



Division of Child Care & Early Childhood Education
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MEMORANDUM

TO: All USDA Food Program Participants
FROM: DCCECE/HNU
DATE: AUGUST 16, 2022
SUBJECT: STEP UP TO WAGE\$ INFORMATIONAL FLYER

Step Up to WAGE\$ Program



The Step Up to WAGE\$ Arkansas Program is funded with the American Rescue Plan Act Dollars and is available through the Arkansas Department of Human Services: Division of Childcare and Early Childhood Education (DCCECE).

The attached memo was provided by the Arkansas Early Childhood Association and contains additional information on available funding.

Please keep this memo on file for quick and easy reference. A copy is also available on the resource library under Mass Alerts 2022 If you have any questions regarding this memo, please contact your Application Coordinator at: 501-682-8869.



Step Up to WAGE\$ Arkansas Fact Sheet

What is Step Up to WAGE\$?

Step Up to WAGE\$ Arkansas provides education-based salary supplements to low-paid teaching staff, 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 program is funded with American Rescue Plan Act dollars made available by the Arkansas Department of Human Services: DCCECE. Payments will depend upon available funding and the recipient's employer is not responsible for providing the supplement should funds no longer be available. **These funds are time limited.**

Who is eligible to receive a salary supplement?

A child care professional (teaching staff, director, family child care provider) earning at or below \$23 per hour who is working with children birth to 5 at least 10 hours per week in a licensed child care setting may be eligible to participate. The supplement recipient must also have a level of education appearing on the Step Up to WAGE\$ Arkansas supplement scale.

How much will I receive?

The supplements vary based on the education earned by the participant and the eligible hours worked. The supplement scale shows 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 average hours worked during the six-month period; supplements for part-time employees are prorated.

What do I have to do to participate in Step Up to WAGE\$ Arkansas?

Interested child care professionals must complete an application and provide verification of (1) current employment in a licensed child care program, (2) current wages, and (3) education earned, as verified by an official transcript or National CDA certificate. See the program application for a checklist of documentation needed.

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 for each individual participant using the application date, start date, and education documentation. The installment is based on half of the annual award amount and reflects the average hours 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. Once approved for an award, participants who remain in the same child care program do not need to reapply to receive future installments.

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

Step Up to WAGE\$ Arkansas participants may increase their supplement amounts by gaining more education. The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Program offers scholarships to childcare 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 Arkansas Early Childhood Association (501-680-1930) for more information. Participants are encouraged to send Step Up to WAGE\$ Arkansas an updated official transcript after the completion of any formal coursework so staff can determine the highest possible award.

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

The salary supplement is considered income. Participants will receive an IRS-1099 form at the end of the year if they received \$600 or more from AECA/Step Up to WAGE\$ Arkansas 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 childcare 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 within the six-month commitment period, then the commitment period must be reset based on eligible 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 childcare 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.

Step Up to WAGE\$ Arkansas Stipend Scale

Level	Education Required	Annual Supplement
8	Bachelor's, Master's or Doctorate with at least 18 ECE/CD credits	\$6,000
7	Bachelor's, Master's or Doctorate with at least 12 ECE/CD credits OR 90 semester hours towards a Bachelor's degree with at least 18 ECE/CD credits	\$5,000
6	Associate degree with at least 24 ECE/CD credits	\$4,000
5	Associate degree with at least 18 ECE/CD credits OR 57 GE credits with at least 24 ECE/CD credits OR Bachelor's, Master's or Doctorate with less than 12 ECE/CD credits	\$3,000
4	Associate degree with at least 12 ECE/CD credits OR 45 GE credits with at least 18 ECE/CD credits	\$2,000
3	36 GE credits with at least 12 ECE/CD credits OR Associate degree with less than 12 ECE/CD credits OR 21 ECE/CD credits	\$1,500
2	12 ECE/CD credits	\$750
1	National CDA	\$500

GE: General Education

ECE: Early Childhood Education

CD: Child Development

CDA: Child Development Associate

Step up to WAGE\$ Arkansas is a demonstration program of Child Care Services Association and is based on the Child Care WAGE\$ Program.

Arkansas Early Childhood Association is the administrative home of Step Up to WAGE\$ Arkansas and T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Arkansas.

AECA/Step Up to WAGE\$ Arkansas

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