



# Step Up to WAGES Arkansas Fact Sheet

## What is Step Up to WAGES?

Step Up to WAGES 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 currently funded with American Rescue Plan Act dollars made available by the Arkansas Department of Education Office of Early Childhood. Payments are dependent upon availability of funding and the recipient's employer is not responsible for providing the supplement should funds no longer be available to operate the program. **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 \$20 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 WAGES 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 WAGES 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 WAGES 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 WAGES 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?

Step Up to WAGES stipends are wage supplements and considered income. No taxes are withheld, and recipients are responsible for all taxes owed. Recipients must report and pay any required taxes. Anyone receiving more than \$600 during the year will receive a 1099-NEC (non-employee compensation) form from AECA in January to file with annual tax returns. This does not constitute tax advice. Recipients should consult with their tax preparer if they have questions.

## 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	Required Education/Credentials	Annual Supplement
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor's Degree with at least 18 credit hours in ECE/CD credits</li> </ul>	<b>\$3,600</b>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor's Degree with at least 12 credit hours in ECE/CD</li> <li>90 credit hours towards a Bachelor's degree with at least 18 in ECE/CD</li> </ul>	<b>\$3,000</b>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Associate Degree with at least 24 credit hours in ECE/CD</li> </ul>	<b>\$2,400</b>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor's Degree</li> <li>Associate Degree with at least 18 credit hours in ECE/CD</li> <li>57 Gen Ed credit hours with at least 24 in ECE/CD</li> </ul>	<b>\$1,800</b>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Associate Degree with at least 12 credit hours in ECE/CD</li> <li>45 Gen Ed credit hours with at least 18 in ECE/CD</li> </ul>	<b>\$1,200</b>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Associate Degree</li> <li>36 Gen Ed credit hours with at least 12 in ECE/CD</li> <li>21 ECE/CD credits</li> </ul>	<b>\$900</b>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12 ECE/CD credits</li> </ul>	<b>\$450</b>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National CDA (not expired)</li> </ul>	<b>\$300</b>

**GenEd: 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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