



Research Brief

Afterschool in Milwaukee: *Is it child care?*

Afterschool programming has long been seen as a way of ensuring the safety of school-age children with working parents, and as a means of providing children with opportunities to enrich their environments and improve their school performance. In Milwaukee, where there are nearly 126,000 children between the ages of 5 and 18, where 73% of families with school-age children have all parents working, and where just 61% of 3rd through 8th graders are proficient in reading, the availability and quality of such programming takes on particular importance.¹

The Public Policy Forum is embarking on a new research project aimed at detailing several facets of the afterschool sector in Milwaukee, including the number of children served; the breadth of providers and programs; the amount and types of public resources devoted to afterschool programming; the regulatory environment; the extent to which the quality of these programs is measured and understood; and whether state policy guiding afterschool programming conforms to or diverges from that of other states and the federal government.

This *Research Brief* — the first in a series of reports on afterschool programming in Milwaukee — provides a broad overview of afterschool programs in the context of the school-age child care sector in Milwaukee, an analysis of the extent to which the afterschool programs in Wisconsin are funded and regulated like child care, and a brief synopsis of funding and regulatory models from other states.

In exploring the differences between afterschool policy and child care policy, we find overlap in the ways in which afterschool programs and child care are regulated and funded, and that major changes in financing and regulation are occurring. These changes are creating a need to better understand the school-age child care and afterschool programs, particularly in Milwaukee, where affordable child care can be a barrier to employment and economic growth. In addition, we find that important policy and practical differences between the child care and afterschool sectors have implications for efforts to ensure *quality* afterschool programming is available to the tens of thousands of families needing this service.

I. Data and definitions

For the purposes of this project, we have defined the school-age child care sector as serving students ages 5 to 18 in grades K5 to 12. We have excluded providers who serve only younger children, as those providers were included in our previous research on the quality and cost of early childhood education in Milwaukee.

In addition, in this *Research Brief* describing the ways in which afterschool policy and child care policy can differ, we focus our analysis on afterschool programs that also can serve a child care function, meaning they offer formally organized activities to all interested families five days per week for at least two hours after school for the entire school year.² Thus, most tutoring programs, music lessons, sports teams, Boy or Girl Scouts, and other similar non-daily, part-year, or specialized extracurricular activities are not analyzed. We do include programs that also may operate before school. We do not include summer-only or off day-only programs.

It is important to note that many child care providers offer care for school-age children in the hours after school. These providers are included in our definition of the school-age child care sector; however, unless their afterschool care stands alone from their full-day child care program, they are not considered afterschool programs for our purposes.

Thus, our narrow definition of afterschool programming mostly includes programs that operate either as a school-based or stand-alone programs. (Some programs may not physically stand alone, but may operate from a facility that also houses other youth services, such as a community center, recreation center, or library.) School-based programs included in our research may be in a public, private, or charter school. Finally, we do not include any family child care providers (those that operate out of their homes) in this report.

Geographically, our project is focused on the City of Milwaukee and the providers, schools, and children located within city limits.

Data presented in this *Research Brief* were collected from the Milwaukee Public Schools, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, the U.S. Department of Education, the child care resource and referral network, and the Forum's annual census of schools in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program.

II. Estimating the demand for afterschool programs in Milwaukee

While the total number of children in Milwaukee needing afterschool care or programming is unknown, several data sources can be used to roughly estimate the number of school-age children in the city currently enrolled in afterschool programs and/or receiving child care subsidies. None of these data sources provides a complete count of the supply of afterschool programs or care and each has other limitations, as well. **Table 1** enumerates three estimates resulting from four data sources:

- **Child care subsidy estimate:** Data on children receiving child care subsidies produces a low range estimate of children in child care after school, as subsidies are available for children ages 13 and under only and exclude children who do not qualify or need fee assistance. Statewide, 30,283 children ages 5 through 13 received child care subsidies; proportionally, that likely includes about **16,353 Milwaukee County children** in that age group.³ (This estimate includes residents of other municipalities in the county, as well as City of Milwaukee children, as subsidy data are available at the county level only.)
- **General estimate:** The Afterschool Alliance, a national advocacy organization, conducted a statewide phone survey of parents in Spring 2009 and found that 11% of school-age children in Wisconsin attended afterschool programs and another 8% were cared for by child care providers after school.⁴ Applying those rates to the 125,799 children in Milwaukee between the ages of 5 and 18 results in an estimated 13,838 children in afterschool programs and another 10,064 school-age children in child care.⁵ This estimate of **23,902 Milwaukee children in afterschool programs or school-age child care** falls in the middle of our estimates.
- **CLC/school-based estimate:** This estimate of **29,181 children** is the sum of all children enrolled in 21st Century Community Learning Centers and MPS school-based afterschool camps in 2010-11.

Enrollment in the 51 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CLCs) in Milwaukee totaled 22,922 students, while total enrollment in the 55 school-based afterschool programs (called afterschool camps) run by the Milwaukee Public Schools equaled 4,127 students.

Table 1: Three estimates of school-age children in afterschool programs or care in Milwaukee, 2012

1. Wisconsin Shares estimate: County children ages 5-13 receiving child care subsidies	16,353
2. Afterschool Alliance survey general estimate: Milwaukee children ages 5-18 in afterschool programs or school-age child care	23,902
3. CLC/school-based estimate: Students grades K3-12 in MPS afterschool programs	29,181
<i>Children enrolled in MPS afterschool camps</i>	<i>4,127</i>
<i>Children enrolled in 21st Century CLCs</i>	<i>22,922</i>
<i>Children enrolled in joint CLC-camp programs</i>	<i>2,132</i>

In addition, five programs operated as both CLCs and school-based camps, enrolling another 2,132 students for a total of 29,181 MPS students served in CLC and/or school-based afterschool programs. This figure is likely an over-count, as it may include children in three- or four-year-old Kindergarten, who are not “school-age” for the purposes of our project. In addition, it is limited by not including students in afterschool programs in most private schools or non-MPS charter schools.

The weaknesses of each estimate and the variation among them cause us to conclude that a much better measure of the total number of children in afterschool programs and care is necessary in order to fully understand the implications of any potential policy or regulatory changes. In addition, our annual census of private schools participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program has tallied 55 private schools that offer some type of services after school. Existing data sources do not capture the students enrolled in these private programs. Because a better estimate of afterschool enrollment will be needed to accurately estimate citywide costs and potential revenue gaps, the Forum is currently surveying over 400 afterschool programs and school-age child care providers in Milwaukee in an attempt to gather more accurate enrollment data. Results of that survey will be discussed in a subsequent report later this year.

III. Child care policy as compared to afterschool policy

Understanding the similarities and differences between afterschool program models and child care providers is important for policymakers as they weigh the advantages and risks of folding afterschool policy into child care policy. Currently, Wisconsin’s child care policy

reflects two important goals: 1) supporting the type of high-quality *early childhood* education shown to have long-term educational and social impacts; and 2) supporting parents’ choice of a child care provider by keeping the cost of access low.⁶ Practical issues to be considered when debating the inclusion of afterschool programs in these policy goals include:

Outcomes: Afterschool programs serve children along a broader range of development than child care providers, which serve mostly younger children. Unlike early childhood education (the model for most high-quality child care providers), for which school readiness can be considered the ultimate goal, not all afterschool programs have a common goal. Some older youth, for example, may be more in need of workforce development-type services while others, perhaps younger youth, need basic tutoring.

In addition, the differing philosophies of different afterschool programs require different outcomes measures. For example, it may be difficult to hold accountable an afterschool program having a character-building mission for student achievement outcomes measures. (See the sidebar on the following page for an explanation of the two dominant philosophies regarding afterschool program quality.) CLCs, in contrast, are obligated as part of the federal 21st Century Community Learning Center program to support learning occurring in a student’s day school in the areas of math, literacy, and science, and to measure their impact in those areas. Early childhood programs and child care, meanwhile, are not usually obligated to demonstrate progress in any particular academic area, nor are they obligated to support work done at school. Their outcomes also have tended to be measured over the long term.

Inputs: One of the most significant ways in which afterschool program models differ from child care models is the much shorter daily and school-year timeframe in which they operate. Not only does this result in less time to work directly with the children, but it also means afterschool program staff may be more likely to work part-time. Creating professional development and credentialing requirements for afterschool staff that mirror those aimed at professional, full-time early childhood educators working in child care settings may be problematic.

Afterschool program design is also more diverse than early childhood education, occurring in many different types of settings and having many different traditions and approaches. A program provided by a youth-serving organization in partnership with a school may be very different from one provided by a recreation center, and both will differ from school-age child care provided by a child care center as a convenience to families with younger children in care.

Furthermore, while youth development and early childhood development experts both emphasize the importance of positive, long-term adult-child relationships, it is more likely that afterschool staff will have specialized expertise, such as in the arts, science, or recreation, and will work at more than one site over the course of a week, month, or semester. Child care regulations governing staffing patterns, in contrast, emphasize daily contact and stability, as well as expertise in early childhood development.

IV. Current funding and imminent changes

The impetus for this analysis of the state's afterschool and child care policies is an upcoming change in how a significant number of afterschool programs in Milwaukee will be funded. While there is broad variance in our enrollment estimates, it is clear that much of the afterschool programming for children in Milwaukee is provided by 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CLCs). The city's 51 CLCs operate with funding from the U.S. Department of Education as part of the only federally-funded program specifically for afterschool programming. Under the program, formula funds are provided to states to distribute via competitive grants to local school districts, community-based organizations, and/or faith-based organizations to operate CLCs. Each CLC must serve a public, private, or charter school enrolling a certain threshold of low-income children.

Afterschool quality

Child care policy in most states now reflects what is really early childhood education policy. This came about after decades of research into the likely economic, academic, and social outcomes of high-quality early childhood programs, which pointed policymakers in a specific direction as they funded and regulated child care.

Unlike the early childhood sector, however, among afterschool program advocates, practitioners, and researchers there is less consensus regarding the best model of quality programming and the expected outcomes. Among these experts there are two dominant philosophies regarding quality program models, each of which has a supporting body of research literature.

Advocates of "extended day" or "extended learning" programs argue that afterschool hours should be focused on further developing the knowledge and skills learned in the classroom. This philosophy puts a premium on the fundamentals of academic achievement, although enrichment in other content and skills areas may be emphasized as well, such as the visual and performing arts, communication arts, or information technology. These programs, an extension of the K-12 system, are more likely to be operated, governed, and/or regulated by education agencies, as opposed to child welfare or workforce development agencies, which usually regulate child care.

In contrast, advocates for "expanded learning" opportunities view afterschool programs as something different than an extension of the school day. The emphasis is not on extending the formal learning environment, but on allowing opportunities for informal learning. Their philosophy is concerned with the emotional, social, and cognitive development of the child and the creation of healthy adult-child relationships. As such, they are viewed, from a regulatory standpoint, more like early childhood education programs. In addition, because these programs do not need to be partnered with a specific day school or serve children who all attend the same school, they are more able to be regulated as part of the child care or social welfare system.

The extent to which either of these philosophies drives policy differs by state. The extended day model has gained traction in recent years, however, as the federal government has endorsed that philosophy in several Department of Education initiatives.

CLC funds are intended by Congress to be a short-term source of funding for the start-up or expansion of after-school programs. In Wisconsin, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) issues grants on five-year cycles. Five of Milwaukee's CLCs have just completed their second cycle of funding and, until recently, would not have been eligible for more federal funding. In addition, 16 CLCs would have lost federal funding in the 2013-14 school year—representing what would have been a loss of \$1.05 million in federal funds for these 21 programs over the next two years.

DPI has now created a third cycle of funding, however, which will potentially allow these programs to continue to access federal funds. CLCs must re-apply for continuation grants at the end of each funding cycle and each of the five CLCs that completed its second cycle in 2011-12 has been awarded funds in a third cycle. **Table 2** on page 6 shows the 2011-12 grant cycle year of each CLC.

Funds awarded to each CLC in the second or third cycle are less than first-cycle awards. To partially offset the reduced federal funds, MPS is expected to commit \$25,000 from the district's extension fund to 29 CLCs next year. While these property tax funds will allow the CLCs to keep their doors open, the smaller budgets may require CLCs to serve fewer children or seek supplemental funds elsewhere.

In addition, recent moves by federal legislators could further reduce the amount of money available for CLC programming. The Senate Appropriations Committee has approved an appropriations bill for FY2013 that would maintain the total appropriation for the 21st Century Community Learning Center program at \$1.15 billion, but would allow school districts the discretion to use these funds to restructure the school schedule to lengthen the school day, week, or year. If this provision is approved by both houses, there is a chance that funds for existing CLCs could be diverted to school district operating budgets.

Consequently, the over-20,000 Milwaukee children currently served by the city's CLCs may be at risk of lost or severely reduced services over the long term as federal support for afterschool programming dwindles and reliance on the property tax grows. In addition, these trends pose substantial risk to the sustainability of a significant number of Milwaukee's afterschool programs unless a more stable funding source can be found.

Other states also are grappling with afterschool funding sustainability issues and are questioning whether the

solution is to be found in funding and regulating these programs as child care. By doing so, states can use federal revenue streams that support child care, such as the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), to fund afterschool programming. For CLCs specifically, greater reliance on CCDF and/or TANF dollars, which are administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, would be a significant change from the 21st Century Community Learning Center funds administered by the U.S. Department of Education. With regard to sustainably funding the existing mix of afterschool programs in Milwaukee, the advantages of a child care funding approach include the following:

1. Federal child care subsidy dollars, both CCDF and TANF, are relatively flexible, in that they can be used for care in programs of various models and missions serving children in any type of day school. Program-focused funding sources, such as 21st Century CLC funds, support a specific model of programming only and may be limited to specific schools.
2. Federal CCDF and TANF dollars can preserve parents' rights to choose their provider because they fund each family's unique need. Funds for specific programs, such as 21st Century CLC funds, are tied to specific sites, not families.
3. Federal CCDF and TANF dollars likely are more sustainable than those associated with categorical aid programs such as the 21st Century CLC program (despite having been flat-funded for several years). Federal child care funds work in conjunction with other aid programs, and some entitlement programs, to assist low-income families to obtain work and move up the economic ladder. The child care subsidy is designed to be a significant piece in a larger puzzle, as opposed to supporting a specific type of program.

In Wisconsin, CCDF and TANF funds support Wisconsin Shares, the child care subsidy program. Many afterschool programs in Milwaukee, including CLCs, currently serve families eligible for Shares subsidies and receive state reimbursement through the program. Some CLCs have been particularly successful in making up for declining federal revenue in successive grant cycles by helping Shares-eligible families apply for authorization to incur child care expenses under the subsidy program. The CLC can thus receive Shares reimbursement from the state despite the fact that the CLC cannot deny services to any family, regardless of their ability to pay.

Table 2: Milwaukee 21st Century Community Learning Centers federal funding status, 2011-2012

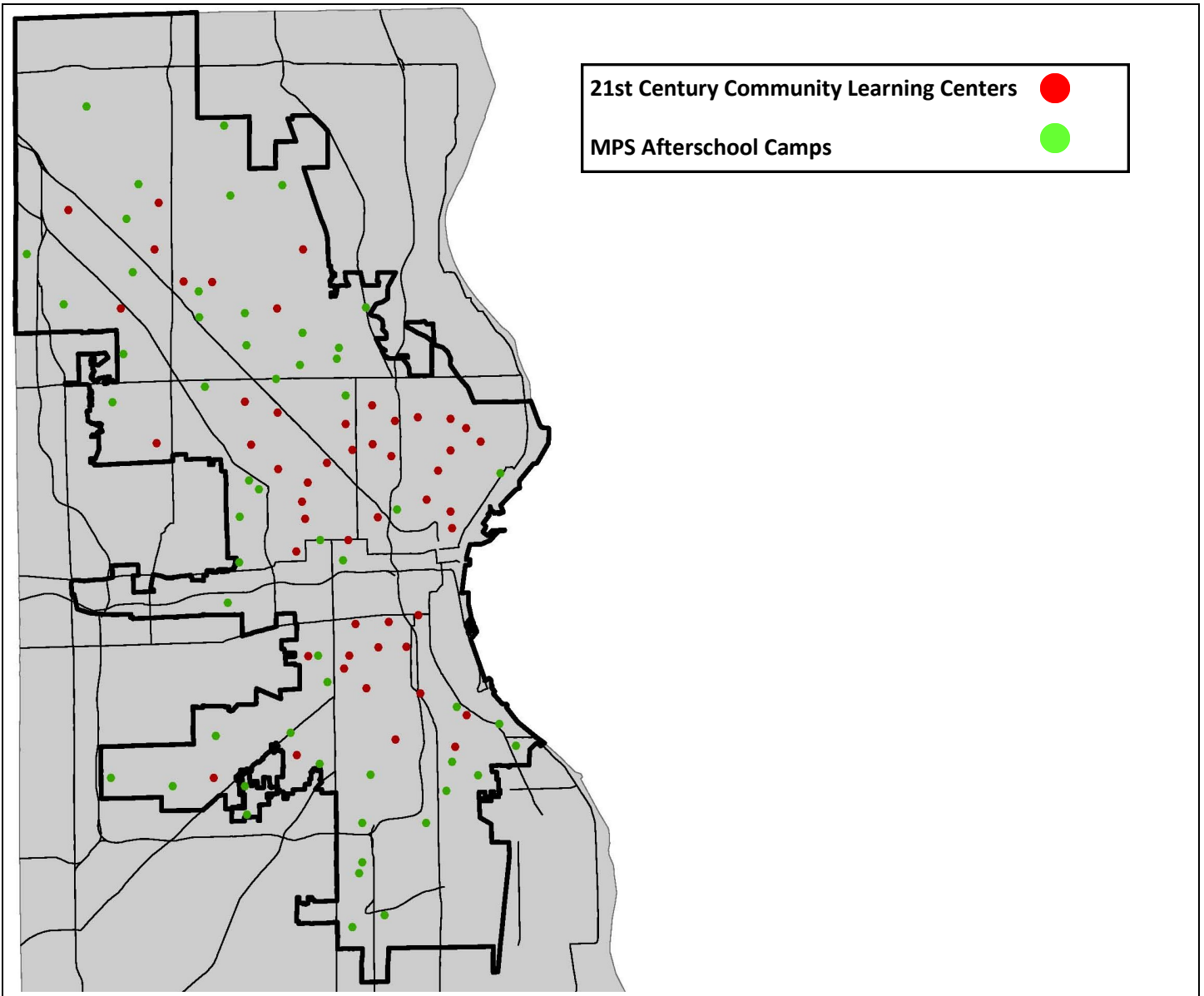
Initial grant cycle		Grant amount	Continuation grant cycle		Grant amount
Brown	Year 2	\$90,000	Auer Ave.	Year 2	\$75,000
Madison	Year 2	\$90,000	Allen Field	Year 3	\$50,000
Milw Campus Tech, Trades					
Media	Year 2	\$90,000	Burroughs	Year 3	\$50,000
M.L. King	Year 2	\$90,000	Carver Academy	Year 3	\$50,000
Story	Year 2	\$90,000	Holmes	Year 3	\$50,000
Audubon	Year 4	\$90,000	Lincoln Ave.	Year 3	\$50,000
Bay View	Year 4	\$90,000	Longfellow	Year 3	\$50,000
Maple Tree	Year 4	\$90,000	Siefert	Year 3	\$50,000
Thurston Woods	Year 4	\$90,000	Gwen T. Jackson	Year 3	\$50,000
Zablocki	Year 4	\$90,000	Cass Street	Year 4	\$50,000
Bethune	Year 5	\$90,000	Engleburg	Year 4	\$50,000
Browning	Year 5	\$90,000	Fratney	Year 4	\$50,000
Clarke	Year 5	\$90,000	Gaenslen	Year 4	\$50,000
Eighty-First	Year 5	\$90,000	Humboldt Park	Year 4	\$50,000
Fifty-Third	Year 5	\$90,000	Kagel	Year 4	\$50,000
Greenfield	Year 5	\$90,000	Keefe	Year 4	\$50,000
Hopkins	Year 5	\$90,000	LaFollette	Year 4	\$50,000
Metcalfe	Year 5	\$90,000	Lincoln Center M.S.	Year 4	\$50,000
Rogers Street	Year 5	\$90,000	MHSA	Year 4	\$50,000
Sherman	Year 5	\$90,000	Mitchell	Year 4	\$50,000
Wedgewood Park	Year 5	\$90,000	Pierce	Year 4	\$50,000
			Riley	Year 4	\$50,000
			Riverside	Year 4	\$50,000
			Townsend	Year 4	\$50,000
			Washington	Year 4	\$50,000
			Multiplex North	Year 5	\$50,000
			Northwest Secondary	Year 5	\$50,000
			South Division	Year 5	\$50,000
			Vieau	Year 5	\$50,000
			Westside I & II	Year 5	\$50,000

The use of child care dollars for afterschool programs raises several issues for Wisconsin policymakers, however, including:

1. The risk that Shares dollars will supplant, rather than supplement, other revenue streams for afterschool programming. Many afterschool programs currently access private support from foundations or other partners in order to keep costs low or free to parents. These donors may choose to invest in other youth programs if parents' afterschool costs are subsidized.
2. The risk that an increasing proportion of Shares dollars, intended for children under age 13, will underwrite programs serving mostly older children.

This risk worries providers of early childhood programming, who feel their programs may be negatively impacted if more afterschool programs access child care subsidy funds.

3. The risk that Shares incentives for improving the quality of care will not result in better programming for school-age children. Under the state's new YoungStar quality initiative, Shares dollars are now tied to quality ratings for all school-age providers, including afterschool programs. The rating system, however, was established based on a body of research regarding the quality of early childhood education. A similar body of research on school-age

Map 1: MPS afterschool camps and 21st Century Community Learning Centers, 2011-2012


programs is lacking—the literature on afterschool programming consists mostly of many short-term program evaluations of individual programs,⁷ as opposed to the type of seminal longitudinal studies found in the early childhood literature, from which an understanding has developed of types of early care that produce the best long-term outcomes.⁸

It is clear that afterschool policy and child care policy in Wisconsin already are intermingled. Afterschool programs have obtained child care licenses in order to access subsidy funds, school-age care services are provided by many early childhood child care providers, and many of Milwaukee's CLCs use both child care subsidy dollars and federal afterschool dollars.

Solving the afterschool sustainability problem by increasing the use of child care subsidy funds raises policy implications that should be fully understood, particularly as the afterschool and child care sectors are funded and regulated under one policy umbrella.

V. Models of state or local funding for afterschool programs

Many other states grappling with sustainability issues have found ways to combine child care and afterschool policy by purposely funding afterschool programs with CCDF and/or TANF dollars. For most states, like Wisconsin, afterschool policy to date has been driven by federal policy and the 21st Century Community Learning Center program. In these other states, adapting child care dollars to support afterschool programs has usually occurred under either a direct contracting model, in which child care dollars are awarded directly to specific afterschool providers for the care of a determined number of children, or a braided model in which the state spends a portion of its child care dollars to indirectly support the afterschool sector as a whole.

Direct contracting model

The two largest federal sources of funding for afterschool programming and school-age child care are the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program and the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), respectively. It is common for states to combine these sources, despite significant differences between the two revenue streams, which are highlighted in **Table 3**. The most relevant difference, in terms of afterschool programming, may be that the 21st Century Community

Learning Center dollars are intended to fund a particular place or program, while the CCDF dollars go to parents and will follow the child from one program to another.

States can combine funds from these two sources to provide access to afterschool care under a “direct contracting” model whereby the funds are awarded under contract to one or more specific providers to serve a specific population of children. The direct contract model, in effect, transforms child care policy into afterschool policy by transforming CCDF funds from assisting individual *families* in need of care to supporting specific *places* where care is provided.

Wisconsin currently spends less than 1% of its CCDF dollars under a direct contracting model (funding only W-2 agencies offering on-site child care for parents when they visit the agency to receive W-2 services).⁹ Thus, a direct contracting model in which contracted afterschool programs provide services in a school district would be a significant change in the use of CCDF dollars in this state. In addition, the current policy structure in Wisconsin is based partially on a goal of providing parents with choices of providers, a goal that would be difficult to meet under a direct contracting model.¹⁰ So far, state officials have been reluctant to abandon this goal by contracting with specific programs or CLCs for afterschool services.

Table 3: Federal funding streams dedicated to after-school and child care

	21 st Century Community Learning Centers	Child Care and Development Fund
Flow of funds	Federal formula grants to states, which distribute funds through a competitive process to school districts to partner with community-based and/or faith-based organizations.	Federal formula block grants to states to provide subsidies for child care to low-income parents. (Some dollars must be used to improve quality, access to infant and toddler care, and for resource and referral agencies.)
Program requirements	Programs must provide academic enrichment in the areas of math and literacy and meet the relevant state safety and licensing requirements.	Programs must meet state health, safety, and licensing requirements.
Goal of program	Supports the creation of community learning <i>centers</i> that provide academic enrichment during non-school hours for students that attend high-poverty schools.	Program assists <i>parents</i> in accessing care for children while parents are working.
Program administration	U.S. Department of Education	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Percent used for afterschool or school-age care	100%	25% nationwide (estimate by The Finance Project) ¹¹

Other states do use CCDF dollars in this manner. For example, in Washington, D.C., the Superintendent of Schools, who oversees all CCDF funds, allocates a portion of these funds to provide school-based afterschool programs for D.C. public school students, including four 21st Century Community Learning Centers. (One-third of the District's CCDF funds are spent under contract, mostly for school-age programs).¹²

The D.C. school district finds community partners to offer afterschool programs in schools via a "vetting process" that evaluates each potential program against the needs of specific schools, as defined by their principals. When a match is made, a three-year partnership is established, although each partnership is evaluated annually and can be discontinued if not meeting expectations.

The partnership agreement requires that the programming must be available to all interested families in the school; however, programs do charge parents a fee, which is based on a uniform sliding fee scale for all programs. Program providers that enter a partnership with the school district not only access the CCDF funds and are assured a reliable revenue stream under the contract, but the school district also ensures they have access to appropriate student academic information, provides a school district-employed coordinator to facilitate operations in each school, and supplies security, custodial services, and afternoon meals for the students.¹³

There are benefits and limitations to a direct contracting model for afterschool programming. Among the benefits are:

- Stable and predictable revenues for providers.
- Easier payment administration for providers.
- The ability to set aside slots for a targeted population of students.
- The ability to write strict quality standards into the contract.
- The potential for a formal partnership between the provider and the day school.
- In some cases, the upfront payment of a portion of the contract award, which can be invested and spent more strategically than a monthly payment.

Limitations include:

- Fewer choices for parents.
- A risk that contracted slots will go unused and contracted dollars wasted.
- The perception that contracts for afterschool programs result in fewer subsidy dollars available for infant and/or toddler care.
- A risk that the contract award either may not cover the provider's costs, or that it will exceed the provider's actual costs and subsidize other unrelated activities.

Of these limitations, most can be mitigated contractually. For example, providers can be required to maintain a certain attendance rate to ensure slots do not go unused, or document actual costs and return any excess funds. Contracting with several types of providers and allowing them to serve children from more than one day school could alleviate the sense of fewer choices for parents, although it could undermine the partnership benefits of having one provider serve all the children from a particular school.

The potential that contracting for afterschool programming could be perceived as taking dollars away from subsidies for infant and toddler care is real, particularly in Wisconsin, where there has never been a waiting list for child care subsidies (all eligible families are served). Due to the potential for some Shares funds to become "tied up" in afterschool contracts, there is a fear among early childhood providers that a waiting list for their services could result.

Braided model

In contrast to the direct contracting model, which is used to directly support operations of specific afterschool providers, the braided model indirectly supports the afterschool sector as a whole. Many states braid CCDF and 21st Century Community Learning Center funds at the state level, usually doing so to fund quality improvement or professional development. For example, Pennsylvania has used a portion of its CCDF quality-improvement funds (federal law requires at least 4% of a state's CCDF dollars be used to improve quality) to assist 21st Century CLCs in making improvements.¹⁴ In addition, Ohio is using some of its CCDF funds to assist 21st Century CLCs in sustainability planning.¹⁵

Wisconsin also has braided CCDF and 21st Century Community Learning Funds at the state level by requiring all afterschool programs accepting Wisconsin Shares funds, including CLCs and those otherwise exempt from child care licensing review, to participate in YoungStar, the state's child care Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).¹⁶ Wisconsin's CCDF dollars, combined with a portion of the state's TANF dollars and some state general purpose revenues, fund Wisconsin Shares. (See section VI for a detailed description of YoungStar's impacts on afterschool programs.)

Non-child care options for funding afterschool programs

There are other revenue options for states, municipalities, or school districts who do not wish to conflate their afterschool policy with child care policy by using child care funds to support afterschool programs.

School districts may use Federal Title I funds, for example, which are available under the No Child Left Behind Act for "supplemental services" to certain populations of low-income children in low-performing schools. While these dollars could help afterschool programs expand their capacity to work with these individual students, they are not particularly flexible and are not necessarily sustainable (the availability of these funds changes as a school district's performance or demographics change).¹⁷

Other revenue sources available to states or local governments for school-based afterschool programs include:

- State K-12 appropriations for extended day programs, which can range from longer school days to academically-focused afterschool programs operated by the school or school district.

Example: Nine school districts in Massachusetts have agreed to offer extended learning schools with at least 300 more hours of school time per year for each child. Additional time must be aimed at improving academic outcomes and broadening opportunities in three key areas: (1) core academics; (2) enrichment opportunities; and (3) teacher planning and professional development. Each school receives an extra \$1,300 per pupil in state aid.¹⁸

- Local education revenues to support community schools, which use a school building as a hub for bringing together community agencies and other partners to provide a wide variety of services to students and their families, including afterschool programs.

Example: The Chicago Public Schools have more than 150 community schools that partner with more than 400 community agencies to provide services to youth and parents, including at least 12 hours per week of afterschool programming. The Chicago Community Schools Initiative was launched in 2001 with private funds, though since then 21st Century CLC dollars and state and district funds have allowed the program to expand.¹⁹

- Local property or sales tax revenues appropriated to municipal parks and recreation departments, which often partner with school districts to provide afterschool services.

Example: In Milwaukee, which lacks a municipal parks department, the school district's recreation department funds afterschool programs using the property tax-supported MPS extension fund.

State and local models that fund afterschool programs that are not necessarily school-based are fewer, but include:

- State income tax credits, which can be made available to individuals and corporations providing support for qualified afterschool programs (and/or school-age child care providers). These tax credits are usually created to provide an incentive for investment in more capacity or to improve quality.

Example: A Colorado state income tax credit is available to individual donors and corporations who direct a monetary contribution to qualified early childhood or afterschool programs or to intermediary funds, such as the Denver Public Schools Foundation, which support such programs. Donations to qualified child care professional development agencies also are allowed.²⁰

- Special assessments for school-age child care or afterschool programs (though these are rare).

Example: In San Francisco, a portion of property taxes—3 cents per \$100 of assessed value—goes to the Children’s Fund. Afterschool programs comprise the fund’s largest disbursement, with more than \$20 million supporting 130 programs annually. Programs can be school- or community-based and are funded by DCYF through a competitive grant process. The current funding plan sets aside up to \$4.4 million specifically for afterschool programs in non-school settings.²¹ All programs must meet quality standards.

VI. Wisconsin’s child care policy and its relationship to afterschool policy

As noted earlier, Wisconsin currently allows afterschool programs to access child care subsidy dollars if they serve qualifying families. In addition, the state is now braiding child care funds with federal afterschool funds at the state level by including federally-supported afterschool programs in the state’s child care quality rating and improvement system (QRIS). In these ways, the state has moved to incorporate afterschool policy into child care policy. That move has been somewhat controversial, as YoungStar, the state’s QRIS, was based on decades of research on high-quality *early childhood* education, and was not originally intended or designed to include afterschool programs or school-age child care.

Under YoungStar, all child care providers serving families who receive state child care subsidies are now required to have their quality assessed across common measures. In addition, programs seeking higher subsidy rates are now required to meet specific quality standards. (See sidebar on page 12 for a description of YoungStar.) As of this month, afterschool (and summer) programs serving only school-age children also will be included in YoungStar.

Those questioning the inclusion of afterschool programs in YoungStar cite both policy concerns and practical concerns. The practical concerns stem mostly from the fact that most school-age-only afterschool providers are interacting with child care regulators for the first time, since school-based programs with school district contracts are exempt from child care licensing review. In addition, some further argue that the unique structure of YoungStar, which penalizes lower-rated providers with a reduction in their Shares subsidy reimbursement rate,

exposes afterschool programs to an unfair risk of revenue loss. That is because many afterschool programs were expected to operate in regulatory compliance, but were exempt from regular review.²² Thus, many programs likely have been operating without an understanding of whether they were, in fact, in compliance with regulatory standards. As a result, the new requirements may significantly change the practices of many providers; those who cannot afford to make these changes or who receive low ratings initially may struggle to continue operations.

The state has responded to the concerns of afterschool program operators by creating a separate track within YoungStar for these programs. YoungStar now has three five-star tracks that are used to rate providers. Track 1 includes all family child care providers, whether licensed or certified, that serve ages birth through 12; Track 2 includes licensed group child care centers serving ages birth through 12; and Track 3 is a new track for all licensed, certified, or exempt (i.e. under contract with a school district) providers serving *only* school-age children, which includes afterschool programs and summer day camps. Track 2 providers can be either for- or non-profit child care centers, but are not public school districts. Track 3 programs can include public school districts as well as for- or non-profit programs.

Like all child care providers, Track 3 programs can opt for an automatic two-star rating, a technical evaluation and rating, or a formal evaluation and rating. As with Tracks 1 and 2, Track 3 programs that are accredited will be automatically rated four- or five-stars. (Accreditation by the Council on Accreditation earns an automatic four-star rating and accreditation by the City of Madison earns a five-star rating.)

There are several significant differences among the tracks within the YoungStar scale. This differentiation reflects both an attempt to accommodate the innate differences between the early childhood quality research upon which Tracks 1 and 2 are based and afterschool philosophies, as well as practical differences between full-day child care programs and afterschool programs.

Highlights of the differences between early childhood YoungStar items and school-age items, and their significance for afterschool programs, include:

- **The observation tool used during formal evaluations of programs.** The formal evaluations for afterschool

programs, like those for early childhood programs, include observations scored with a nationally-verified rating tool. For afterschool programs, the tool is the School Age Care Environmental Rating Scale (SACERS). In order to receive four or five stars, among other things, a provider must earn an average SACERS score of four or five points, respectively. The SACERS scale includes 49 items (plus six supplementary items for programs enrolling children with disabilities) organized into seven subscales: space and furnishings, health and safety, activities, interactions, program structure, staff development, and special needs.

SACERS is a more appropriate tool for a school-age child care setting than the infant or toddler versions of the ERS. Compared to those versions, created in the early 1980s, the school age tool is relatively new, having been developed in 1996. In addition, SACERS was developed to measure quality in a child care setting, not an afterschool setting. SACERS may be less familiar, therefore, to afterschool programs than similar tools are to early childhood care providers.

- **Use of self-assessments.** Programs opting for a technical evaluation will not be observed using the SACERS tool. One requirement for earning three or more stars, however, will be to conduct a self-assessment.

Unlike most child care programs for younger children, which obtain revenue mostly from parent fees, afterschool programs tend to minimize fees to parents by seeking grants from foundations or other community partners. This funding structure means afterschool programs are more likely to have previously conducted regular self-assessments to satisfy their funders or partners. All Wisconsin CLCs, for example, are required to perform self-assessments.

- **Quality improvement plans.** After conducting the self-assessment, programs are required to write a quality improvement plan to achieve a high-quality rating.

The writing of a quality improvement plan also should be familiar to many school-based afterschool programs, as DPI has urged programs to utilize the Wisconsin Afterschool Continuous Improvement Process, which is “intended to assist programs in

What is the YoungStar initiative?

On June 23, 2010, Wisconsin joined more than 20 other states that have child care quality rating and improvement systems with the Legislature’s Joint Finance Committee’s approval of YoungStar.

YoungStar rates provider quality, links Wisconsin Shares subsidy rates to quality, and provides parents with information about quality as they choose providers. The five-star rating scale evaluates: educational qualifications of staff, learning environment, business practices, and health and well-being of children in care.

Participation in YoungStar is mandatory for providers who serve recipients of child care subsidy dollars. Providers accredited by specific national accrediting bodies receive an automatic four- or five-star rating, depending on the accrediting body. All other providers can opt to receive an automatic two-star rating, which indicates they are in compliance with all health and safety standards, or be evaluated and rated. Technical evaluations, which do not require classroom observations, can earn a maximum of three-stars. Formal evaluations, which include classroom observations, can result in four-, or five-star ratings.

Providers with four or five stars earn higher reimbursement rates, while providers with three stars receive the base subsidy, currently set at the existing rate. Providers receiving two stars are reimbursed at a rate lower than the base subsidy. Providers not in compliance with regulations earn one star and are not eligible for reimbursement. This tiered reimbursement is intended to create an incentive for providers to improve their quality.

The initiative also includes training and technical assistance to help child care providers improve their quality and micro-grants for equipment purchases. The state posts the ratings of individual providers on a website for parents and conducts outreach to parents about the importance of choosing a high-quality provider.

Visit <http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/> for more information.

identifying areas for improvement and develop a plan to address them,” since 2005.²³ DPI provides coaches to assist programs in developing and

implementing these plans. Both afterschool programs and early childhood care providers now will be able to access technical assistance through YoungStar as they develop and implement these plans.

- **Staff credentials.** Table 4 illustrates how YoungStar’s 40 possible points are distributed among the four indicators of quality for both Track 2 and Track 3 providers. It is noteworthy that the credentials of those working most closely with children—“group teachers” in Track 2 and “group leaders” in Track 3—are worth fewer points in Track 3. Meanwhile, the credentials of the managers of the programs are worth *more* points in Track 3. This is a reflection both of the differing workforces of the early childhood and afterschool sectors and the differing states of their professional development systems.

During the school year, the early childhood and child care workforce is more likely to work full-time than the afterschool workforce, meaning afterschool staff may be juggling more than one job and may have difficulty meeting credentialing standards developed for full-time workers. In addition, afterschool staff may or may not have year-round positions, depending on the program and whether it offers a summer program. These important differences are reflected in YoungStar, which, for example, requires 100% of a group child care center’s lead classroom teachers to have associate’s degrees (or 60 credits) in order for the center to earn five stars, while allowing afterschool programs to earn five stars if half of their group leaders have 18 qualifying credits beyond high school. In addition, afterschool programs earn points for retaining their highly-qualified site coordinator,

while group child care centers earn points for retaining their highly-qualified classroom teachers.

YoungStar also takes into account the differences in the professional development infrastructure of the afterschool sector as compared to the early childhood sector. An afterschool program site coordinator earns the maximum points (nine) for a related bachelors degree, an unrelated bachelors degree and a teacher’s license, or a masters degree or higher. A child care center director can only maximize points (six) with a related bachelors degree and a child care administrators credential, or a masters degree or higher. This reflects the fact that site coordinators of afterschool programs may have training or degrees in a variety of disciplines, from elementary education to youth development to recreation or arts education. Most child care center directors, in contrast, have an educational background specifically in early childhood development.

- **Academic standards.** One final difference of note among the various YoungStar tracks is that afterschool programs may earn a point if their curriculum is aligned with the Wisconsin Common Core academic standards, which are now the standards to be used by all public schools in the state.

Conversely, YoungStar does not provide an incentive for group child care centers or family providers to align their curricula with the K-12 standards in this way. (They are to be aligned with the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards, which are focused on child development rather than academic learning.) This reflects both the ages of the children

Table 4: YoungStar point distribution, group centers serving ages 0-12 and schoolage afterschool programs

Quality Indicator	Track 2 Group Centers	Track 3 Afterschool
Staff qualifications		
Group Teacher (Track 2) or Group Leader (Track 3)	0-9	0-6
Group Director (Track 2) or Site Supervisor/Coordinator/Director (Track 3)	0-6	0-9
Learning environment and curricular framework	0-13	0-13
Professional practices	0-7	0-7
Health and wellness	0-5	0-5
Total	0-40	0-40

in afterschool programs and the mission of many afterschool programs to build on the learning occurring during the school day.

Those fearing that the state would capriciously apply early childhood quality indicators to school-age afterschool programs have been reassured to some extent. In fact, as discussed above, the three YoungStar tracks run in parallel, yet they are quite different. Wisconsin is one of five states to create a separate school-age track within the rating system; most other states that rate afterschool programs embed their school-age indicators within their overall rating scale.²⁴

Although Wisconsin's "track" design is less common, other elements with which the state has folded school-age programs into the child care rating system are more common. Of the 16 other states with afterschool-specific indicators in their quality rating systems, 15 use the SACERS tool for making evaluations, 13 have staff qualification requirements similar to Wisconsin's, and 11 award points for quality improvement plans. However, only six award points for aligning afterschool program curricula with K-12 standards.²⁵

Despite these concrete efforts by state officials to apply the child care regulatory scheme to afterschool programs with the unique needs of afterschool programs in mind, it should be noted that YoungStar was designed based on decades of early childhood research and was planned over the course of three biennial state budget cycles. The addition of an afterschool track without the same underlying research and planning and deliberation means that the impacts of this strategy on afterschool programs must be closely monitored as YoungStar is fully implemented and outcomes are measured.

In addition, despite the positive *quality* impacts that YoungStar is hoped to generate for afterschool programs, the potential impact on the *sustainability* of those programs is uncertain. While a higher-quality program logically would attract more demand and possibly more support, the fact that a quality program is more costly to operate means that sustainability will continue to be an issue for many afterschool programs. State policymakers could consider incentivizing sustainability planning under YoungStar, as does Missouri, which awards points in its quality rating system to programs having robust sustainability plans. Wisconsin could consider offering technical assistance in this regard, as well.

VII. Conclusion

Thousands of Milwaukee children attend afterschool programs each day. Unfortunately, many attend programs funded solely through competitive federal grants, which makes their sustainability uncertain. Many programs are looking to child care subsidy dollars to ensure their sustainability, but funding afterschool programs under a child care model raises many policy concerns. One of the cautions of a child care funding model is that the innate differences between child care/early childhood education and afterschool programming call for different regulatory structures.

Wisconsin appears to have struck a balance by allowing afterschool programs serving low-income families to access child care subsidy dollars, and including these programs as a separate track in the state's child care rating and improvement system. The proof will come once all of the programs are rated, however, and the new subsidy rates kick in. Depending on the outcome, other funding models could be considered, including a funding model more reliant on state or local K-12 education funds. At a minimum, the state may wish to incentivize sustainability planning among programs by rewarding such plans in the quality rating system.

Future reports on afterschool issues will include the results of our survey of afterschool providers in Milwaukee, an analysis of visual and performing arts in afterschool programs and their relationship to academic achievement, a citywide map of program capacity and quality, and a case study of the extent to which afterschool programming in Milwaukee is meeting neighborhood needs.

ENDNOTES

1. The total children figure comes from the June 2011 MPC child census, see note 5. The proportion of working parents comes from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-09 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. (http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_09_5YR_DP5YR3&prodType=table) The reading achievement data represent the 2011-12 school year and are from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (<http://data.dpi.state.wi.us/Data/serveRawDataCsv.aspx>)
2. Our definition closely resembles that of the first national study of afterschool programs conducted for the U.S. Department of Education. Seppanen, P., Love, J, deVries, D., Berstein, L., Seligson, M., Marx, F., & Kisker, E. "National study of before- and after-school programs," Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Policy and Planning, 1993
3. The statewide figure is from the Department of Children and Families and represents child care authorizations as of first quarter 2012. Milwaukee County issuances made up 54% of all state Shares expenses during that quarter. (<http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcare/wishares/scbag.htm>)
4. Afterschool Alliance, "America After 3PM." (http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM_2009/AA3_Factsheet_WI_2009.pdf) The Afterschool Alliance survey included 593 Wisconsin households and was conducted between March and May 2009.
5. MPS conducts an annual child census of all children residing in the City of Milwaukee. This figure represents the total number of children ages 5 to 18 in June 2011. (<http://mpsportal.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/portal/server.pt/doc/86536/Comprehensive+Annual+Financial+Report+2011>)
6. Public Policy Forum, *Moving the Goal Posts: The Shift from Child Care Supply to Child Care Quality*, December 2010. (<http://www.publicpolicyforum.org/pdfs/MovingTheGoalPosts.pdf>)
7. Afterschool Alliance, *Evaluations Background: A Summary of Formal Evaluations of Afterschool Programs' Impact on Academics, Behavior, Safety and Family Life*, May 2011. (<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/EvaluationsBackground2011.pdf>)
8. See the Forum's matrix of peer-reviewed research on early childhood education. <http://www.publicpolicyforum.org/Matrix.htm>
9. Wisconsin FYY2011-13 CCDF Plan (http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcare/ccdf/1112_final_plan.pdf)
10. Public Policy Forum, *Moving the Goal Posts: The Shift from Child Care Supply to Child Care Quality*, December 2010. (<http://www.publicpolicyforum.org/pdfs/MovingTheGoalPosts.pdf>)
11. The Finance Project, *Estimated Federal Investment in Out-of-School Time*, 2007 (http://www.financeproject.org/publications/estimatedfederalOST_TFPflyer.pdf)
12. Washington, D.C. FYY2012-2013 CCDF Plan (http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/DC_CCDF_PLAN_FFY_2012_2013.pdf)
13. D.C Public Schools, Office of the Chief Academic Officer (<http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/Files/downloads/Beyond-the-Classroom/FAQ%20SY%202012-2013%20Revised.pdf>)
14. Afterschool Investments Project, *Using the Child Care and Development Fund to Support a System of Quality Improvement for School-Age Programs*, U.S. Child Care Bureau, Sept. 2009. (<http://www.financeproject.org/publications/AIPQualityBrief.pdf>)
15. Ibid.
16. According to DCF's instructions for providers, a school-age provider that is "not certified or licensed and does not have a contract with a school district to provide before and after school services cannot participate in YoungStar." (http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/pdf/application_instructions_schoolage.pdf) Thus, tutoring and other non-child care programs will not be rated.
17. Margaret Flynn, *Title I Supplemental Educational Services and Afterschool Programs: Opportunities and Challenges*, The Finance Project, August 2002. (<http://76.12.61.196/publications/suppsvc.pdf>)
18. Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time Initiative (<http://www.mass2020.org/node/10>)
19. Center for American Progress, *A Look at Community Schools*, October 2009. (http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/10/pdf/community_schools.pdf)
20. Colorado Department of Revenue (https://revenuestateco.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/365/~child-care-contribution-income-tax-credit---general-information)
21. San Francisco Department of Children, Youth, and their Families (<http://www.dcyf.org/WorkArea/showcontent.aspx?id=3852>)
22. Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/publications/pdf/dcf_p_pfs4085.pdf)
23. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (<http://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/clcwascip.html>)
24. DHHS, ACF, NCCIC, *Guidance for State Leaders Developing Quality Rating and Improvement Systems for School-age Programs*, May 2010.