



“Benefit Cliffs” for Wisconsin Public Programs

A family hits a **benefit cliff** when a small income increase makes them ineligible for public benefits they had been receiving ([UW-Madison Institute for Research on Poverty](#)). Many public benefits programs in Wisconsin have “benefits cliffs.” It is important for participants in these programs to be aware of benefits cliffs as they make financial and professional decisions that impact their income. This information sheet contains details about four commonly used Wisconsin public benefits programs as well as their eligibility limits.

Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy Program

This program helps make quality childcare more accessible and affordable by covering a portion of monthly childcare costs for qualifying families. Income eligibility limits are based on group (i.e., household) size and Wisconsin’s state median income (SMI).

Size	Monthly Income Limit--85% of SMI
2	\$4,956
3	\$6,122
4	\$7,289
5	\$8,455
Others	Visit Website

Wisconsin FoodShare Program

The FoodShare program is Wisconsin’s title for the Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The program provides food benefits to low-income families to supplement their grocery budget so they can afford nutritious food essential to health and well-being. Income eligibility limits are based on household size and federal poverty level (FPL) guidelines.

Size	Monthly Income Limit—200% of FPL
1	\$2,266
2	\$3,052
3	\$3,840
4	\$4,626
5	\$5,412
Other	Visit Website

Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP)

This WHEAP program assists eligible households with heating and electric bills. Benefits are not guaranteed to eligible households when funds are exhausted for a program year. Income eligibility limits are based on household size & Wisconsin’s state median income (SMI).

Size	Monthly Income Limit--60% of SMI
1	\$2,675.25
2	\$3,498.42
3	\$4,321.58
4	\$5,144.83
5	\$5,968.00
Others	Visit Website

Wisconsin School Nutrition’s Free & Reduced Meals

This program provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost, or free lunches to children each school day. Income eligibility limits are based on household size and federal poverty level (FPL) guidelines. Note there are different limits for free and reduced-price eligibility. The limits shown in the box below are for reduced-price eligibility.

Size	Monthly Income Limit--185% of FPL
1	\$2,248
2	\$3,041
3	\$3,833
4	\$4,625
5	\$5,418
Others	Visit Website

[BadgerCare Plus](#), is a state & federal health insurance program that helps low-income Wisconsin residents cover the costs of doctor visits, hospital stays, and prescriptions. Contact [Covering Wisconsin](#) to explore BadgerCare Plus and other health insurance programs. Other public benefits programs may be available to you. You can contact 211 at 877-847-2211 and visit <https://access.wisconsin.gov/access/> to learn more. Talk with your county’s financial educator to get started. Visit <https://counties.extension.wisc.edu/> for more information.