

2019-2020 AWARD\$ ANNUAL REPORT

Infant-Toddler Educator
AWARD\$®



INFANT-TODDLER
EDUCATOR AWARD\$®

SUPPORT IN A TIME OF CRISIS





ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY

SUPPORT IN A TIME OF CRISIS

Professionals who serve our youngest, most vulnerable children – when brain development is at a peak – are key to ensuring successful growth and development. Yet, they earn the least. In North Carolina, infant-toddler teaching staff earn \$11.00 per hour on average, compared to \$12.45 per hour for those who teach children who are 3-5 years old.*

The particularly low salaries for infant-toddler educators are a long-standing issue for the early childhood field, but they have been spotlighted during the COVID-19 crisis. Child care programs stepped up to support other essential workers and their families during the pandemic, despite risks to their own health. They continue to help parents to return to work so the economy can rebound. With society's growing awareness of early childhood's critical importance, the child care workforce's low compensation has gained national attention and calls for change.

*Child Care Services Association. 2019 North Carolina Child Care Workforce Study. Released October 2020.



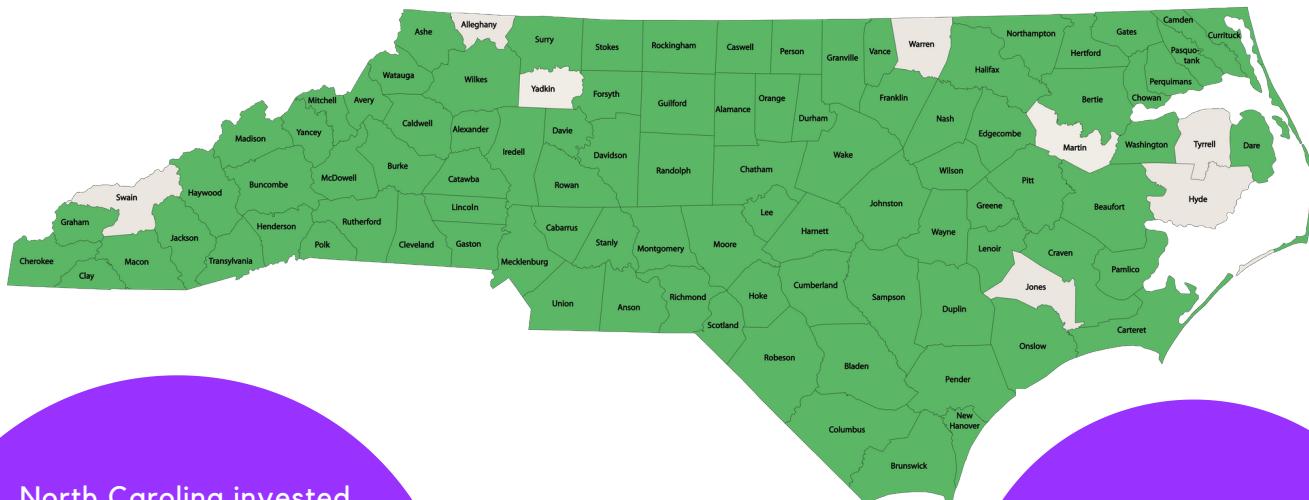
WHAT IS AWARD\$?

Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® helps address this issue by providing education-based salary supplements to well-educated teachers and family child care providers working full-time with children birth through age two. The program, available statewide, is funded by the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) and is administered by Child Care Services Association (CCSA).

To be eligible for AWARD\$, applicants must:

- work at least 35 hours per week with infants, ones or twos
- earn at or below \$19 per hour
- work in a licensed child care center or home with at least three stars
- have at least an associate degree with at least 24 birth to five focused semester hours

IN FY20, AWARD\$ HAD RECIPIENTS IN 92 COUNTIES



North Carolina invested
\$2.6M+

in AWARD\$ salary
supplements for infant-toddler
teachers and family child care
providers

1,353
FY20 supplement
recipients

\$1,271

average six month supplement
(approximately \$1.22 more when
viewed as an hourly rate
increase)

29%

of FY20 AWARD\$
participants had a four-year
or graduate degree

97%

of survey respondents
said AWARD\$ encourages
them to stay with
their current
child care programs

Annual
supplements range from

\$2,000-\$4,000



"Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® is important to us because it helps lighten the financial burden we all face, which in turn helps us to feel less stressed and more appreciated." (Participating teacher, Burke County)

"AWARD\$ helps ease the stress. When you're not stressed, you focus and that always benefits your class." (Participating teacher, Cumberland County)

"I think Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® is important because it has helped me do things that I never would've been able to do with just my salary alone. It has meant the world because it eases my stress and helps me provide the best possible care that I can for the children." (Participating teacher, Moore County)

"Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® is very important. I feel early childhood teachers are underpaid, underappreciated, and many don't stay or even choose a career in the field for this reason. Personally, AWARD\$ has helped ease a lot of financial stress in my life. Since my first supplement, not having that stress has allowed me to do what I love and come to work every day with a positive attitude. AWARD\$ make me feel that I am valued and my hard work is not going unrecognized." (Participating teacher, New Hanover County)

AWARD\$ SUPPLEMENTS HELP EASE FINANCIAL STRESS, ALLOWING RECIPIENTS TO FOCUS MORE ON THE CHILDREN IN THEIR CARE

99%

of the AWARD\$ participant survey respondents said AWARD\$ helps ease financial stress

97%

of the AWARD\$ participant survey respondents said AWARD\$ helps them feel more satisfied with their jobs

AWARD\$ RECOGNIZES THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND COMMITMENT OF INFANT-TODDLER EDUCATORS THROUGH ENHANCED COMPENSATION

98%

of the AWARD\$ participant survey respondents indicated that receiving the AWARD\$ supplement makes them feel more appreciated and recognized

"Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® makes you feel worthy. It has made me more motivated to continue to work with small children, and to know that what I do is noticed." (Participating teacher, Carteret County)

"I feel like a teacher instead of a babysitter, and more like a professional." (Participating teacher, Duplin County)

"The supplement has shown recognition to the teachers of infants and toddlers. That they are valued, needed, and important to the future of the children they teach." (Participating director, McDowell County)

"Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® is important to recognize that quality educators are required for such an important stage in the children's development. AWARD\$ is recognizing and valuing our work. I thank you for that." (Participating family child care provider, Wake County)



PARTICIPANT HIGHLIGHT: TONYA MARTIN

Appreciating **AWARD\$**

"Working as an early childhood educator, I make very little money. I give my all to the children in my care. Yet, I can barely pay my mortgage and keep the lights on in my house. For dinner most nights, I eat popcorn or ramen noodles because I literally can't afford anything else," said Tonya Martin.

As an infant-toddler educator, Tonya struggles with critically low pay and she works an additional part-time job to survive. It is a constant and ongoing challenge, but her passion for young children drives her.

She said, "We don't go into this field thinking we are going to become wealthy, but you do expect to be able to take care of your basic needs and a lot of times that is impossible. You are living paycheck to paycheck, which can be very depressing. I have a bachelor's degree and I'm working two jobs and I can barely make ends meet. I cut back on this and get rid of that, and I'm barely scratching the surface.

"When I think about my finances, it is disheartening. You love the kids and families, being able to be a part of their learning process, but on the other side, you are coming home not knowing if your lights will be on, not knowing if you can make rent this month. You are taking care of a classroom full of little ones, but you cannot take care of your own needs as a working person."



Tonya is very grateful to receive salary supplements from Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$®, and was one of the first participants paid when the program began.

She said, "When AWARD\$ came, it was just a godsend. AWARD\$ has absolutely eased some of this financial stress. I get chills just thinking about it. It has been so incredibly helpful. When I get to the edge and think I'm going to quit and just go work for Target, that boost in income is enough to make me step back. I feel like I can keep doing what I love and stay in the field."

"Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® gives an extra incentive to stay with your present place of employment. Keeping the same teachers or staff at a child care center helps with the stability of the children and workforce! It makes you feel more appreciated and that you are being noticed for all the things that you do for the children and their parents! Thank you for providing this for us early educators!" (Participating teacher, Beaufort County)

"Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® is very important to me, it helps to ease my financial situation. Child care centers benefit because it helps them to retain staff for longer periods of time. The children benefit because they continue to have the same teachers, which helps them to feel comfortable, to bond with them, and feel secure, happy and safe. I love knowing that I can count on extra financial support." (Participating teacher, Buncombe County)

"AWARD\$ has helped me to want to further my education. It also encourages me to tell other people about the program and the perks from continuing education in the early childhood field." (Participating teacher, Catawba County)

"Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$® encourages me to continue my education. It helps me gain the knowledge I need to be a better teacher." (Participating teacher, Mecklenburg County)

WITH INCREASED COMPENSATION, DEGREED AWARD\$ RECIPIENTS CAN BETTER AFFORD TO STAY IN THE INFANT-TODDLER CLASSROOM, AND MANY ARE ENCOURAGED TO CONTINUE THEIR COURSEWORK



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**NC DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**
Division of Child Development
and Early Education