

The following are financial and policy proposals intended to further the City of Madison in its goal of increasing access to high-quality early childcare and education.

Financial Proposals

1. The Problem: The City of Madison currently does not support families who are eligible and/or currently receiving Wisconsin Shares funding. However, some of these families, despite the funding they receive from the state / county, can still not afford high-quality care due to the size of their co-pay. This co-pay represents the differential between the Shares funding and the actual cost of care in the City.

Proposal: Revise Child Care Assistance program to include / allow support for low-income families who are concurrently receiving WI Shares funding

- * Fund the most impoverished
- * Allow greater access to high quality care without burden of co-pay
- * Possibility of greater service to families of accredited providers
- * Removes the disincentive that currently exists to support Shares families – because some cannot pay their co-pays, this cost is passed on to centers who in turn take on fewer and fewer Shares families.

2. The Problem: Although space exists in high-quality childcare centers and family care across the City, it is not always accessible (cost) or available in an area where it is most needed.

Proposal: A new, targeted RFP to address gap in services for high quality care for existing/new families. This RFP would offer funds to existing or new agencies who were willing or able to offer high-quality care in currently underserved areas of the city.

- * Through existing CR funding process
- * Use CC Assistance funding with or without additional funds.

3. The Problem: As referenced above, centers continually voice the challenges with taking on low-income families. Because of Shares policies, the funding does not cover the full cost of care and only pays centers for days students attend. Because Shares families have less of a fixed schedule, this leaves centers with substantial bad debt that they must cover via other means. This has also lead to increasing numbers of centers taking on fewer and fewer low-income families.

Proposal: Provide a subsidy to centers to encourage service to low income families.

- * Use Stabilization / additional funds
- * e.g. \$2000 upfront for every low income family above a certain percentage to offset co-pay
- * Competitive preference priority in the City funding process for those centers who have XX% of low-income / Shares families or who agree to take on a certain number of additional low-income families.

Accreditation / Policy Proposals

1. The Problem: The childcare accreditation process was started to increase the quality of care for low-income families. However, increasingly the centers or providers requesting accreditation have very low number of these families. This diverts staff to centers that are not in as great of need leaving those most in need with less staff support.

Proposal: Develop Tiered System of Accreditation that assures ongoing quality of those centers accredited while also devoting more time to those centers who, while not pursuing accreditation, would benefit from additional support from City staff.

- * More consultation/ training/funds to centers serving low income families/ less attention to those not serving low income families
- * In depth accreditation (challenged) / self-review (stable centers) /accelerated (long time centers maintaining quality)
- * Targets more staff resources to the neediest centers

2. The Problem: Universal childcare in its traditional format would be extremely costly and would involve placing more students in care as opposed to in family care. The question then is how to achieve the goal of increased quality of early childhood care and education without the cost of universal care.

Proposal: Parent Education for families

- * Support/fund/provide parent education training in accredited centers
- * Support/fund/provide parent education to individuals/ families whose children are not in accredited child care
- * Partner with United Way funded and other agencies and institutions (e.g., MMSD) providing parent education