

*YoungStar in Wisconsin
Analysis of Data as of
July 2013*



**YOUNGSTAR PROGRESS REPORT # 4
DECEMBER 2013**

Acknowledgements:

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SUMMARY: KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Key Findings

Children in YoungStar:

1. Nearly **two-thirds** (65%) of Wisconsin Shares children are served in programs rated 3-Star or higher. YoungStar ratings data shows that more and more children are in higher-rated programs in the third year of implementation.
2. Infants and toddlers are distributed very similarly to the whole Shares population, with **64%** in programs rated 3-Star or higher.
3. The actual distribution of children by Star level is **better overall** than initially projected in 2010. It is significantly better (14 percentage points higher) at the 3-Star level and slightly worse at the 5-Star.
4. The number of children served by Wisconsin Shares has declined dramatically over the past 5 years, from a high of 59,501 in 2008 to **48,101** in 2013. Programs serving these children are required to participate in YoungStar.

Programs in YoungStar:

5. Ratings data identifies an increased number of higher-rated programs, but **62%** of programs are still at the 2-Star level. However, two-thirds (66%) of licensed group centers and one-third (34%) of licensed family programs at the 2-Star level chose to receive a technical rather than automated rating. This indicates they are actively working on quality improvement and making the effort to move up to the 3-Star level or higher.
6. Ratings continue to vary dramatically across the four program types: licensed group child care centers, licensed family child care, certified family child care, and public schools. A **much** larger percentage of group child care centers have higher ratings than the other three types.
7. Almost all 5-Star group programs (**90%**) received their rating through accreditation rather than the YoungStar point system.
8. An increasing number of programs have been rated: **4506** child care programs were rated as of July 2013, compared to 1516 in July 2011.

9. **1298** YoungStar rated programs are NOT participating in Wisconsin Shares. This is an increase of 325 over the past year.

YoungStar Regions:

10. The six YoungStar regions vary appreciably in the number of children served. The Northern region has the smallest number of children, and the **Milwaukee** region has the largest.

11. Regions vary in the percentage of children in higher rated programs. The Milwaukee, Northern, and Western regions have the highest percentage of children in 2-Star programs. The **Southern** and **Northeastern** regions have the highest percentage of children in programs rated 3 to 5 Stars.

Resources to Help Programs Improve:

12. Technical assistance has been provided in **19,153** visits to 5047 programs since YoungStar began.

13. 4628 micro-grants totaling **\$3.5 million** have been awarded to programs to improve quality since 2011.

14. There were **1318** individuals from 64 counties with T.E.A.C.H. scholarships as of July 2013.



Analysis

1. What does it mean that nearly two-thirds (65%) of Wisconsin Shares children are in programs with 3- to 5-Star ratings?

This is a significant accomplishment for YoungStar and ensures access to higher quality early childhood education for over 28,000 children from low-income families.

2. Why has the number of children receiving Wisconsin Share been declining?

Fewer children served by Wisconsin Shares has likely been caused by lost jobs due to the recession, fraud prevention efforts, higher co-pays, less availability, a drop in child care programs participating in Wisconsin Shares, and more parents choosing to use cheaper unlicensed child care.

3. Why are so many YoungStar rated programs not participating in Wisconsin Shares?

The recession and the loss of jobs had significant impact. In addition, 2-Star programs received a 5% cut starting July 1, 2012 and reimbursement rates for all Star levels have been frozen since 2006. These, among other factors, may have driven programs out of Wisconsin Shares.

4. What are the obstacles for family child care programs moving from a 2-Star to a 3-Star rating?

Two-Star programs that were rated as of July 2013 had very low ratings in the staff qualifications category, which requires specified credit-based education.

5. Why is there so much regional variation in quality?

Compared to a year ago, there is actually much less. Milwaukee has been targeted for quality improvement efforts, especially in the area of staff education, and it seems to be paying off.

6. Why is getting a technical rather than an automated rating significant?

A technical rating means a child care program can receive assistance from a technical consultant, they are eligible for micro-grants, they will be scored on the 40 point scale, and most importantly, they have the potential to move up to 3-Star level or higher.

“I will make interactions and conversation more meaningful and purposeful on a daily basis. And I will listen to the children.”

--a provider after attending a training on Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Background

This report is the fourth in a series of WCCF reports tracking the progress of Wisconsin’s YoungStar program, a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) launched in 2011 to improve the quality of Wisconsin child care programs. YoungStar focuses on children of low-income working families receiving assistance from the Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy programs. YoungStar rates the quality of child care programs on a 5-Star scale and is administered in 6 regions of the state. The analysis in this report is based on data as of the end of July 2013.

Programs are rated 1-Star if they do not meet health and safety standards, and are prohibited from receiving Wisconsin Shares funding. Two-Star programs meet basic regulatory standards for health, safety, program, and personnel (prior to 2011, these were the only standards required to participate in Wisconsin Shares). Star levels 3, 4, and 5 represent progressively improved quality, with an emphasis on early learning and development.

For more background on YoungStar, the quality indicators, and a summary of the program’s implementation history, see the Appendix at the end of this report.

I. CHILDREN: QUALITY RATINGS OF THEIR CHILD CARE SETTINGS

Nearly two-thirds (65%) of Wisconsin Shares children are served in programs rated 3-Star or higher:

The most important YoungStar metric is percentage of **children** from low-income families receiving early care and education services in higher quality programs. When YoungStar is analyzed by *where the children are*, the picture looks considerably brighter than an analysis of child care programs and their ratings. The primary desired outcome for YoungStar should be the impact on children. As of July 2013, nearly two-thirds of the children (65%) funded by Wisconsin Shares are in programs rated 3-Star or higher (47% at 3-Star, 4% at 4-Star, and 14% at 5-Star). Only about one-third (35%) are in 2-Star programs.

Because center-based programs serve many more children than family child care settings, and because center-based programs are generally rated higher (see Figures 10 and 11), the percentage of *children* served in higher quality programs is significantly higher than the percentage of *programs* rated as higher quality. In fact, over three-quarters (**76%**) of children in Wisconsin Shares were in licensed group centers as of June 30, 2013. Only 13.5% were in licensed family programs, 6.5% in certified care, and 4% in school based settings.

So while 58% of **programs** have 2-Star ratings, only 35% of **children** are served in 2-Star rated programs funded by Wisconsin Shares. And while only 42% of **programs** are rated higher than 2 Stars, 65% of **children** attend programs rated at 3 Stars and above. (See Figures 1 and 2)

28,072 children are now in higher quality (3-5 Star) programs funded by Wisconsin Shares

Figure 1

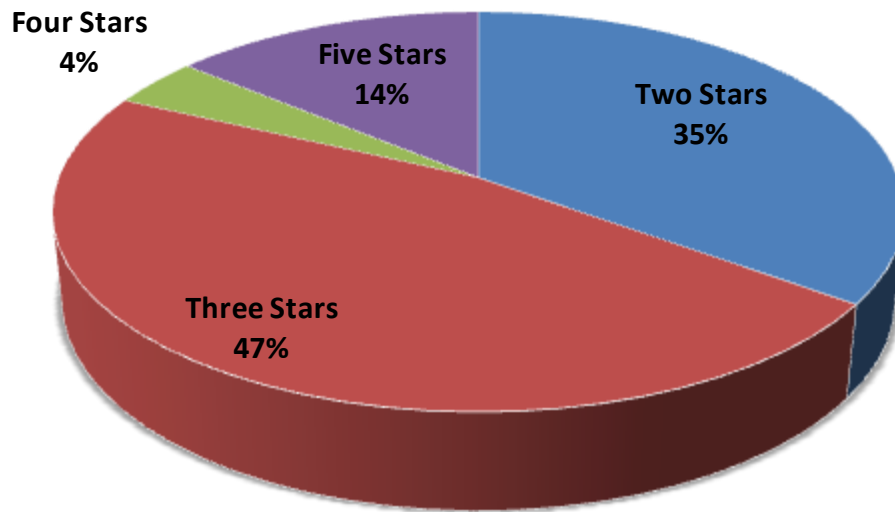
**Comparison: Providers and Children by Star Rating
Funded by Wisconsin Shares
July 2013**

	1 Star	2 Star	3 Star	4 Star	5 Star	Total
<u>Programs</u> by Star Rating	0	1860	997	129	222	3208
Percent of Total Programs	0%	58%	31%	4%	7%	100%
<u>Children</u> Served by Star Level	0	15,208	20,374	1790	5908	43,280
Percent of Children Served by Star Level	0%	35%	47%	4%	14%	100%

Note: Programs and children in this table have funding support from Wisconsin Shares, and the data do not include 1298 rated programs that do not receive Wisconsin Shares funding and the children they serve. Wisconsin Shares does not reimburse providers at the 1-Star level for child care services.

“YoungStar has required myself and my staff to go back to college and receive credentials and has completely raised the standards and learning experience for both of the centers I oversee. We are leaps and bounds better than we were.”

Figure 2
WI Shares Children by Star Level
July 2013



Infants and Toddlers: 64% in 3- to 5-Star programs.

Because the first two years are so crucial to a child’s healthy development, an analysis of Wisconsin Shares children under 2 years old is presented here. Over 7000 infants and toddlers were funded through Wisconsin Shares in July 2013; 64% were in child care programs rated 3- to 5-Stars, and 36% were in 2-Star settings, very similar to the distribution of all children, as illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3		
Infants and Toddlers (under 2 years old) by YoungStar Rating		
<i>(The children in this table are funded by Wisconsin Shares)</i>		
July 2013		
Rating	Number of children under 2	Percent of children under 2
Two Stars	2601	36%
Three Stars	3234	45%
Four Stars	290	4%
Five Stars	1045	15%
TOTAL	7170	100%

Good News: Ratings data identifies more children in higher-rated programs.

The number of Wisconsin Shares children in higher-rated programs (3- to 5-Star) has substantially increased over the last year. From July 2012 to July 2013, the number of children funded by Wisconsin Shares in programs rated 3- to 5-Stars has increased by almost 60%--from 17,671 to 28,072. (See Figure 4).

Figure 4

Number and Percent of Wisconsin Shares-funded Children by Star Ratings Over Time

(July 2011 - July 2013)

(Lower quality = 1- to 2-Star rating; Higher quality = 3- to 5-Star rating)

Year	Number of children in 1- to 2-Star rated programs	Percent of children in 1- to 2-Star rated programs	Number of children in 3- to 5-Star rated programs	Percent of children in 3- to 5-Star rated programs
July 2011	5867	56%	4526	44%
July 2012	19,572	53%	17,671	47%
July 2013	15,208	35%	28,072	65%

“One thing that I can’t wait to try at my program tomorrow is just trying to get more on the child’s level and engage more in what they are doing and what interests them.”

It is reasonable to conclude that the technical assistance, training, micro-grants, and educational scholarships have had a significant impact. As the Supporting Families Together Association (SFTA) states it,

“These numbers show significant change for children who are at higher risk for poor outcomes due to broader socioeconomic and environmental factors. With higher rates of children participating in Wisconsin Shares being cared for by programs that have achieved higher quality ratings, these children are immersed in experiences and environments that will promote better outcomes through crucial elements such as school readiness and social emotional competence.”

Substantial progress towards initial (2010) estimates of star level distribution.

The initial estimate of the distribution of Wisconsin Shares children across the various Star levels was both more optimistic and more pessimistic than the actual distribution of children in July 2013. A Legislative Fiscal Bureau paper in June 2010, provided an estimate of the percentage of Wisconsin Shares children at each Star level from 2010 through 2015, based on a plan proposed by the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Figure 5 demonstrates how those estimates compare to the actual ratings as of July 2013.

The percentage of children in 2-Star programs is less than anticipated, by 6 points, which is a good thing since those are of lower quality. The percent of children in 3-Star programs is much higher than anticipated, by a whopping 14 percentage points. 4-Star programs come out six percentage points below the estimate, and 5-Star just 2 points off the predicted mark.

“I will use the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards as a resource that I can go to in order to help families and parents learn more about the developmental milestones and standards for their children.”

Figure 5

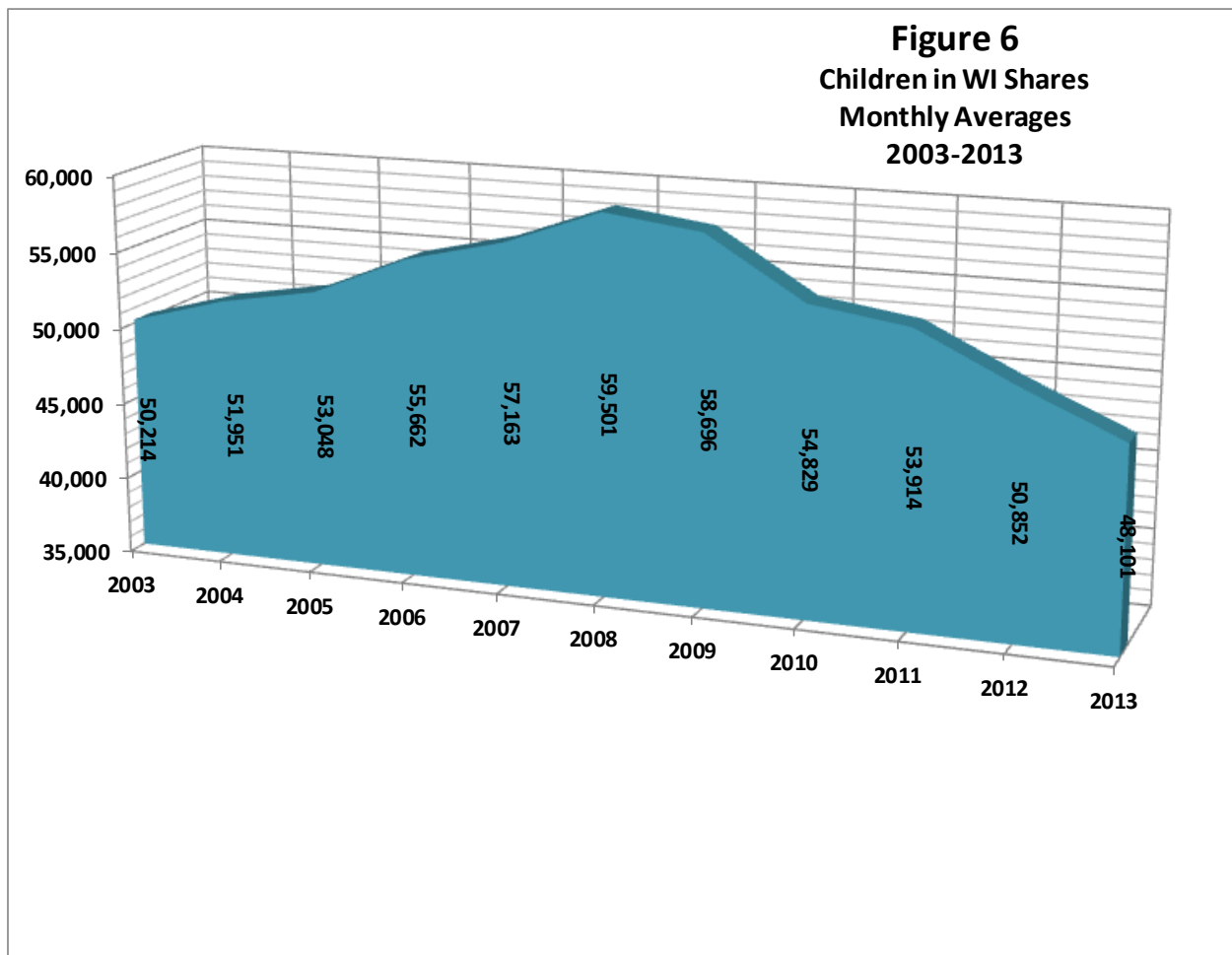
A Comparison of Initial Estimates and Actual Distribution of Children by YoungStar Quality Rating

Star Rating	Initial Estimate: Children by YoungStar Rating SFY 2012-13 *	Actual Data: Children by YoungStar Rating July 2013	Difference: Positive or Negative
One Star	0%	0%	0
Two Stars	41%	35%	-6%
Three Stars	33%	47%	+14%
Four Stars	10%	4%	-6%
Five Stars	16%	14%	-2%

*Source: DCF and Legislative Fiscal Bureau, June 2010.

Decline in children served by Wisconsin Shares.

As you can see from the chart below (Figure 6), there are over 11,000 fewer children being served by Wisconsin Shares than there were five years ago. There was a high of 59,501 in 2008. As of 2013, the monthly average is 48,101, the lowest it has been over the past eleven years. The decline in children served by Wisconsin Shares is significant because the programs that serve those children are required to participate in YoungStar, which is dedicated to improving and sustaining the quality of early learning and development.



II. PROGRAMS: QUALITY RATINGS AND YOUNGSTAR PARTICIPATION

Trend over time: Ratings data identifies an increased number of higher-rated programs, but 62% are at 2-Star level.

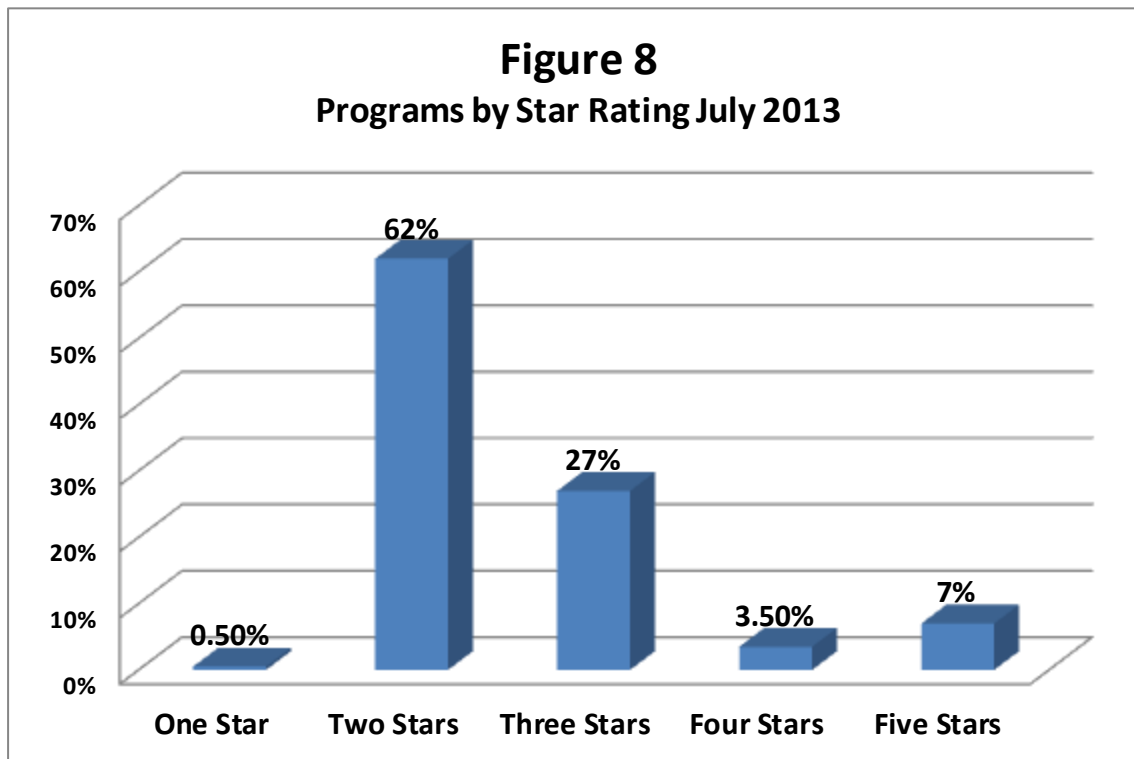
While the number and percent of children in quality settings under YoungStar may be the most important metric, tracking the number and percent of quality child care *programs* is also informative, giving a picture of the supply available for children and families. A comparison of rated programs over the two-year period from July 2011 to July 2013 shows a trend toward higher ratings. The number of child care programs at higher rated levels (3-Star, 4-Star, and 5-Star) continued to grow, with 1698 programs rated at higher levels in July 2013, compared to 229 in July 2011 (see Figure 7).

Figure 7		
Number of programs rated 3- to 5-Stars over time		
July 2011	July 2012	July 2013
229	1172	1698

In interpreting this data, note that many more programs were rated over time.

“I have more self-confidence now and am more relaxed with my children. I have set some goals to work on.”

While the majority of programs are still at the 2-Star level, the percentage is declining: In July 2011, over **84%** of programs rated were at 2-Stars; two years later, in July 2013, **62%** were at 2-Stars. See Figure 8 for a percentage breakout by Star levels.



As Figure 9 indicates, in the twelve-month period July 2012 to July 2013, the general trend has been an increase in both the number **and** percent of programs with higher ratings. As more programs were rated and more programs took advantage of training offerings, technical assistance, and micro-grants, there were significant increases in programs rated at the 3- to 5-Star levels.

In the twelve-month period, the **number** of programs rated 3- to 5-Stars increased by 526. The **percentage** of higher-rated programs rose from 28.5% to 37.5%. Meanwhile, over the same timeframe, the **percentage** of programs at 2-Stars dropped from 70.5% to 62%, and the **number** of 2-Star programs also shrank by over 100. Based on discussion with key YoungStar staff, we believe that most of the programs that have recently come into the YoungStar system are rated at the 2-Star level.

Figure 9

Programs by Star Ratings Over Time

Year	July 2011		July 2012		July 2013	
Provider Ratings	Number of programs by Star rating	Percent of Total	Number of programs by Star rating	Percent of Total	Number of programs by Star rating	Percent of Total
One Star	10	1%	40	1%	27	.5%
Two Stars	1277	84%	2891	70.5%	2781	62%
Three Stars	0	0%	792	19%	1209	27%
Four Stars	47	3%	120	3%	164	3.5%
Five Stars	182	12%	260	6.5%	325	7%
TOTAL	1516	100%	4103	100%	4506	100%

Note: This table includes **all** programs rated by YoungStar, whether or not funded by Wisconsin Shares.

The trends can be somewhat confusing because the number of rated programs continues to rise, from 4103 programs rated in July 2012 to 4506 programs rated a year later in July 2013. (3208 of these programs serve children receiving Wisconsin Shares.) The data over the past two years shows an increase in the number **and** percentage of programs rated 3- to 5-Stars, which is good news.

Ratings broken out by the four program types

This section looks at quality ratings for the four different service delivery types that comprise the 4506 programs participating in YoungStar as of July 2013:

1. Licensed group child care centers (serving 9 or more children): **1862 programs**
 2. Licensed family child care programs (serving 4-8 children): **1424 programs**
 3. Certified family child care programs (serving 6 or less): **1024 programs**
 4. Public school child care programs (mostly after-school): **196 programs**
- 4506 TOTAL**

1. Licensed group child care centers: 63% rated at 3- to 5-Stars.

Almost two thirds of group child care centers participating in YoungStar were rated at 3- to 5-Stars, a major increase from twelve months earlier, when only 55% were rated above 2 Stars. 16% of group centers are rated at 5 Stars. 37% are rated at the 2-Star level. *Group child care centers* serving nine or more children are licensed for the health, safety, and welfare of children, and must meet a rigorous set of rules and requirements. Most programs serve 50 children or more, and many serve well over 100. Many group child care programs have participated in private accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the city of Madison, or other auspices over the last 15 years that have helped them verify high-quality standards and enabled them to receive higher ratings in YoungStar.

2. Licensed family child care programs: 71% rated at the 1- to 2-Star level.

Over two thirds of family child care programs are rated at the 2-Star level or lower, with only 29% at 3- to 5-Star levels. *Licensed family child care* programs serve 4 to 8 children and meet standards similar to group child care centers, but adapted for a smaller setting. Accreditation efforts have been more recent for family child care, and may offer an avenue for programs to move up the YoungStar scale.

3. Certified family child care programs: 94% rated at the 1- to 2-Star level.

Nearly all certified family child care programs are rated at the 2-Star level. These small family child care homes are not required to be licensed, but must meet regulatory standards considerably less stringent than licensing rules. A *certified provider* serves less than four children under 7 years old unrelated to them (the threshold for family child care licensing), but can serve as many as six children total if some are related or older

than 6 years. Certification allows smaller family providers to receive Wisconsin Shares funding.

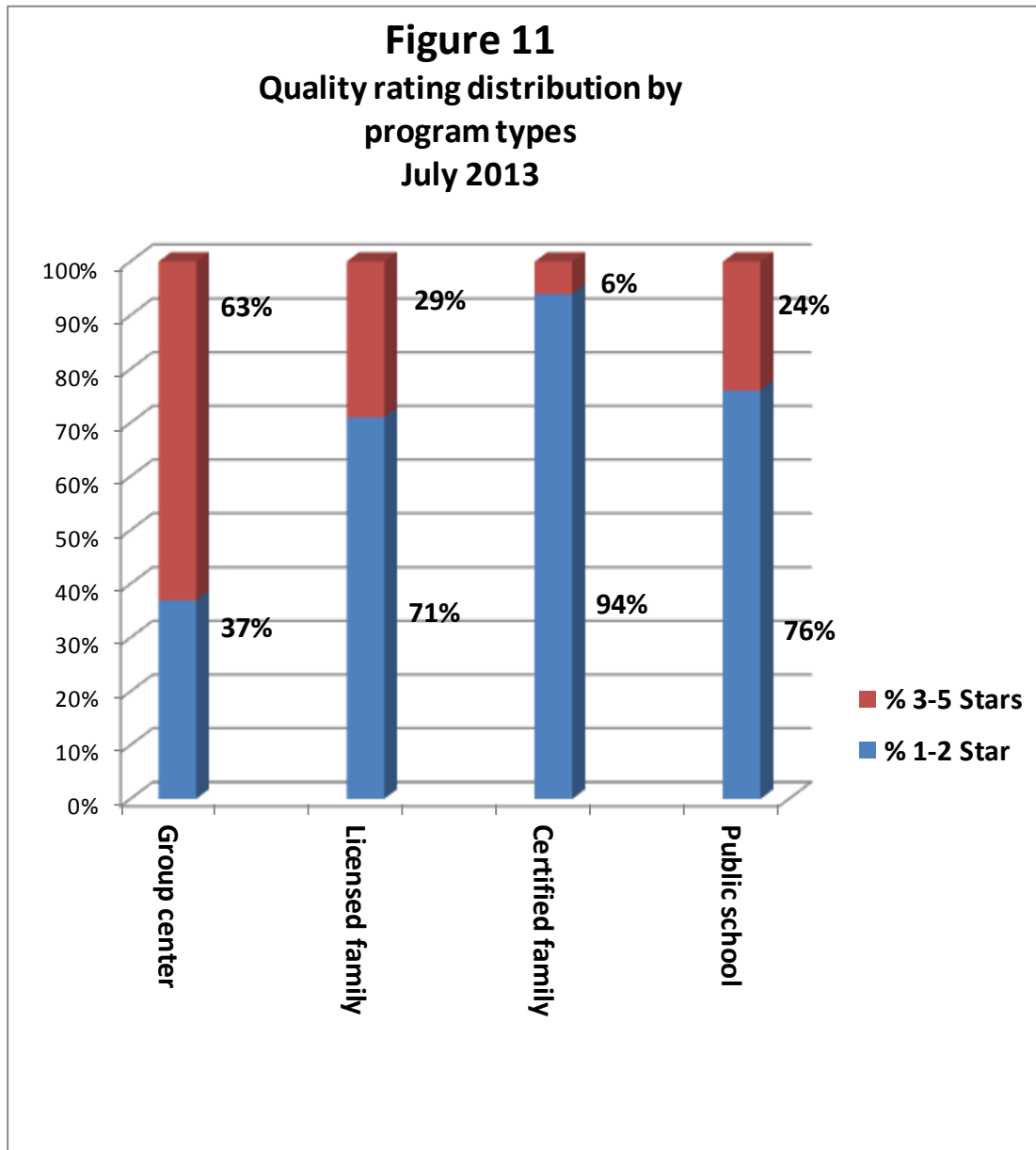
4. Public school child care: 76% are at the 2-Star level.

Some public schools provide child care services. Few public schools – only 196 – are participating in YoungStar currently, but that number is likely to rise as YoungStar includes school-age child care in the system. In July 2012, YoungStar began rating school-age child care using quality standards designed for school-age services. Most school-age child care services are in licensed child care settings, but some are provided by public schools on-site.

Figure 10 provides details of each program type by Star level.

Figure 10						
Child Care Programs Rated Broken Out by Provider Type						
July 2013						
Provider Type	1 Star	2 Star	3 Star	4 Star	5 Star	Total
Licensed group child care	7	684	797	93	281	1862
Licensed family child care	11	996	315	59	43	1424
Certified family child care	9	952	53	10	0	1024
Public School child care	0	149	44	2	1	196
TOTAL	27	2781	1209	164	325	4506

Figure 11 provides a comparison of Star rating distribution by the four program types, broken out by percent of programs rated 1 to 2 Stars and those rated 3 to 5 Stars. Quality ratings under YoungStar are dramatically higher for group child care centers, with 63% rated 3 to 5 Stars, than for all three other types.

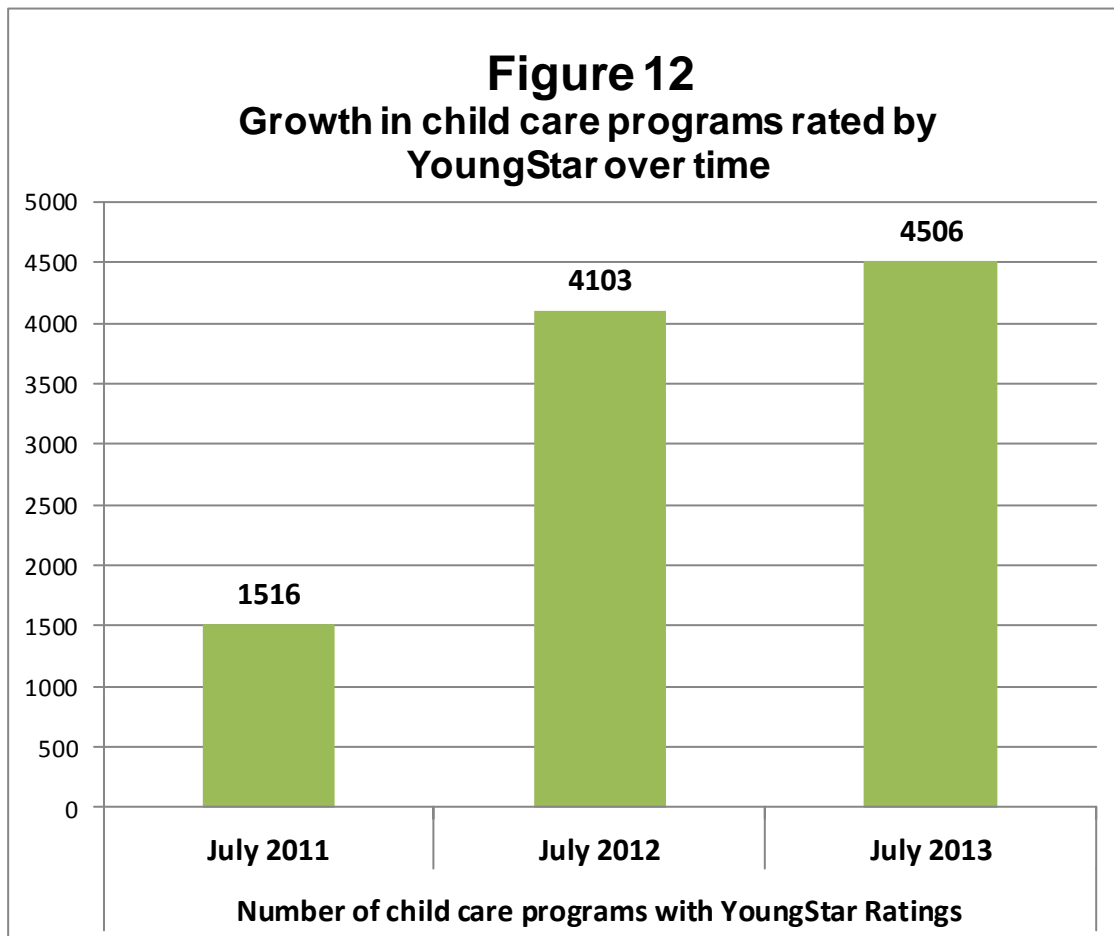


Increasing number of programs rated:

4506 child care programs were rated as of July 2013.

As of July 2013, a total of **4506** programs had been rated on a scale of 1 to 5 Stars, based either on an assessment of quality or on a provider's decision not to be rated above a 2-Star level. Given the challenge of rating thousands of programs in a relatively short period, this is a significant accomplishment for DCF and the Consortium--Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA), Supporting Families Together Association (SFTA), and Celebrate Children Foundation (CCF)--responsible for much of the implementation. The number of programs rated increased by 403 in the past year, from 4103 programs in July 2012 to 4506 in July 2013.

Figure 12 illustrates the growth in child care programs rated over time.



Note: These statistics apply to all programs rated by YoungStar, including both those receiving Wisconsin Shares funding and therefore required to participate, and other child care programs that are not required to participate but do so voluntarily.

The number of programs rated by YoungStar is likely to grow even more in the next few months, since 164 ratings were pending as of July 2013.



“The program (YoungStar) is teaching me that children need to be nurtured and guided in all domains of life. It also is teaching my program how to focus on the whole child; My TC (Technical Consultant) is teaching more and more how important it is to show evidence of the children learning through observations as well as teaching through children’s developmental milestones.”

III. ANALYSIS BY YOUNGSTAR REGIONS

The YoungStar program is divided into six regions (see Appendix B for a regional map). This section looks at data for each region, including a breakout of children by Star levels, and a comparison of each region based on its percentage of children enrolled in programs at the 3- to 5- Star level.



“Our work on the Quality Improvement Plan has helped us identify and prioritize the areas of the program we would like to enhance. We are continuing our project to provide children with a focus on a healthy future. The nutrition phase of the project has been successfully completed. Our work this year is putting together an outdoor environment that brings the classroom outside and provides opportunities for physical activity experiences not available during inclement weather.”

Distribution of children by Star rating across regions.

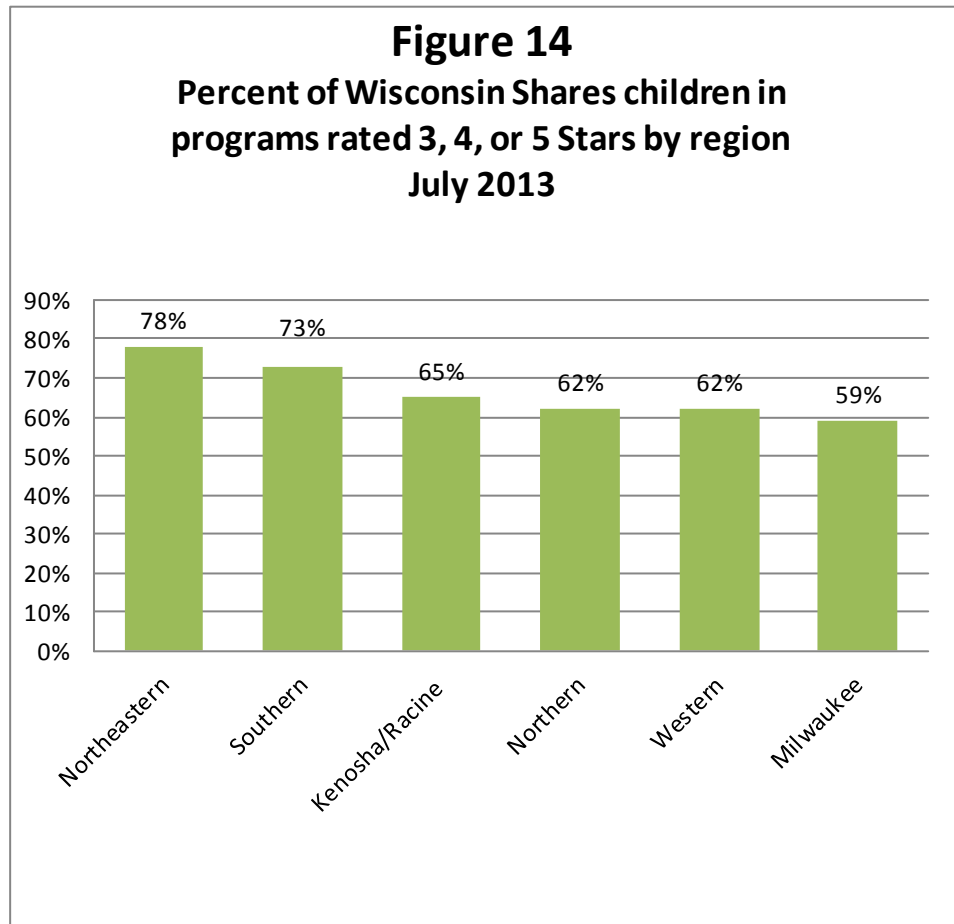
Figure 13 shows the distribution of children funded by Wisconsin Shares by region and by Star rating as of July 2013.

Figure 13					
Breakout of Children by Star Level of Program by Region (Children are funded by Wisconsin Shares) July 2013					
Region	Two Stars	Three Stars	Four Stars	Five Stars	Total Children
Kenosha/Racine (Southeastern)	1256	1764	114	429	3563
Milwaukee	8475	9872	324	2212	20,883
Northeastern	1273	2841	480	1073	5667
Northern	967	1095	209	243	2514
Southern	1988	3193	549	1648	7378
Western	1249	1609	114	303	3275
Total	15,208	20,374	1790	5908	43,280

Note: Programs rated at 1 Star are not eligible to receive Wisconsin Shares funding.

Percent of children in higher quality programs across regions.

As shown in Figure 14, there is quite a bit of variation by region in percentage of children in programs rated 3, 4 or 5 Stars. Kenosha/Racine (Southeastern) comes out right at 65%, which is the same as the overall percentage of children in 3- to 5-Star programs throughout the state. Northern, Western, and Milwaukee are all somewhat lower. Southern, and particularly Northeastern, are significantly higher.



The level of child care quality in each region reflects the development of the child care supply over many years, likely influenced by such factors as the qualifications of the child care workforce, the impact of welfare reform, the level of poverty, and the ability of communities to build higher quality programs.

IV. YOUNGSTAR RESOURCES TO HELP PROGRAMS IMPROVE

Moving Programs from 2-Star to 3-Star rating.

With so many child care programs rated at 2 Stars under the YoungStar 5-Star system, an analysis of 2- and 3-Star programs provides helpful data:

- Most 2-Star programs got automated ratings: Of the 2621 2-Star programs statewide, 60% (1585) requested an automated rating, which meant they did not receive a rating assessment and would automatically be rated as a 2-Star program. But 1036 programs did get a technical rating—and remained at the 2-Star level. (See Figure 15)
- 2-Star programs must earn 11 out of 40 possible points to move up to a 3-Star rating. On average, 2-Star programs are earning 5 points for certified family, 7.5 for licensed family, and 9 for licensed group.

The data shows that 2-Star programs are earning the least number of points in the staff qualifications category, where 2-Star programs earned less than one point on average. In terms of educational qualifications, 2-Star programs are earning an average of .2 points for certified family, .5 for licensed family, and .9 for licensed group. To earn the minimal points needed to move to the 3-Star level, teachers, administrators, and family child care providers must earn specified college-level credits. The time and investment required is a serious barrier for many 2-Star programs, particularly family child care programs.

Figure 15

2* Programs with Technical vs. Automated Ratings

Category	Technical	Automated	Total	% Technical
Certified Family	249	695	944	26%
Licensed Family	334	660	994	34%
Licensed Group	453	230	683	66%
TOTAL	1036	1585	2621	40%

Technical assistance has been provided in 19,153 visits to 5047 programs as of July 2013.

Cumulative on-site technical assistance since the beginning of YoungStar is impressive, with over 19,000 visits to more than 5000 programs. Technical assistance (TA) visits occur when a YoungStar staff member goes into a program and provides one-on-one coaching, mentoring, or guidance. TA is only available to programs that opt for a technical versus an automated rating.

Figure 16 shows the number of cumulative technical assistance visits and the number of child care programs reached by region.

Figure 16 Technical Assistance Visits to Child Care Programs Cumulative as of July 2013		
Region	Visits	Child care programs
Western	2266	643
Northern	1837	387
Northeastern	3159	834
Southern	4327	1105
Milwaukee	6429	1730
Racine/Kenosha	1135	348
Total	19,153	5047

Over 4600 micro-grants totaling \$3.5 million have been awarded.

Since July 2011, the YoungStar consortium has awarded 4628 micro-grants to help group child care centers, family child care programs, and school-age programs improve their quality. A total of almost \$3.5 million in micro-grants has been distributed. Micro-grants are used by child care programs to purchase materials and resources and pursue professional development opportunities tied to achieving quality improvement goals. Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA) is responsible for administering micro-grants, which vary in amounts depending on the size of the program.

1318 individuals from 64 counties had T.E.A.C.H. scholarships as of June 30, 2013.

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarship program, administered by WECA, provides scholarships to child care professionals to help them improve their educational credentials through credit-based courses. While not all scholarships go to programs participating in YoungStar, desire to improve in YoungStar ratings has undoubtedly spurred increased interest in T.E.A.C.H. scholarships.

As of June 2013, there were a total of 1318 active scholarship recipients from 64 Wisconsin counties. 21.5% of the active recipients were family child care providers, 57.5% were teachers or assistant teachers in a group child care center, and the remaining 21% were directors or administrators in a group center.

“My Technical Consultant (TC) was there to help me every step of the way and made it as easy as she could. With e-mails, visits and sending supportive information...it went very well! I was really against YoungStar until the first visit with my TC. She explained all about it, she answered my questions and never made me feel like I had to do anything I didn't want to. Since meeting with my TC, I have been talking to other providers in my area to educate them about what YoungStar is and is not.”

V. ANALYSIS

1. What does it mean that nearly two-thirds (65%) of Wisconsin Shares children are in programs with 3- to 5-Star ratings?

This is a significant accomplishment for YoungStar and ensures access to higher quality early childhood education for over 28,000 children from low-income families. Overall, there has been an 18 percentage point increase in the number of kids in 3- to 5-Star settings, and a corresponding 18 point decrease in 2-Star enrollment. Compared to a year ago, there are 10,401 more children in higher quality programs and 4364 fewer receiving lower quality child care. And these numbers are reflected similarly in the breakout of infants and toddlers across the state.

2. Why has the number of children receiving Wisconsin Share been declining?

Fewer children served by Wisconsin Shares has likely been caused by lost jobs due to the recession, fraud prevention efforts, higher co-pays, less availability, a drop in child care programs participating in Wisconsin Shares, and more people choosing to use cheaper unlicensed child care. With fewer children receiving Wisconsin Shares, fewer children will be in programs participating in the YoungStar quality rating and improvement system.

3. Why are so many YoungStar programs not participating in Wisconsin Shares?

Many child care programs serve middle- and upper-class families not eligible for Wisconsin Shares. Some programs have decided to no longer serve Wisconsin Shares-funded children because of the drop in reimbursement rates that have been frozen since 2006 along with many authorizations being changed from enrollment-based to attendance-based. Also, 2-Star programs received a 5% cut starting July 1, 2012, which may have driven programs out of Wisconsin Shares. Providers often have a difficult time collecting co-pays from parents, particularly when families are struggling.

4. What are the obstacles for family child care programs moving from a 2-Star to a 3-Star rating?

Two-Star programs that were rated as of July 2013 had very low ratings in the staff qualifications category, which requires specified credit-based education. Increasing educational credits and improving business practices are the greatest obstacles to moving to a 3-Star level. Of the 334 Licensed Family Child Care programs at the 2-Star level who received a technical rating, 7.5 was the average number of points achieved. A program needs at least 11 points plus some mandatory minimum requirements to reach the 3-Star level.

5. Why is there so much regional variation in quality?

Compared to a year ago, there is actually much less variation. In 2012 there was a 30-point spread between the highest (Northeastern) and lowest (Milwaukee) in terms of percentage of children in higher quality programs. As of 2013, that was down to a 19 point difference, mainly because the Milwaukee region improved by 25 percentage points! There are now over 1000 more children in the Milwaukee region enrolled in 3-Star programs than are in 2-Star. Milwaukee has been targeted for quality improvement efforts, especially in the area of staff education, and apparently it is paying off.

6. Why is getting a technical rather than an automated rating significant?

Initially the vast majority of 2-Star programs chose an automated rating. This means they were accepting the fact that they would stay only at the 2-Star level. An automated rating does not result in a point score. Now many more 2-Star programs, especially licensed group centers, are choosing to take a technical rating. This means they can receive assistance from a technical consultant, they are eligible for micro-grants, they will be scored on the 40 point scale, and most importantly, they have the potential to move up to 3-Star level or higher.

“She (our technical consultant) was so positive with our program and the policies we had in place. It made me feel more confident about what we are providing to our families. Staff had commented they always felt ‘pumped up’ after our TC would leave. Thanks!”

VI: APPENDICES

Appendix A: Background

A1. Summary of YoungStar

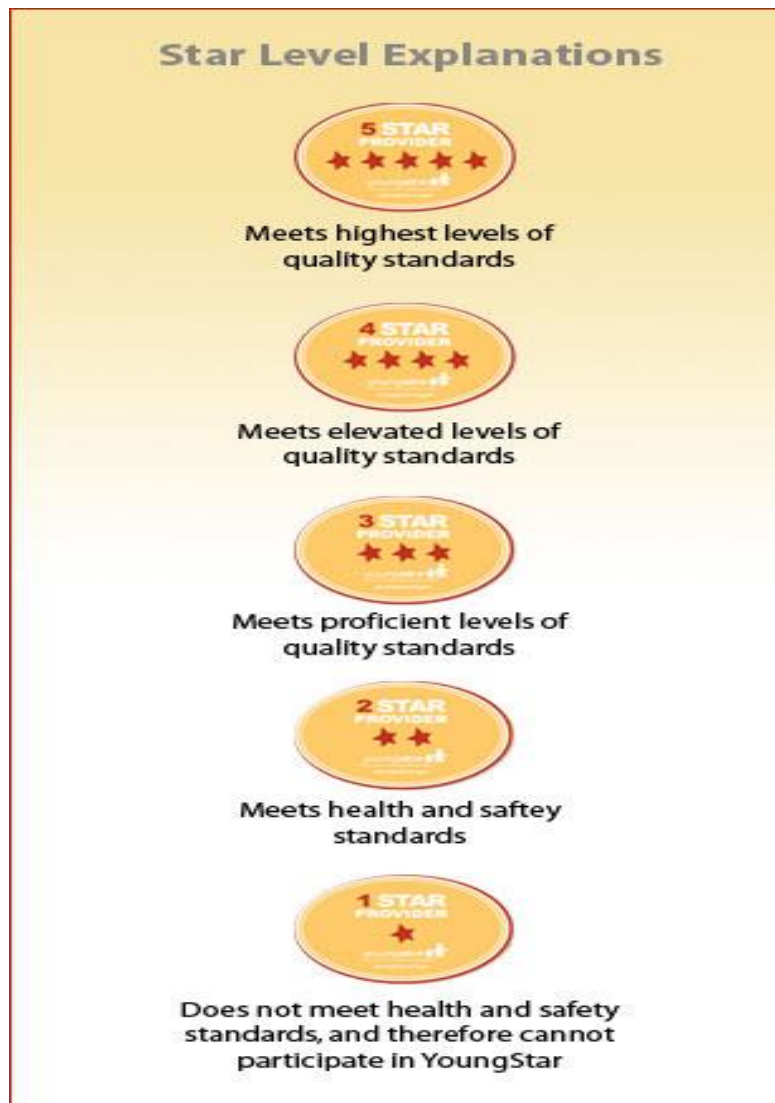
YoungStar is a program of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to improve the quality of child care for Wisconsin children. YoungStar is designed to:

- evaluate and rate the quality of care given by child care providers;
- help parents choose the best child care for their kids;
- support providers with tools and training to deliver high-quality early care; and
- set a consistent standard for child care quality.

(Source: YoungStar website, Department of Children and Families, <http://dcf.wi.gov/youngstar>)



A2. Five-Star ratings



YoungStar evaluates the quality of care given by regulated child care providers and rates them from 1 to 5 Stars, with 5 Stars being the highest rating, similar to ratings for hotels, restaurants, or other types of businesses.

A provider's Star rating is based on these criteria:

- Educational Qualifications and Training
- Learning Environment and Curriculum
- Professional and Business Practices
- Child Health and Well-Being Practices

(Source: YoungStar website, Department of Children and Families, <http://dcf.wi.gov/youngStar>)

A3. Implementation Background

In November 2010, the DCF contracted with a consortium to deliver specified YoungStar services in six regions in the state. The Consortium is made up of three agencies: Wisconsin Early Childhood Association, Supporting Families Together Association, and Celebrate Children Foundation.

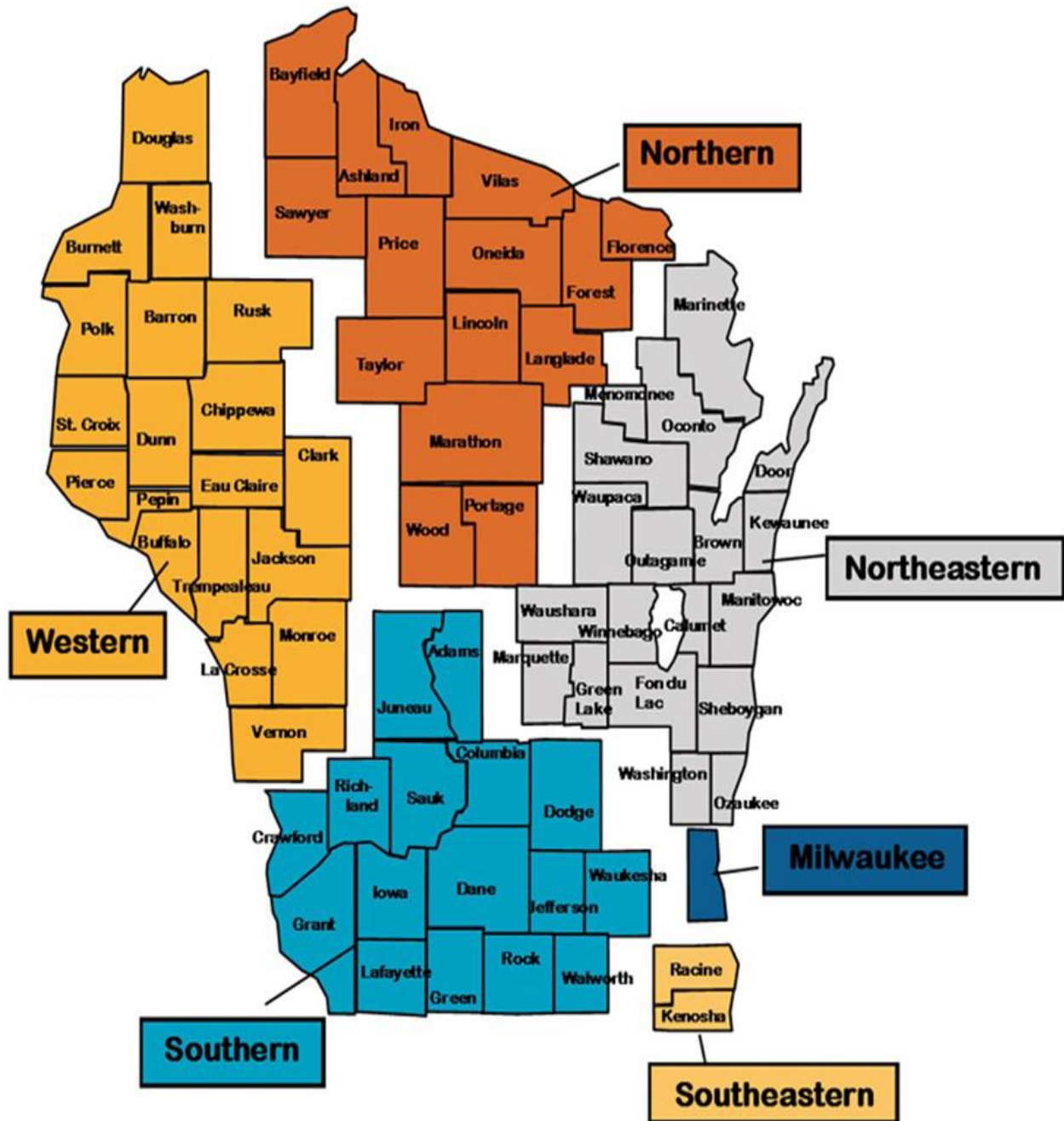
The Consortium is responsible for:

- YoungStar administration for six regional areas of the state;
- technical assistance to early care and education providers;
- providing ratings via observation and assessment;
- administering micro-grants to help programs improve; and
- public outreach and communication to provide parents with concrete and understandable information on how to choose child care programs.

The table below shows the tiered reimbursement schedule adopted by the State Legislature in the 2013-15 budget:

Tiered Reimbursement Schedule	
Program Rating	Impact on Wisconsin Shares Payments
One Star	Prohibited from receiving Wisconsin Shares payments
Two Star	Minus 5 percent, effective July 2012
Three Star	No change
Four Star	Plus 10 percent, effective July 2013
Five Star	Plus 25 percent, effective January 2013

Appendix B: YoungStar Regions



Appendix C:

More information about YoungStar and Early Childhood Issues

- ✓ Wisconsin Council on Children and Families has four progress reports on YoungStar and other early education publications:
<http://www.wccf.org>
- ✓ YoungStar information on the Department of Children and Families website:
<http://dcf.wi.gov/youngstar/>

