing the greatest number of providers).
- 5 This is the most common rate level.
- 6 This analysis reflects tiered payment rates as of February 2018. The state increased its tiered payment rates as of January 2019.
- 7 Parents can continue receiving child care assistance while searching for a job for up to 3 months or until the end of their eligibility period, whichever comes first.
- 8 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.

