Wisconsin 2025–27 State Budget: 4K Program Changes Starting in 2026–27

This document summarizes the changes to Wisconsin’s Four-Year-Old Kindergarten (4K) program as enacted in the 2025–27 state budget (2025 Wisconsin Act 15), with particular focus on provisions that take effect beginning in the 2026–27 school year.

1. Get Kids Ready Program (Starting 2026–27)

• A new community-based elementary school-readiness program administered by the Department of Children and Families (DCF), called Get Kids Ready, begins during the 2026–27 school year.
• Annual funding of $66 million supports the program.
• Payments go to licensed or certified child-care providers serving four-year-olds.
• Providers must deliver at least 437 hours of instruction annually using a curriculum aligned to the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards.
• Teachers must hold at least an associate or bachelor’s degree.
• Providers may not participate in Get Kids Ready if they also contract with a public school district to provide 4K in the same year.

2. FTE Counting and Outreach Requirement Changes

• Beginning with the 2025–26 school year, all 4K public education pupils are counted at 0.60 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) for membership, revenue limits, and aid computations.
• Outreach hours are no longer required for 4K programs.
• Districts should review their pupil-counting practices and budgeting projections to align with the new rules.

3. Related Early Care and Child-Care Investments

• Child Care Bridge Payments and Wisconsin Shares reimbursement increases are included to stabilize provider capacity.
• These supports reduce parent costs and complement Get Kids Ready by expanding access to early learning options.

4. Practical Implications for Districts

• Some families may choose community providers in Get Kids Ready instead of district 4K; providers cannot participate in both a district 4K contract and Get Kids Ready in the same year.
• The 0.60 FTE rule will directly affect district revenue-limit and aid allocations. Business offices should carefully review enrollment and financial planning in light of these changes.