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CONTACT: Micki Krueger, Assistant Director
micki@childcaring.org
715-841-9490

Childcaring, Inc. to help local essential businesses secure child care for employees through new Partner Up! grant program

Mosinee, Wis., Feb. 16, 2022 - The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) has awarded administration of the Partner Up! grant program to Supporting Families Together Association (SFTA) in partnership with Wisconsin's nine Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs), including Childcaring, Inc. in central Wisconsin. Partner Up! is a new statewide initiative that aims to connect essential businesses with local child care programs to secure affordable child care slots for essential workers.

“SFTA and the CCR&R network are uniquely positioned to successfully implement this program across all Wisconsin communities,” said SFTA Executive Director Matricia Patterson. “Each CCR&R has close, long-term relationships with local child care providers, businesses, families, and partners. All those relationships will be drawn on to make Partner Up! a success. These agencies have been preparing for years to initiate this type of partnership program between businesses and child care providers.”

Childcaring will support businesses and child care providers in central Wisconsin through the Partner Up! application process and provide ongoing support to program participants. Childcaring is the local child care resource and referral agency (CCR&R), with an office in Mosinee. The ten-county service delivery area includes: Adams, Clark, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Marquette, Portage, Taylor, Waushara, and Wood Counties. The mission of Childcaring is to enhance and support a quality early childhood education system by providing resource and referral services to families, child care programs, and communities, with the vision for all Central Wisconsin children to benefit from the best child care possible.

SFTA and Wisconsin's nine CCR&Rs partner to administer a number of programs statewide that support child care providers and families with young children. The agencies have worked closely with DCF for decades to improve the affordability and accessibility of child care in Wisconsin.

Through Partner Up!, participating essential businesses will be able to secure subsidized child care slots in local regulated child care programs for their employees' use. Based on costs of care determined by DCF, the employer will contribute at least 25% of the cost of care for each child care slot they reserve, and Partner Up! will contribute the remaining amount to pay the child care provider. This will allow participating essential worker parents to receive quality child care at little or no out-of-pocket cost. The Partner Up! grant program will provide \$10 million in total to support child care for Wisconsin's essential businesses. Applications will open Feb. 28 for eligible businesses interested in participating.

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“Childcaring is excited to be a part of this opportunity to work with essential businesses and child care providers, to help local families stay in the workforce,” said Childcaring Executive Director Kelly Borchardt. “The cost of child care can be a barrier for low to middle income families. Partner Up! can support those families and our economy by building partnerships between employers and child care programs.”

Child care affordability and accessibility is a significant barrier for Wisconsin’s workforce. According to Child Care Aware of America’s [Child Care Data Center](#), Wisconsin has only 57 child care slots for every 100 young children whose parents’ work. While the cost of child care varies throughout the state, the average cost is \$10,764 per child in Wisconsin. A [2020 report](#) from United Way found that 50% of Wisconsin’s labor force works in essential industries.

Partner Up! is part of Project Growth, a large-scale grant program from DCF designed to help Wisconsin businesses, communities, and early care and education partners add services, find solutions, and innovate to ensure a stable, high-quality workforce in Wisconsin. Informational webinars will be offered in late February and early March, registration coming soon. Learn more at projectgrowth.wi.gov.

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About Childcaring

Childcaring’s mission is to enhance and support a quality early childhood education system by providing resource and referral services to families, child care programs, and communities in Adams, Clark, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Marquette, Portage, Taylor, Waushara, and Wood counties. To learn more about Childcaring visit: www.childcaring.org and like us on Facebook@ChildcaringInc