

# Moving Wisconsin Forward

## How YoungStar is Creating a Better Future for Children and Families

A report prepared by the YoungStar Consortium:



# Letter from the Consortium

## Shaping the Future of Wisconsin

As you read this letter, child care is literally shaping Wisconsin's future. Research shows that brain development between birth and age five lays the foundation for future growth. And, for young children whose parents work (more than 70% in Wisconsin), the majority of this time is spent in child care. The dire need for high quality early care and education is clear and experts from around the country couldn't agree more.

"Results consistently show that high quality early childhood programs help kids enter kindergarten with the skills they need to learn and that those children continue to be successful in school and ultimately become contributing members of society," writes Art Rolnick, economist and former director of research and public affairs at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. Simply put, when children start kindergarten ready to learn, they're more likely to succeed in school, in work, and in life.

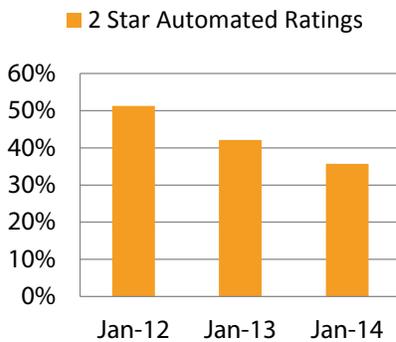
In Wisconsin, we've spent the last four years working to implement

YoungStar, a program that creates better early care and learning opportunities for young children. We've made great strides in increasing the quality of care for children. Child care providers have worked hard, taking steps to increase the quality of their programs. And the end result is that an increased number of children enrolled in Wisconsin Shares—the states most at-risk population—are receiving higher quality care than ever before.

What's most promising about the future of YoungStar is that child care providers are choosing to become more actively engaged in quality improvement. More and more programs are opting to complete onsite ratings, resulting in fewer automated 2 Star ratings (see graph on right) and more higher quality 3 to 5 Star programs.

Through quality improvement, YoungStar is increasing the professionalism of the early care and education field. Child care providers across Wisconsin have taken strides to further their education, implement stronger business practices, and provide

**The continued decrease in programs taking an automated 2 Star rating shows Wisconsin child care providers' growing commitment to increasing quality through YoungStar.**

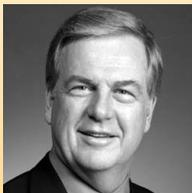


children healthier, more effective learning environments.

Join us in continued support for YoungStar and related investments in early learning. It's the right choice to ensure a better future for Wisconsin's children and families.

Sincerely,

The YoungStar Consortium



**James Leonhart**  
**President**

Celebrate Children Foundation



**Jill Hoiting**  
**Co-Director, Programs  
& External Relations**

Supporting Families Together  
Association



**Ruth Schmidt**  
**Executive Director**

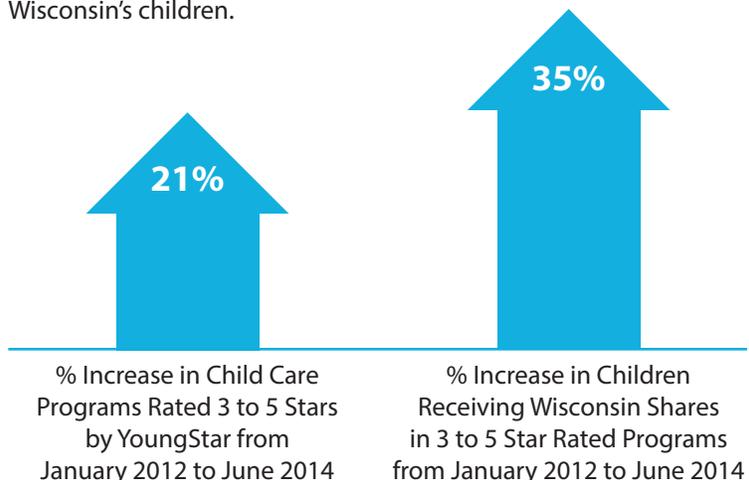
Wisconsin Early  
Childhood Association

## What is YoungStar?

YoungStar is a program of the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families created 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.
- Set a consistent standard for child care quality and improvement.
- Support providers with tools and training to deliver high quality early care.

**Is YoungStar working?** Since the first round of YoungStar reporting in 2012, both the number of programs ranked at 3 to 5 Stars and the number of children in Wisconsin Shares served by 3 to 5 Star programs have increased by over 20%. This is exactly what YoungStar was designed to do—improve the quality of care for Wisconsin’s children.



## Follow the timeline to see how YoungStar is creating a better future for children and families...

### June 2010

On June 23, 2010 the bi-partisan Joint Committee on Finance unanimously passed YoungStar, Wisconsin’s child care quality rating and improvement system.

The committee approved full funding—\$10 million—for the launch of the program, which provided child care providers with training and technical consulting, micro-grants, and onsite ratings, and parents with an online system of program ratings. Child care programs would now be rated across four categories:

1. Education and Training
2. Learning Environment and Curriculum
3. Program Business and Professional Practices
4. Children’s Health and Wellness

### November 2010

The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families contracted with a consortium to deliver specified YoungStar services across the state.

The YoungStar Consortium is made up of three organizations:

- Celebrate Children Foundation (CCF)
- Supporting Families Together Association (SFTA) - In partnership with member Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) agencies
- Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA)



Kelly Jensen, program director and administrator of Sand Box Child Care & Preschool, knew what her approach to YoungStar would be: proactivity and positivity.

“When the YoungStar staff came in to evaluate, it brought a new set of eyes to how we do things,” says Sand Box Child Care & Preschool team member, Mary Gerstberger.

With a 4 Star rating under their belt, Sand Box Child Care & Preschool aspires to continued quality improvement with specific goals for a successful future.



## July 2011

Significant work was done to provide information and technical consultation to child care providers statewide, and the YoungStar website was launched for use by parents.

A major focus in 2011 was to enroll child care programs in YoungStar and to complete initial ratings on the 5 Star scale statewide.

As of July 2011, more than 1,500 programs were rated.



“Through YoungStar, we will improve the quality of child care across the state to help our children get off to a promising start while providing parents with priceless peace of mind,” said DCF Secretary Eloise Anderson moments before unveiling a new YoungStar sign. “Everybody benefits when Wisconsin children succeed.”



## August 2011

The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families held a launch event for YoungStar’s new child care rating website at the Learning Gardens Child Development Center in Madison, a 5 Star rated child care program.

**“Everybody benefits when Wisconsin children succeed.”**

**Secretary Eloise Anderson**

**Department of Children and Families**



“Quality is our foundation at Young Child Development Center, because everything we do affects so many lives: children, families, our providers, and the community. Through YoungStar I believe that our program has improved and our staff is more unified.

Our YoungStar journey began with cautious optimism and apprehension. But once we started working with our Technical

Consultant (TC), Kathy Kadar, we realized YoungStar’s goal is just as stated; to improve the quality of our program. We compiled a YoungStar file box of all the information we needed for our TC visits, which was key to our success.

Our center now offers more outdoor and fitness-focused activities among other improvements, and we are very proud to have earned a 5 Star rating. We earned it by working together and focusing on our goal, and we work hard daily to maintain that high standard.”

**Dorothy Young**  
**Administrative Director**  
 Young Child Development Center  
 Appleton

## December 2011

To help programs improve their YoungStar ratings in 2011, Consortium partners WECA and SFTA, with their member Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies, administered:

- Micro-grants to over 1,000 programs.
- Over 1,100 T.E.A.C.H. scholarships for providers looking to enhance their education.
- Professional development counseling to over 800 child care providers.
- Technical consulting (one-on-one coaching, mentoring, and guidance) to more than 1,000 child care programs.
- Nearly 200 quality-enhancing training sessions.

## January 2012

By January 2012, more than 3,300 child care programs were rated by YoungStar.

Initially, only 19% of the programs were rated at 3 to 5 Stars. Yet, of the children served by Wisconsin Shares, 35% were in 3 to 5 Star programs.

**“Through YoungStar I believe that our program has improved and our staff is more unified.”**

**Dorothy Young**  
**Young Child Development Center, Appleton**



“Our Shepherd has been open nearly 12 years and we decided from the very start that we would strive to offer the highest quality child care possible. We are always looking for ways to improve our program and offer the very best to families.

As Director, it is important that I continue to grow and learn about what is best for the children in our

care, because that is what matters most. I believe YoungStar has that same goal. Our success at earning 5 Stars is from the dedication and hard work of our staff. We are proud of our accomplishments and thankful for the technical consultation and trainings that we received.

Whether you are a family program, group, or a faith-based center such as ours, we can all work together with the help of programs like YoungStar to improve the quality of child care statewide. And that is what is best for children.”

**Ann Potter**  
**Director**

Our Shepherd, Appleton



## July 2012

**“...we can all work together with the help of programs like YoungStar to improve the quality of child care statewide. And that is what is best for children.”**

**Ann Potter**

**Our Shepherd, Appleton**

By July 2012, the number of programs rated increased by 171% from the year before, totaling more than 4,100 programs.

At this point, YoungStar surpassed 1,000 programs rated at 3 to 5 Stars—a significant step towards moving more programs to higher levels of quality care.

To continue supporting child care programs, Technical Consultants provided nearly 9,000 visits to over 2,800 programs as of July 2012.



Sheri Bishop, owner of Precious Cargo family child care in Pulaski, worked hard to achieve 5 Stars.

"My experience with YoungStar has been outstanding," said Sheri. "If my Technical Consultant, Gina, didn't have the answer she would look into it and get back to me immediately. My friendship with Gina was truly the most rewarding experience I received from YoungStar."



Ivelisse Crespo came to the U.S. with a college degree and a passion for working with young children. She now owns a family child care business with a 5 Star rating.

According to Ivelisse, working with YoungStar opened the door to creating the successful teaching style she uses now, and to receiving her National Association for Family Child Care Accreditation.

## January 2013

By the beginning of 2013, 32% of programs were rated 3 to 5 Stars.

Now 53% of children in Wisconsin Shares are enrolled in 3 to 5 Star programs.

**"YoungStar... can be difficult. But it is worthwhile, and it is rewarding."**

**Ivelisse Crespo**

**Ivelisse Crespo Family Child Dc, Milwaukee**

## July 2013

Nearly two-thirds of children in Wisconsin Shares are enrolled in 3 to 5 Star programs, and data shows an overall increase in higher rated programs.

More than 4,500 child care programs were rated and supported through:

- Over 19,000 technical consulting visits (5,047 programs).
- Over 4,400 micro-grants totaling \$3.3 million awarded to programs to improve quality.
- Scholarships to more than 1,300 individuals from 64 counties through the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program.

## Where's YoungStar headed now?

YoungStar has made huge progress over the past four years—and it's positioned for more. The consortium is continuing to partner with YoungStar over the next few years to:

- Increase the number of children served by Wisconsin Shares who are in 3 to 5 Star rated programs.
- Provide more programs with access to quality improvement resources, including technical consulting, training, and micro-grants.
- Increase the number of programs participating in onsite ratings, which can lead to growth in 3 to 5 Star rated programs.
- Expand public and private funding, with the goal of exceeding \$1 million raised from the private sector.

## Let's continue to build a strong foundation for Wisconsin's youngest children...

### June 2014

In June 2014, the percentage of children served by Wisconsin Shares in 3 to 5 Star programs is 70%, a 10% increase from the previous year.

Now, starting YoungStar's fourth year of implementation, the percentage of 3 to 5 Star programs is 42%, a 21% increase since the beginning of 2012.

### July 2014

Since the inception of YoungStar in 2010, the Celebrate Children Foundation has raised more than \$500,000 in additional funds to supplement the state's initial investment in the program.

These funds help to sustain YoungStar's ability to provide quality improvement efforts to early childhood education programs across Wisconsin.

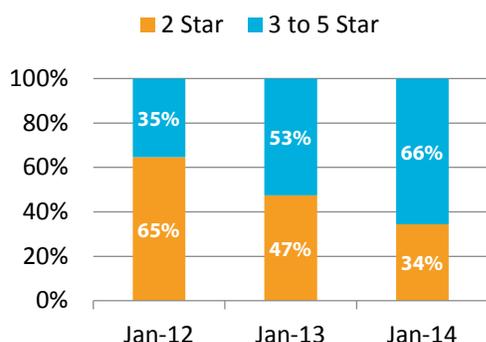
Additionally, the Celebrate Children Foundation has benefited more than 25,000 children across the state by providing financial support to child care programs for curriculum enhancements, professional development scholarships, and business practice toolkits and training.

# What the Numbers Tell Us

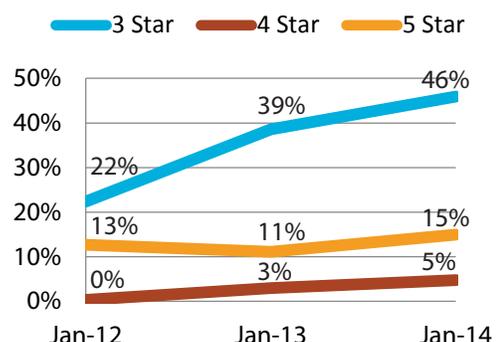
## YoungStar Under the Data Microscope

Over three years, the percentage of children in Wisconsin Shares receiving care from 3 to 5 Star programs has continued to increase, which is YoungStar's ultimate goal. The graphs below illustrate this trend.

**% of Children in Wisconsin Shares:  
2 Star vs. 3 to 5 Star Programs**

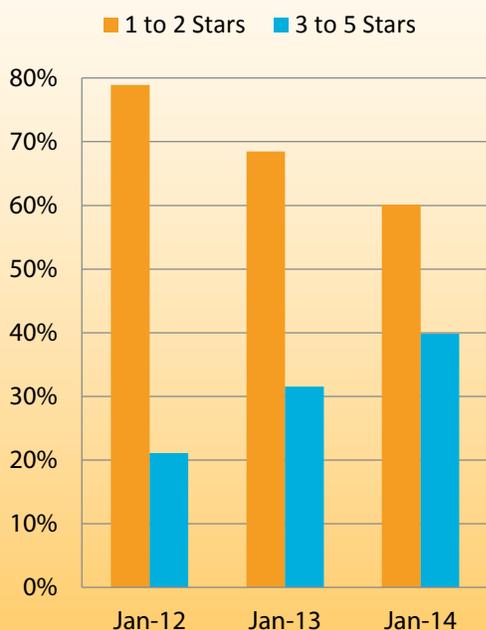


**% of Children in Wisconsin Shares  
in 3, 4, and 5 Star Programs**

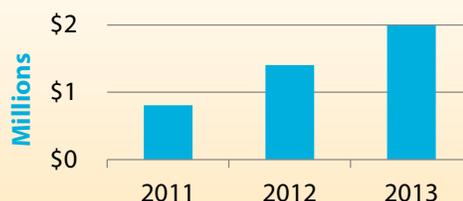


Child care programs in Wisconsin have made great strides in their commitment to high-quality care. In the bottom left graph, we see programs have continued to rise into 3 to 5 Star ratings, decreasing the amount of 1 to 2 Star ratings. This increase is a result of programs receiving technical consultation and financial support through micro-grants, among other key YoungStar quality improvement efforts, including professional development counseling and Youngstar-funded trainings.

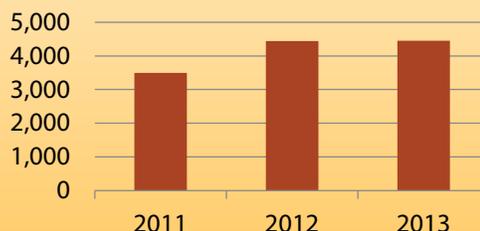
**% of Child Care Programs  
Rated 1 to 2 Star vs. 3 to 5 Star**



**\$ of Micro-grants Awarded  
Per Year to Child Care Programs**



**Annual # of Participants  
in YoungStar-Funded Trainings**



# Investing in the Future

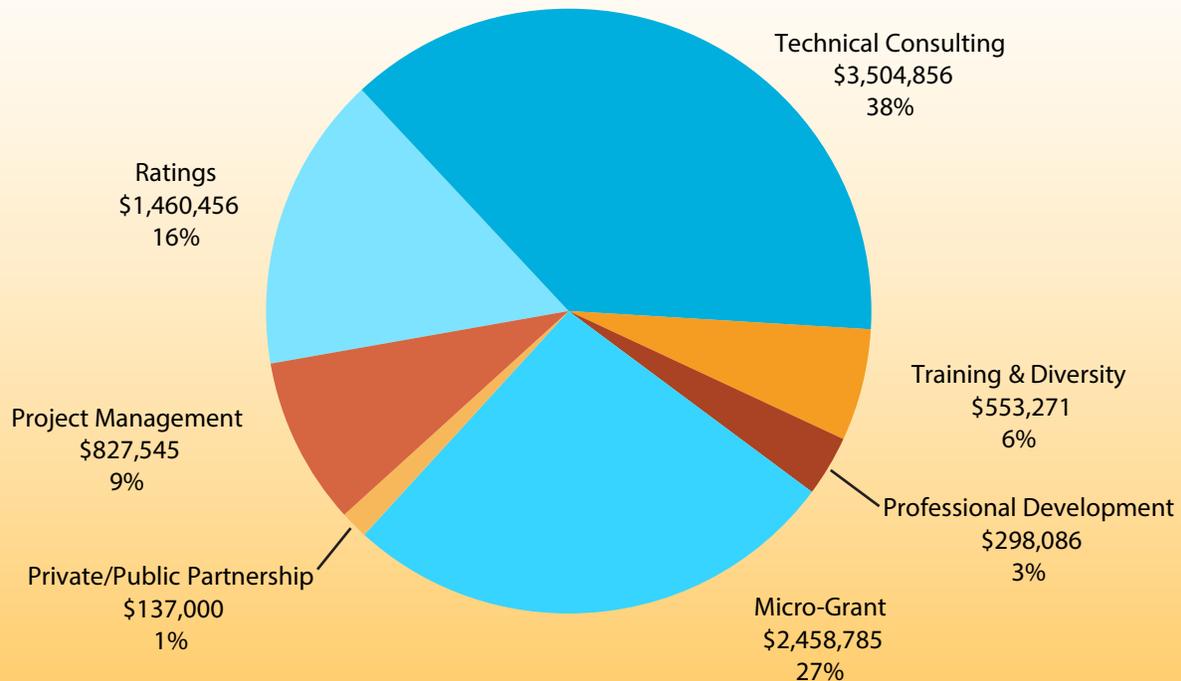
## YoungStar's Financial Statement

YoungStar's budget is allocated across the state to strategically serve Wisconsin's children and families. There are six YoungStar regions with local offices where providers can receive assistance to help them increase the quality of their programs and where parents can find information about choosing a program.

	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>By YoungStar Region</b>				
Northern	881,983	797,940	943,339	985,461
Western	942,960	1,101,090	1,213,927	1,314,534
Northeastern	1,171,193	1,374,618	1,472,875	1,600,683
Southern	1,739,701	1,848,381	1,814,228	2,330,668
Milwaukee	2,169,691	2,383,747	2,123,468	2,442,209
Southeastern	444,915	505,652	556,796	566,445
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$7,350,444</b>	<b>\$8,011,429</b>	<b>\$8,124,633</b>	<b>\$9,240,000</b>

### 2014 YoungStar Budget Allocation by Cost Center

The YoungStar budget is allocated to cost centers that focus on providing programs the support they need to improve quality of care. The majority of YoungStar funding goes to these services including technical consulting, the Micro-Grant program, professional development, and trainings.



# Consortium Partner Bios

The YoungStar Consortium is an organization made up of the Celebrate Children Foundation, Supporting Families Together Association, and the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association. Together they administer YoungStar in all six regions of Wisconsin as contracted by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families.

**The Celebrate Children Foundation (CCF)** is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization that helps communities throughout Wisconsin create the most effective early learning systems for children from birth to age five.

Through public-private partnerships, CCF's initiatives reach children at a critical time in their development and help to promote the growth of healthy, engaged citizens. The Foundation created a permanent endowment to ensure that investments will continue to be made for young children throughout the state.

CCF believes every child deserves the best start to help them thrive in school and in life. The Foundation supports statewide efforts and makes direct investments to ensure that:

- Children have safe and positive early learning environments.
- Early childhood professionals can pursue training and education.
- Parents can find needed support and resources.
- Children with disabilities are included in programs.
- Children are physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy.

**Supporting Families Together Association (SFTA)** is Wisconsin's statewide nonprofit member association for those committed to making every early childhood a great one.

Our core membership consists of:

- **Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs):** SFTA contracts with CCR&Rs to support their assistance of families, early care and education professionals, and communities, through child care and community resource referrals, trainings and technical support, and more.
- **Family Resource Centers (FRCs):** SFTA supports and promotes FRC work to strengthen Wisconsin children and families through parenting support and education.

SFTA envisions an environment in which all children have the opportunity to reach their highest potential and all adults understand their responsibilities to children.

**Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA)** is a statewide nonprofit organization for early childhood professionals and is the Wisconsin affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

WECA works to advance positive change for children by focusing on the professionals who provide child care for well over 70% of Wisconsin's children.

WECA strengthens the capacities of child care professionals through:

- Professional development for child care providers.
- Advocacy for policies and programs that support the well-being of children and the early childhood education workforce.
- Programs and services that offer early learning professionals training, educational scholarships, retention rewards, a child nutrition program, and more.
- Research on the child care workforce that identifies strengths, needs, and strategies for improvement.

With offices in Madison and Milwaukee, WECA is Wisconsin's largest membership organization for early childhood professionals.

WECA calls for greater public investment in early education and promotes excellence in the child care profession.



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Administered by **The YoungStar Consortium**—a partnership of the Celebrate Children Foundation, Supporting Families Together Association and Wisconsin Early Childhood Association. **To get started or to learn more go to <http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar>**



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**This report was published August 2014**