



Program Overview for Child Care Providers – Northwest Lower Michigan

The TriShare Child Care Program was created to improve working parents' affordability and access to high-quality, licensed child care. The “Tri” in TriShare refers to a cost-sharing model in which an employer, an employee, and the State of Michigan share the responsibility for the cost of child care equally – each pays one-third of the cost. The TriShare program was created by legislators in collaboration with the Governor’s Office, Michigan Women’s Commission, Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA), and stakeholders across the state, including many chambers of commerce and early childhood advocates. The program is administered at the state level by the Michigan Women’s Commission with support from the Early Childhood Investment Corporation and LARA.

TriShare is an employer-based benefit. Employers who offer this program to their employees benefit by attracting and retaining the talented workforce they need to sustain and grow their businesses. Families benefit because their child care and tuition costs are reduced by two-thirds, and they can access additional resources if they need help finding care. Providers benefit because they can count on receiving full payment and more predictable revenue.

How eligibility works: In Northwest Lower Michigan, the TriShare program is administered by the United Way of Northwest Michigan (UWNWMI) in partnership with the Great Start Collaborative of Traverse Bay and 5toONE. Any employer in Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, or Wexford counties can opt into the program by signing a Memorandum of Understanding with UWNWMI. Once an employer has opted in, their employees can go to TriShare.org to submit the household information, which is used to determine eligibility.

How payment works: When an eligible employee with an existing licensed child care provider enters the TriShare program, UWNWMI contacts the provider to set up the billing and payment processes. UWNWMI becomes the payer for the total amount of care costs. These processes are designed to be simple and adaptable and do not create additional administrative burdens on the providers.

Employers set up payroll deductions for employees enrolled in TriShare. Each pay period, the employers match their employees’ contributions and forward those funds to UWNWMI. United Way uses the received state funds to add the last one-third and sends payments to providers for the total amount billed. The only change for providers is that invoices will now be forwarded to UWNWMI instead of the parents. Providers will receive payments via ACH direct deposits to their bank accounts.

Parent choice is a core value of the TriShare program. TriShare funds may be used for any licensed child care program that enrolls children ages 0 -17, including, but not limited to, traditional child care (full or part-time), tuition-based preschool programs, before and after school care, and summer programs/camps.

Employees may change child care providers at any time, and their employers will accommodate changes in payment arrangements within the terms established for the benefit.

An extra benefit: A key benefit of the program in this region is a partnership with the Great Start to Quality Northwest Resource Center to help employees seeking child care find the program that meets their needs. Resource Center staff work with licensed providers in the service area to gather the most up-to-date information on openings and facilitate connections between parents seeking care and providers. In addition, through the Great Start Collaboratives and 5toONE, employees have access to various resources and learning opportunities around parenting and child development.

A Few FAQ's

- Employees eligible for the program have household incomes between 200% and 325% of the Federal Poverty Level and must not be eligible for any other form of child care subsidy, including the Child Development and Care (CDC) subsidy.
- TriShare payments are based on enrollment in a program. If a child attends a program at least one day/month, the child is considered enrolled as long as the family intends for the child to return to care.
- If a family withdraws their child from care, TriShare payments cease on the date the child leaves the program. The provider must advise the TriShare staff when a child has been withdrawn from the program and submit a final invoice for payment within one week of the child's last date of attendance.
- If a family's employment status changes with a participating TriShare employer, their benefits end on the termination date. The family becomes responsible for 100% of their care costs with the provider.
- If a provider terminates care arrangements with a family enrolled in TriShare, TriShare payments cease on the termination date. The provider must advise TriShare staff of the termination and submit a final invoice for payment within one week of the date of termination.
- Funding for the TriShare program is part of the ongoing state budget and is guaranteed. If there are any changes to the program, you will be notified.

If you have questions, encounter a problem, or want to offer suggestions to improve the TriShare program, please get in touch with Kristina Bajtka, TriShare Coordinator, via email at kbajtka@unitedwaynwmi.org or call 231-266-5513.