

Child Care WAGE\$[®] Project

An Education-Based Salary Supplement Program for Child Care Teachers, Directors and Family Child Care Providers

The Problem:

According to workforce data collected in 2003 by Child Care Services Association, North Carolina is faced with an average teacher turnover rate of 24% per year. This rate is a notable drop from the 31% turnover rate established previously and reveals the impact of programs created to address retention. Despite the progress, this rate of departure means that children still struggle with inconsistent educators in the years when the establishment of trust and the promotion of learning in a stable environment are most important. The median wage for teachers is \$8.00 an hour, and teachers cite low pay as a primary reason for leaving. According to the study, 79% percent of teachers statewide who do not see themselves in the child care field in three years indicate that better pay might entice them to stay. Lack of resources and an effort to maintain affordability for parents often make it difficult for individual child care programs to offer sufficient wages to retain educated staff and to reward or encourage teacher education. Research continues to show that teacher education and turnover rates affect children's development, so fair compensation of child care professionals is essential.

The Purpose:

Improve child care quality through salary supplements by reducing turnover and encouraging the continued education of teachers, directors and family child care providers.

The Program:

- **Rewards Attained Education**

Supplement award amounts are based on the level of education an individual has attained.

- **Rewards Consistency**

Supplements are distributed in six month increments, after the recipient has spent a continuous six month period in the same child care setting.

- **Maintains Marketplace Competition for Better Salaries**

Supplements vary based only on education attained, not on wages earned.

- **Integrates with other Education and Compensation Initiatives**

The Child Care WAGE\$[®] Project builds on and collaborates with the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood[®] Project. Whereas T.E.A.C.H. rewards child care professionals seeking more education and helps them attain it, WAGE\$ rewards those who have already attained education and helps keep them in their child care programs.

- **Provides a Direct, Graduated Supplement that is Logical and Sufficient**

Supplements recognize individual professional development efforts regardless of the work environment and address low wages without affecting center budgets, regular wages or parent fees. Amounts are sufficient to make a difference and the scale levels and awards represent logical progress in the educational system.

- **Does Not Increase Costs to Parents**

Because funding for the Child Care WAGE\$[®] Project comes from external sources and goes directly to individual child care providers, families can have the benefit of better educated, more consistent staff without having to pay more.

Selected Results: Fiscal Year 2004-2005

During fiscal year 2004/2005, Child Care Services Association administered the statewide Child Care WAGE\$® Project in 59 North Carolina counties. See below for statewide outcome data and for data from a small sample of participating counties.

Reduced Turnover

	Turnover rates established by 2003 workforce data	WAGE\$ turnover FY 2004/2005
North Carolina	24%	16%
Davidson	27%	13%
Harnett	34%	11%
Onslow	42%	12%
Region A	23%	10%

Increased Education

The following recipients submitted coursework in 2004/2005 to verify their completion of additional coursework; many moved up a level on the supplement scale and increased their awards as a result.

	Active participants that submitted coursework	Active participants that reached a new level
North Carolina	29%	18%
Craven	32%	21%
Davie	61%	55%
Henderson	52%	29%
Wayne	33%	22%

Evaluation Techniques

Several tools are used to determine the impact of the Child Care WAGE\$® Project.

- An annual written survey is sent to a sample of recipients and to a sample of directors with staff participating on the Child Care WAGE\$® Project. Ninety-nine percent (99%) of the survey respondents indicated that they are satisfied with the program and its administration.
- Child Care Services Association collects workforce data periodically. The turnover rates established in 2003 for full time teachers in the counties and the state provide useful comparisons for WAGE\$ turnover. Continuing turnover rates for Child Care WAGE\$® participants are determined through employment confirmation calls at the end of each individual's six month commitment periods and at the end of the fiscal year.
- Transcripts or grade reports submitted by participants verify educational accomplishments attained during the year.