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Wisconsin Shared Services Network Helps Streamline Licensing Paperwork

By Paula Drew

The [Wisconsin Early Education Shared Services Network \(WEESN\)](#), launched just over two years ago, has grown rapidly to include over 135 center- and home-based child care settings across Southern Wisconsin. Encouraging child care business owners and administrators to use [Child Care Management Software \(CCMS\)](#) is one of our top priorities.

WEESN learned early on that convincing child care owners and administrators to embrace technology is a multifaceted process. Key to success is a software product that brings the greatest administrative efficiencies to program leaders—replacing myriad tasks formerly completed on paper with new electronic systems that can be easily understood and implemented. After trying various

software options, WEESN selected [Alliance CORE](#) from Early Learning Ventures (ELV) and worked with ELV to ensure that all the administrative tasks of both center and home-based child care providers could be completed efficiently and electronically.

A key challenge was Wisconsin's licensing process, which still required many time-consuming and paper-based, duplicative tasks. WEESN brought regional licensing staff to the table early on in network development to ensure that our planned Relief Squad substitute service could meet state requirements. Over time, WEESN staff worked with state licensing staff to address other barriers, such as creating online enrollment forms that complied with state child care licensing standards. In the process an important inequity was revealed: state licensing requirements still required family child care homes to use state-supplied paper forms for all licensing documentation, essentially prohibiting them from taking full advantage of the technological advances WEESN was putting in place.

The WEESN team brought this challenge to different levels of licensing staff—from individual licensers to regional managers and department heads—who initially agreed to pilot electronic documentation via use of Alliance CORE with family child care providers. While pleased with this progress, WEESN leadership continued to communicate with state department officials and were subsequently invited to speak to the Bureau of Early Care Regulation managerial team (BERC). Armed with strong real-world experience as well as support from ELV and the Director of Colorado Licensing, WEESN made a strong case for equitable usage of technology and online forms for child care licensing documentation and compliance.

The presentation was very effective. Within weeks, BERC published new licensing commentary to include equity for family child care programs. Wisconsin family child care homes are now able to use software solutions for licensing documentation and compliance.

After celebrating this important win, WEESN is already setting the stage for deeper technology links between CCMS and state systems.

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