

What is the Child Care WAGE\$[®] Program?

The Child Care WAGE\$[®] Program provides education-based salary supplements to low-paid teachers, directors and family child care educators working with children ages birth to 5 years old. The program is designed to increase retention, education and compensation. The Child Care WAGE\$[®] Program is a funding collaboration between your local Smart Start partnership and the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE).

Who is eligible to receive a salary supplement?

Any child care professional earning at or below the income cap selected by the funding partnership may be eligible to participate. A partnership may choose one of three income cap options: \$15, \$17 or \$19/hour. Bonuses received from the employer will be included in calculations to determine hourly rate. COVID-19 bonuses are not counted. The supplement recipient must work with children ages birth to 5 at least 10 hours per week in a licensed child care program in a participating county and must have a level of education appearing on the Child Care WAGE\$[®] supplement scale (see reverse for eligible education levels). Partnerships may also elect not to fund administrative time, level two education or time worked in a site with fewer than three or four stars.

How much will I receive?

The awards vary based on the tier selected by the funding partnership. Local Smart Start partnerships choose one of three different supplement models (tiers) and awards are issued accordingly. The scales show annual award amounts for full-time eligibility. Awards are issued in two six-month installments, each after the participant completes an assigned six-month commitment period in the same child care program. The amount received will reflect the schedule worked during the six-month period; supplements for part-time employees are prorated. Funding partnerships may choose to apply a percentage cut to supplements due to budget constraints or may increase awards if funding is available.

What do I have to do to participate in the Child Care WAGE\$[®] Program?

Interested child care professionals must complete an application and provide verification of (1) current employment in a participating child care program, (2) current wages and (3) education earned, as verified by an official transcript or through Early Educator Certification (EEC). If an official transcript has been assessed by EEC, that assessment may be used to determine the WAGE\$ award. Official transcripts submitted to Infant-Toddler Educator AWARD\$[®] may also be used.

How are supplements received?

Checks are issued following commitment period completion to eligible participants who have met the requirements. Commitment periods run from mid-month to mid-month and are established by CCSA for each individual participant using application date, start date and education documentation. The installment is based on half of the annual award amount and reflects the schedule worked during the six-month period. All payments are contingent upon funding availability. Program staff must verify that participants have worked in their child care programs during the preceding six months before checks can be issued. Payments are mailed after CCSA has received the necessary funding from DCDEE. Once approved for an award, participants who remain in the same child care program and obtain the necessary education (if applicable) do not need to reapply in order to receive future installments.

How can I increase the level of the supplement I receive?

Participants in the Child Care WAGE\$[®] Program may increase their supplement amounts by gaining more education. The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood[®] Program offers scholarships to child care professionals who want to earn course credits toward specific early childhood credentials or degrees. Contact the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood[®] Program at CCSA (919-967-3272) for more information. Participants are encouraged to send WAGE\$ an updated official transcript after the completion of any formal coursework so staff can determine the highest possible award. All educational levels noted with an asterisk on the scale are temporary. Participants must advance to a higher level as noted on the scale in order to remain eligible. Deadlines are shared with individual participants as applicable.

Do I have to pay taxes on the supplement I receive?

The salary supplement is income. Participants will receive an IRS-1099 form at the end of the year if they received \$600 or more from CCSA during the calendar year. Recipients are responsible for reporting and paying any personal income taxes due.

Will I receive a supplement if I move to another child care program?

Checks are issued to participants after each six-month period in the same child care program. If a participant moves to another licensed child care program in a participating county within the six months, then the commitment period must be reset based on reapplication and the employment date at the new site. This policy is designed to encourage more stability for the children in care.

If I work in a child care center, what is the center's responsibility?

A child care center must agree to provide verification of an applicant's employment status and wages and agree not to use participation in the program to offset normal wage increases. The center is not responsible for providing the salary supplement should funding no longer be available.