

Child Care WAGE\$® Project

North Carolina, Fiscal Year 2011

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. Many early educators earn as little as \$8.00 per hour, and teachers cite low pay as a primary reason for leaving. According to the study, 79% 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.

In the Words of Participating Teachers, Directors & Home Providers, the Child Care WAGE\$® Project is Benefiting Children...

- * *"With my WAGE\$ checks, I was able to save up and get out of public housing and into my own apartment. ... The supplements help me provide for my family. When I'm not constantly worried about how to make ends meet, I enjoy my time with my kids more. I'm able to also do and buy things for my kids at work that I hadn't been before." — Alamance, teacher*
- * *"The WAGE\$ Project is so important because it gives caregivers a better reason to go back to school and receive a degree in the field of early childhood, and it will give the centers a better education score when they go for the stars. Everyone wants to be a 5 star center because that's the best you can be and all parents want the best care for their child(ren) but that means education. So that's why this program is so important." — Buncombe, teacher*
- * *"By doing this, I can better serve the children in my care without worries like having food or a place to live. My attention can be on them and not myself. For the early childhood community, it's like a thank you for doing a good job since sometimes caregivers are unrecognized for doing something positive." — Chatham, teacher*
- * *"Early childhood is the most important time in a child's life, yet many teachers who are caring for and teaching these young children have incomes at poverty level. The WAGE\$ bonus absolutely helps these teachers financially as well as boosts their morale and makes them feel appreciated for all their hard work." — Cleveland, director*
- * *"The supplement, to me, is an incentive for hard work, dedication and success for the effort that I put into being the best educator that I can be. Educators are encouraged to further their education so as to grow in the profession. It has helped me to stay focused and stationed in my center and adds to overall success in working with children and fellow staff. I love and enjoy what I do. If I had it to do all over again, I would have entered early childhood sooner than I did. I would like to thank all those who make the Child Care WAGE\$® Project the success that it is." — Columbus, teacher*
- * *"The program rewards me for staying with my current employer. This creates a bond and stability for the children and families that I serve. These children are the future, they need positive role models in their world." — Craven, teacher*
- * *"I think the Child Care WAGE\$® Project is very important to early childhood teachers. For most of us, this program is more important than other programs Smart Start sponsors. Without it, it would be difficult to maintain longevity with our employers. We would be jumping from center to center to find the highest pay. With the supplement, it rewards us for giving our time and loyalty to one center and directly affecting the quality of care offered to the children in NC." — Davidson, director*
- * *"Overall, it has led to a reduction in my stress level and it has enabled me to educate myself in the field of early childhood education. Both of these things help me to be a better and happier teacher, parent, and member of the community. I work very hard and love my job! The WAGE\$ program helps me to feel valued in a challenging and low-paying position." — Mitchell, teacher*
- * *"The main thing is the kids are benefiting greatly from the things I learn while getting my education. ... It has made me really want to continue my education. I think I can offer the kids ten times more than I could before. I benefit, the kids benefit and therefore the parents and the community benefit." — Randolph, home provider*

Selected Results: Fiscal Year 2011

During FY11, Child Care Services Association administered the statewide Child Care WAGE\$® Project in 68 North Carolina counties. See below for statewide outcome data and for data from a small sample of participating counties.

Reduced Turnover

WAGE\$ turnover FY11

North Carolina	12%
Alleghany	13%
Craven	10%
Hertford-Northhampton	9%
Polk-Rutherford	10%

Increased Education

The following percentages reflect active participants with education below the Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education on the WAGE\$ scale who submitted coursework in FY11; 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	41%	31%
Cumberland	47%	34%
Davidson	57%	45%
Martin-Pitt	41%	27%
Mitchell-Yancey	60%	30%

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 in the Child Care WAGE\$® Project. Ninety-nine percent (99%) of the survey respondents indicated that they are satisfied with the program and its administration.
- Turnover rates for Child Care WAGE\$® participants are determined through employment confirmation calls at the end of each individual's six-month commitment period and at the end of the fiscal year.
- Transcripts submitted by participants verify educational accomplishments attained during the year.

The Child Care WAGE\$® Project was available in the following counties during FY11.

Alamance	Davidson	Jackson	Randolph
Alleghany	Davie	Johnston	Rockingham
Avery	Duplin	Lee	Rowan
Beaufort	Durham	Lincoln	Rutherford
Brunswick	Edgecombe	Macon	Stanly
Buncombe	Forsyth	Martin	Stokes
Caldwell	Franklin	Mitchell	Surry
Catawba	Gaston	Moore	Swain
Chatham	Graham	Nash	Transylvania
Cherokee	Granville	New Hanover	Union
Chowan	Guilford	Northampton	Vance
Clay	Halifax	Onslow	Warren
Cleveland	Harnett	Orange	Watauga
Columbus	Haywood	Pender	Wayne
Craven	Hertford	Perquimans	Wilson
Cumberland	Hyde	Pitt	Yadkin
Dare	Iredell	Polk	Yancey

Child Care WAGE\$® Project, FY11



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