

What is the Child Care WAGES[®] program?

The Child Care WAGES[®] 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 WAGES[®] program is a collaboration between your local Smart Start partnership, the North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC) and the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE). It is administered by Early Years.

Who is eligible to receive a salary supplement?

Teachers, directors and family child care educators earning at or below the income cap selected by the funding partnership may be eligible to participate. Partnerships may choose one of three income cap options: \$19, \$23 or \$25/hour. 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 WAGES[®] supplement scale. Partnerships may also elect not to fund administrative time, level two education or time worked in a site with fewer than three 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 WAGES[®] program?

Interested early educators must complete an application and provide verification of current employment in a participating child care program, current wages and education earned, as verified by an official transcript or with an active CDA Credential issued by the Council for Professional Recognition.

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.

How are supplements received?

Payments 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 Early Years 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 payments can be issued. Payments are issued after Early Years has received the necessary funding from NCPC. 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?

Participants in the WAGES[®] program may increase their supplement amounts by gaining more education. The TEACH Early Childhood[®] program offers scholarships to child care professionals who want to earn course credits toward specific early childhood credentials or degrees. Contact the TEACH Early Childhood[®] program at Early Years (919-967-3272) for more information. Participants are encouraged to send WAGES[®] 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 be mailed an IRS-1099 form at the end of January as needed in accordance with IRS guidelines. 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?

Payments 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.