

Wisconsin Shares Child Care and Teen Parents

10 Frequently Asked Questions

As a state funded program, the Wisconsin Shares program is a resource to help low income families pay for quality childcare while they work or attend school. You will be the best advocate for your teen parent students if you establish a relationship with your local Wisconsin Shares case managers. These questions are only meant to provide SOME background on situations that your students may find themselves in. If you think they are eligible for the program, they should be prepared to provide documentation of income, citizenship/residency, birth, etc. However teen parents often lack all of the paperwork and the county human services office should be able to help them locate some of the public record documents they need.

1. What are the key considerations to be eligible for child care subsidy?

- a. **Income:** To be initially eligible, the family's gross monthly income must be equal to or less than 185% FPL for the family size. Families may continue to be eligible up to 200% FPL. Foster parents, kinship relatives who receive a kinship care benefit for the child and have a court order for their placement, and subsidized guardians have different income eligibility requirements.
- b. **Necessity:** The teen parent must need child care to attend school or work. For example, all adults who are expected to provide childcare are participating in a W-2 approved activity while the teen is in school.

2. How does a student apply for child care subsidy?

There are three ways to apply. A student under 18¹ will need to have their parent(s) apply online at <https://access.wisconsin.gov>, however they will still need to meet with a worker at the local agency. Grandparents/student can also apply by calling the local agency or a student can apply in person at the local agency. If the family is planning to apply in person, he/she should call ahead and make an appointment.

3. How does income and eligibility change based on living arrangement?

The number of people in the family determines the federal poverty level (income). If a teen parent is living with his/her parent(s) and they available to provide child care when the teen is in school, then there is no demonstrated *necessity*. However if the student's parent(s) work during the day or work night shift and need to sleep during the day, a teen parent can demonstrate need for child care.

Some teen parents may be homeless or live in kinship care or guardianship situations and different eligibility criteria may apply.

4. What other adults in the household can be compelled to provide child care?

The biological or legal step parent of the teen parent or the co-parent of the child, if they are available to provide child care during school or work, would make a teen parent ineligible to receive child care subsidy. If the household includes other adult relatives, significant others, or

¹ Students over 18 or under 18 and married or in a supervised living situation are able to apply on their own.

friends, they are NOT required to provide child care and there would still be a necessity for child care during school and work hours for the teen parent student.

5. What if the teen's biological parent/guardian does not want /should not provide child care?

If they are available during the teen's school hours, it will still make the teen ineligible for subsidies. If there are concerns about a child's safety due to substance abuse, mental illness, disability, etc., grandparents might be able to get a doctor's note or other documentation that indicates they are unfit to watch their children. If this documentation is provided, assuming income eligibility, the teen parent could qualify for subsidy.

6. What if the teen parent is living with a boyfriend/girlfriend who may or may not be the co-parent?

Teens under 18 must be in a supervised living situation. If the teen mother is living with the co-parent (paternity is established) of her child, then the co-parent's income would be considered for eligibility. If the boyfriend/girlfriend is not a co-parent, then his/her income is not considered and he/she would not be compelled to provide child care.

Once a teen parent turns 18, he/she is eligible to apply for Wisconsin Shares under his/her own case, regardless of living situation.

7. Who can provide supervision if a teen parent is not living with their parent(s) or other relative or in a group/licensed foster home? Independent living situations can be approved by a licensed or public child welfare agency, social services or state corrections agency.

8. How much will a teen parent pay for child care?

The teen parent's share of the cost is determined on a sliding scale depending on the family's income, family's size, number of children in subsidized care, and the type of child care service chosen. The co-payment can be as low as 2% of the family gross income. The family may also be responsible for any difference between the actual cost of childcare and the subsidy rate.

9. How does Head Start fit in with child care provided to teen parents?

As a federally funded poverty program, Head Start (Early Head Start) has determined that the children of teen parents are at risk of poor health, social-emotional and academic outcomes. Therefore, Head Start programs will prioritize teen parents. In addition, Head Start is able to income qualify teen parents on their own regardless of living situation. However, Head Start has a variety of service delivery patterns with very few Early Head Start center-based placements available. As with the local W2 office, you should create partnerships with your local Head Start program.

10. What if my county human services office does not want to work with my students or gives them information counter to what is in this document?

Contact the Child Care Help Desk at 608-264-1657 or childcare@wisconsin.gov.