

Participant Handbook

Effective 2/17/26



— ARKANSAS —

A Program of Arkansas Early Childhood Association

Arkansas Early Childhood Association
P. O. Box 4291 | Fayetteville, AR 72702
501.680.1930
teach@arkansasearlychildhood.org



www.arkansasearlychildhood.org

Welcome and Introduction

Dear TEACH Scholars and Sponsors,

Congratulations on choosing the **TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS** scholarship program to support your educational journey. You are taking an important step toward advancing your career, and we at the **Arkansas Early Childhood Association** are proud to support your commitment to professional growth.

Educated and knowledgeable early childhood educators are essential to high-quality programs that positively impact children and families. If you are an employer of a TEACH scholar, your investment in their education reflects a strong commitment to the future quality of your program and the well-being of the children you serve.

This handbook is designed to help both scholars and employer-sponsors understand the TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS program. A clear understanding of the program will help you make the most of your scholarship experience. Please take time to read it carefully.

Each scholar will be assigned a **TEACH Scholarship Counselor** who will walk you through the scholarship details and answer any questions before your contract is signed. Throughout your scholarship, your Scholarship Counselor will be a valuable resource and guide. We encourage both scholars and sponsors to reach out with any questions or concerns.

Our team is here to support you every step of the way. Together, we are investing in the future of Arkansas's children.

Table of Contents

I – What is TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS	4
A. History	4
B. What We Believe	4
C. Who Funds TEACH	4
D. Who Manages TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS	5
E. The TEACH Scholarship Counselor	5
F. The Child Care Employer	5
G. Confidentiality	6
H. Definitions and Clarifications	6
II – Who is Eligible for the TEACH Scholarship	8
A. Applicants	8
B. Employers	9
C. Professionalism	10
D. Integrity in All Representations	10
III – Applying for a TEACH Scholarship	12
A. How to Apply	12
B. Waitlist	13
C. Deferrals	14
IV – The TEACH Scholarship Contract	15
A. Contract Terms	15
B. Incomplete Contracts	15
C. Changes in College Program	15
D. Scholarship Renewal	16
E. Contract Extensions/Graduation	16
F. Reporting Changes	16
V – Enrolling in College	17
A. Selecting a College Program	17
B. Other Financial Aid	18
C. General Education Requirements	19
D. Negotiated Tuition Rates	19
VI – Getting Started with TEACH	20
A. Your First Semester	20
B. Semester Checklist	21
C. Renewing Your TEACH Contract	22
D. If a Scholar Exceeds Approved Credit Hours	23

VII – Release Time	25
VIII – Academics	27
A. Grades and Minimum Requirements	27
B. Repeating a Course	28
C. Adding, Dropping, or Withdrawing from a Class	28
D. Field Experience/Practicum Course	29
E. CDA Credential Procedures	29
F. Praxis Tests	29
IX – Finances	30
A. Managing Responsibilities	30
B. Payment of Tuition and Fees	30
C. Books	31
D. Travel/Access Stipend	32
E. Incentive Payments	32
F. Other Fees	32
G. Shortened Terms	33
H. Taxable Income and Reporting	33
I. Claim Deadlines	34
J. Verification Holds on Payments	34
X – Commitment	35
A. Voluntary Quit	35
B. Taking a Semester Off	36
C. Layoffs and Terminations	37
D. Employer Changes	37
XI – Due Process and Appeals	38
A. What Decisions are Eligible for Appeal?	38
B. Requesting an Appeal	38
C. Appeal Review Panel	39
D. Decision and Notification	39
E. Reinstatement	39
XI – Telling Your Story	40
XII – Contact Information	40

I

What is TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS

A. History

The TEACH (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Early Childhood® scholarship was launched in 1990 by the Child Care Services Association—now known as Early Years—in North Carolina. Its mission was to make higher education more accessible and affordable for early childhood educators working with children from birth to age five. The program also aimed to reduce staff turnover and improve compensation by linking education with career advancement.

Since its inception, TEACH has gained national recognition for its innovative approach. Today, TEACH Early Childhood® scholarships are available in many states across the country. Each participating state operates its own version of the program under a license from the TEACH National Center. In Arkansas, we offer a variety of scholarship models to support the early care and education workforce. These models help individuals pursue early childhood certificates, degrees, teacher licensure, or coursework needed to meet program staff qualification requirements.

B. What We Believe

TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS holds to a set of core beliefs that define who we are, what we do and why we do it.

- ▶ Young children need **educated, effective teachers** and **consistent, nurturing relationships**.
- ▶ Families depend on a **stable early childhood workforce** to support their ability to work and thrive.
- ▶ Early childhood professionals need access to an **affordable, high-quality college education** to gain the knowledge and skills required for their roles.
- ▶ That education must carry **meaningful credentials** that support career advancement, increased earnings, and long-term retention in the field.

C. Who Funds TEACH

Each state operating a TEACH scholarship program is responsible for securing its own funding. In Arkansas, our goal is to build a **diverse and sustainable funding base** to support the long-term success of the program.

Currently, **TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS** is funded through a combination of federal child care funds and private foundation support.

D. Who Manages TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS

TEACH is operated in Arkansas under a license from the TEACH Early Childhood® National Center at Early Years in North Carolina. Branding will follow National Center’s usage guidance (logo/style). TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS is administered by the Arkansas Early Childhood Association (AECA). AECA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to representing the Arkansas early childhood workforce and serving their needs. AECA has worked for more than 60 years to promote quality care and education for the children of Arkansas including an annual conference offering the highest quality professional development for our teachers working with young children.

E. The TEACH Scholarship Counselor

Having access to a TEACH scholarship counselor is one of the most valuable benefits of the TEACH Early Childhood® scholarship. Because our counselors have worked in early childhood environments themselves, they understand the real-world challenges and are here to support you every step of the way.

TEACH counselors are here not only to guide you through the scholarship process and communicate with colleges, but also to support you personally and professionally. They listen, help you set goals, connect you with resources, and offer encouragement when you need it most. Whether you have questions about your scholarship, need help selecting courses, or are navigating the balance between work, school, and life—your counselor is your partner in this journey. Staying in regular contact with your TEACH counselor helps ensure you stay on track and feel supported every step of the way.

F. The Child Care Employer

The TEACH Early Childhood® scholarship is a partnership—not just with the recipient, but also with their child care employer. Employers play a vital role in sponsoring and supporting scholars throughout their educational journey. Their financial and moral support is a key factor in the scholar’s success.

As part of this partnership, employers are expected to:

- ▶ Contribute a percentage of tuition and book costs (varies by contract).

- ▶ Provide release time (reimbursed by TEACH), based on the number of credits taken.
- ▶ Offer an incentive—either a stipend or a permanent wage increase—after the scholar successfully completes the annual contract and service commitment.
- ▶ Collaborate with the scholar on a manageable course load to support success both at work and in school.
- ▶ Help connect scholars to community resources to support their needs.
- ▶ Promptly report any changes in scholar’s employment status.

G. Confidentiality

- ▶ **TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS** is committed to protecting the confidentiality of all personal information collected through the scholarship program. This includes, but is not limited to, employment information and any PII. All data is securely stored on databases and cloud drives with password protection. We will never sell your personal information.
- ▶ By accepting the TEACH scholarship, scholars grant permission for us to share demographic and scholarship-related information with program funders and partners, as required for reporting purposes. This data is always reported in aggregate form—no individually identifiable information will be shared.
- ▶ To facilitate communication with colleges and ensure scholarship support, TEACH scholars are required to list **TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS** as an authorized party on their FERPA release form. This allows college officials to share necessary academic & enrollment information with TEACH in compliance with federal privacy laws. TEACH safeguards PII consistent with 2 CFR 200.303(e) and applicable state laws.

H. Definitions and Clarifications

- ▶ **Applicant / Scholar / Recipient**
These terms refer to the early childhood professional who is attending college to pursue a degree in early childhood education with support from the TEACH Early Childhood® Scholarship.
- ▶ **Sponsor / Employer / Program**
These terms refer to the child care center or family child care home

where the TEACH scholar is employed for at least 30 hours per week. The employer plays a key role in supporting the scholar's success.

▶ **FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)**

A required form for students seeking financial aid for college. It collects financial information to determine eligibility for federal grants, loans, and work-study programs. Deadlines apply, so timely submission is important.

▶ **FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act)**

A federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. It applies to all schools receiving U.S. Department of Education funds. Students must give written consent (e.g., via a FERPA release form) to allow colleges to share information with third parties like TEACH.

▶ **Passing Grades**

Each college or university sets its own minimum grade requirements for course credit. It is the scholar's responsibility to know and meet these standards. Only credit officially awarded by the institution counts toward fulfilling TEACH contract requirements.

▶ **PDR (Professional Development Registry)**

Arkansas's system for tracking professional development in early childhood education. All professionals working in licensed programs must be PDR members. Each member receives a unique ID number used to track training and access transcripts and resources online.

▶ **Submitting documents**

Whenever this handbook refers to submitting a form, document or application, **TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS** staff will always provide instructions on whether to use the online portal (which requires creation of an account) OR through email. If you need clarification, please contact the TEACH office.

II

Who is Eligible for the TEACH Scholarship

A. Applicants

To qualify for a TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS scholarship, applicants must:

- ▶ Reside within the boundaries of Arkansas
- ▶ Have a GED or a diploma from a regionally accredited high school.
- ▶ Work at least **30 hours per week** in an Arkansas-licensed child care center or family child care home serving children from birth to age five.
- ▶ Be admitted to an approved Arkansas college to pursue coursework, a degree, certificate, or licensure in early childhood education.
- ▶ Contribute financially toward tuition, fees, and books, and remain current on all co-pays and payment plans.
- ▶ Have the support and sponsorship of their child care employer.
- ▶ Meet the maximum hourly wage requirement, if applicable.
- ▶ Submit additional required documentation after application is received.

Residency: All TEACH scholars—as well as graduates continuing to receive any financial incentive—must be current residents of the State of Arkansas. Because TEACH is supported in part with federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) resources, TEACH is required to verify Arkansas residency using independent, third-party documentation.

Acceptable documentation (submitted with an application or upon request) includes the following:

Primary Proof of Residency (must be unexpired):

1. A valid Arkansas driver’s license or Arkansas state identification card showing the scholar’s residential address
2. Arkansas vehicle registration

Secondary Proof of Residency (must be dated within the last 60 days):

1. Residential lease or mortgage statement
2. Utility bill (electric, water, gas, internet) showing Arkansas service address
3. Bank or credit union statement (financial info/account numbers may be redacted)
4. Official correspondence from a government agency

Note: While paystubs may document rate of pay and continued employment, they cannot be used to verify residency. Documents produced by an employer who is also a family member cannot be accepted as proof of residency, as they are not independent sources.

Ongoing Verification:

TEACH may request updated proof of Arkansas residency at any time if information in the participant’s file is inconsistent, if mail is returned, if contact information changes, or as required for CCDF or funder compliance. Failure to provide requested documentation may result in delays, suspension, or termination of the scholarship.

Length of Employment: Prior to a scholarship contract being issued, center-based applicants must document at least **90 days of employment** with their sponsoring employer. Family child care applicants must show the licensed family child care program has been operating in good standing for at least **six months**.

B. Employers

To sponsor a TEACH Early Childhood® scholarship, a child care program must:

- ▶ Maintain a **regular license** with Arkansas Child Care Licensing as a child care center or family child care home.
- ▶ Remain in **substantial compliance** with Arkansas Child Care Licensing regulations.
- ▶ Agree to provide **paid release time** to scholars (reimbursed by TEACH).
- ▶ Offer **one-time stipends or permanent wage increases** upon scholar’s successful completion of the annual contract and service commitment.
- ▶ **Contribute financially** toward tuition, fees, and books.
- ▶ Promptly notify TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS of any changes in the **scholar’s employment status**.

Employers must demonstrate a history of fulfilling TEACH contract obligations, including providing release time, issuing incentive payments, and continuing to sponsor scholars through the completion of their educational goals. This history may be considered when evaluating new or renewal applications. Participation in any state or nationally recognized quality accreditation system may be used to determine priority on waiting lists or the number of scholars approved per center.

 **Note:** The individual creating a business account, submitting required documentation, and signing TEACH documents on behalf of the employer must be officially authorized by the employing organization to enter into agreements that involve financial obligations.

C. Professionalism

TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS staff are committed to maintaining professionalism and ethical standards in all interactions and communications. In return, TEACH scholars and sponsors are expected to conduct themselves with professionalism, integrity, and respect when engaging with TEACH staff, college advisors, instructors, and one another.

We expect all participants to:

- ▶ Communicate respectfully and constructively.
- ▶ Uphold honesty and integrity in academic and professional settings.
- ▶ Avoid any form of harassment, threats, or the use of profanity.



Harassment, unethical behavior, or unprofessional conduct will not be tolerated.

TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS reserves the right to discontinue services or terminate participation in the TEACH program for any individual or program that violates these standards.

D. Integrity in all Representations

Truthfulness and Accuracy of Information

Scholars and sponsors are expected to provide complete, accurate, and truthful information at all times when interacting with TEACH Early Childhood® Arkansas. This includes all documents, forms, residency and/or employment verification, academic records, and communication with TEACH staff. Knowingly providing false, misleading, or incomplete information—or withholding information that affects scholarship eligibility—may result in denial, suspension, or termination of the scholarship.

Prohibition on Fraud or Misrepresentation

Because TEACH is supported through state and federal funds, any attempt to falsify documents, misrepresent eligibility, or obtain scholarship benefits through deception is strictly prohibited. TEACH reserves the right to verify the

authenticity of all information submitted and may request additional documentation at any time.

Actions involving fraud, deception, or misrepresentation may result in:

- denial or termination of the scholarship,
- repayment of improperly issued funds,
- ineligibility for future TEACH participation, and/or
- notification to appropriate state agencies if required.

III

Applying for a TEACH Scholarship

A. How To Apply

To apply, prospective scholars must submit a complete application and required follow-up documentation to the **TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS** office.

A complete application includes:

1. Completed information from the scholar and the employer.
2. A valid email address.
3. The name of the college you plan to attend and your chosen degree or program. (Refer to the ECE Education Directory for options.)
4. The **Child Care License Facility Number** of your current employer.
5. Employer agreement to sponsor the scholarship.

For application to be processed, the following additional documentation should be submitted with the application or soon after:

- ▶ **Identity & Residency Verification:** Copy of unexpired driver's license or state ID.
- ▶ **Employment & Salary Verification:** A copy of a paystub dated within the last 30 days, current teacher contract or completed Family Child Care Income Form
- ▶ **Proof of admission** letter or email from your selected college
- ▶ A **PDR transcript** dated within the last 90 days or **digital access granted** to TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS to view your PDR transcript
- ▶ **Proof of previous education** (unofficial transcripts are acceptable)

Incomplete applications: If an application is incomplete, the applicant will be notified and given **10 business days** to submit the missing information. After that, the application will be closed and the applicant must reapply.

Processing and Deadlines: **TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS** processes applications on a **rolling basis**. Applications are only approved if the applicant meets all eligibility requirements, capacity and funding are available and a scholarship opening exists for the requested semester.

Note: TEACH utilizes a waitlist system, and submission of an application **does not guarantee approval** for a specific semester.

Approval and Next Steps: Applicants who are approved will receive a **written confirmation** of their scholarship, a **congratulations letter** with instructions, and an invitation to schedule a **welcome phone call or web meeting** with a TEACH Counselor to officially accept the scholarship. After acceptance, a **TEACH contract** will be issued and **digitally signed** by the scholar and the employer.

B. Waitlist (Priority Framework)

When demand exceeds available capacity and/or funding, **TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS** maintains a waitlist of complete applications (all required documents received). Placement on the waitlist does not guarantee approval for a particular semester. Final approvals depend on applicant eligibility, available funding, workforce needs, and program priorities.

How does the waitlist priority work?

- ▶ TEACH applies a priority framework to allocate limited funds and capacity in a manner that most effectively advances Arkansas’s early childhood workforce goals and stewardship of resources. In general, undergraduate programs at Arkansas public institutions are prioritized, with additional weight given to workforce need, geographic equity, and cost-effective use of funds.
- ▶ Specific, degree-level tiers and annual caps (if any) are set in the TEACH Priority Framework, which may be updated periodically in consultation with funders and advisors.
- ▶ To ensure fairness and consistency, the current TEACH Priority Framework is posted online and available upon request. TEACH may adjust the framework as needed to address funding conditions or workforce needs without updating this Handbook.

What happens when a slot becomes available?

- ▶ The TEACH office will contact the next applicant(s) in line according to the current framework and allow applicant ten (10) business days to submit any final documents (e.g., proof of residency). Applications not completed within the stated timeframe may move down the list.

Transparency & non-discrimination:

- ▶ The priority framework is applied program-wide, uses non-discriminatory factors, and supports CCDF fiscal integrity and internal controls.

C. Deferrals

We understand that personal or professional situations may occasionally prevent an accepted applicant from starting their program as originally planned. In such cases, the applicant must notify their TEACH scholarship counselor as soon as possible. The counselor may approve a one-semester deferral. (The scholar is also responsible for notifying their college and arranging for a delayed start date.)

If a deferral is needed for more than one semester, the applicant will be required to submit a new application.

IV

The TEACH Scholarship Contract

A. Contract Terms

Once approved, applicants will receive a TEACH contract (Form A) which must be signed by the scholar, an authorized representative of the employer and the State TEACH Director. By signing, the parties indicate they have read, understood, and agree to the terms outlined in the contract and this handbook. Key components include but are not limited to:

- ▶ Scholars and employers must pay a percentage of tuition and books.
- ▶ Contracts are valid for 12 months and are renewed annually if the scholar continues to meet all program requirements and funding is available.
- ▶ Scholars agree to complete at least nine (9) credit hours each contract year with passing grades as defined by the college and degree program.
- ▶ Scholars must remain employed with their current sponsoring employer for at least one year after the contract is completed (service commitment).
- ▶ Applicants must also sign a Personal Responsibility Agreement (PRA).

B. Incomplete Contracts

If a scholar is unable to complete the required nine (9) credit hours during the contract year, they must meet with their scholarship counselor to discuss the circumstances and develop a mutually agreed-upon **improvement plan**. Failure to meet with the counselor or to establish a plan may result in termination of the scholarship. Repeated failure to complete contract requirements may also lead to termination.

 **Note:** This policy does not apply to scholars who complete fewer than nine (9) credit hours due to graduation from or completion of their program.

C. Changes in College Program

Contracts are valid only for the degree program listed on the contract. If a scholar changes their degree program or college, the contract becomes void, and repayment terms may apply.

After graduation, scholars who wish to pursue a new degree program must submit a new application and contract.

D. Scholarship Renewal

If adequate academic progress is being made and all contract requirements are fulfilled, TEACH contracts may be renewed annually until the scholar's educational goal is completed, contingent upon continued funding availability.

See Section 6 for instructions on scholarship renewal.

E. Contract Extensions/Graduation

In cases of emergency or extenuating circumstances, a scholarship contract may be extended with approval from the State TEACH Director. Extensions are considered on a case-by-case basis, and only one semester may be granted per extension. If additional extensions are needed, the scholar must meet with their scholarship counselor to explore the underlying causes and determine whether the TEACH scholarship remains the most appropriate support program.

Graduation-Related Extensions: For scholars approaching graduation, contracts are typically extended by one semester to align with their expected graduation date. If graduation is more than one semester away, the scholar must complete a new renewal contract.

F. Reporting Changes

Scholars and employers are required to report any changes to our office within five (5) business days. This includes updates to contact information, employment status, school admission or enrollment, and any other factors that may affect scholarship eligibility. Failure to report changes in a timely manner may result in the scholar being held responsible for repaying any financial loss incurred by the TEACH program as a result.

V Enrolling in College

A. Selecting a College Program

To qualify for a **TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS** scholarship, applicants must choose a college that meets the following criteria:

- ▶ Be **based in Arkansas** and **regionally accredited**
- ▶ Offers a **college-credit early childhood education** program
- ▶ Agrees to **invoice TEACH directly** for tuition and fees

Applicants can explore approved colleges and universities through the **ECE Education Directory**. Scholarship counselors are available to help applicants choose a program that aligns with their educational and career goals. They can also connect applicants with college contacts for questions about admissions, financial aid, and program details. Scholarship model may vary with choice of college.

First Time College Students: If you are starting with a high school diploma, you'll need to enroll in an **associate degree or certificate program** in early childhood education to begin.

Already Have a Degree? TEACH does **not** cover a second associate, bachelor's, or master's degree OR a second early childhood-related teaching license. If you already hold a degree and need additional early childhood coursework, counselors can give you some alternative options to finance this.

Admissions: Applicants should begin the admissions process as early as possible. TEACH will terminate a contract for failure to meet admissions requirements or not following the approved degree plan set by the college.

1. Applicants should **apply online** through their chosen college's website.
2. Follow the school's **admissions and enrollment** procedures.
3. Make sure to select an **approved early childhood program** (focused on birth to age five).

Some general education degrees may qualify **if they include an early childhood concentration or emphasis**. Confirm the required courses with your college advisor. If you do not complete the required concentration, your scholarship may be terminated and repayment could be required.

Previous Transcripts and Transfer Credits: If an applicant has previous college coursework, the college will require official transcripts from those colleges. Advisors or program coordinators can also review transcripts to see if credits from previous colleges might transfer. Get any transfer decisions in writing.

TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS is unable to pay college application fees, transcript fees or past due balances at previous colleges.

B. Other Financial Aid

Scholars may apply for additional grants and scholarships. To do this, students must complete the FAFSA each year by the college's deadline. Check with your school's financial aid office or go to www.fafsa.ed.gov.

PELL Grants

- ▶ Scholars who qualify for PELL Grants may use them in addition to TEACH funding to help cover co-pays, books, and other eligible expenses.
- ▶ Any remaining PELL funds not applied to the student's account after TEACH pays tuition and fees are typically refunded to the student later in the semester.
- ▶ Be aware that PELL Grants have a lifetime eligibility limit. Students are encouraged to use this aid only when necessary to preserve eligibility for future education.

Student Loans

The mission of TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS is to help scholars achieve a **debt-free education**. Student loans can come with high interest rates and long-term repayment obligations, which can significantly impact financial stability, especially for professionals in early childhood education. Unfortunately, when students apply for additional aid, colleges may automatically include student loans in the financial aid package. **Before accepting any financial aid package**, TEACH scholars are strongly encouraged to consult with their scholarship counselor to discuss the need for additional aid and how it will be used.

⚠ IMPORTANT: If a scholar accepts a student loan, **TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS** reserves the right to eliminate its scholarship award or reduce it to release time and incentive only. The only exception

is for private college tuition where loans may be necessary to meet tuition co-pays.

C. General Education Requirements

If a scholar needs to complete transferable general education requirements, **TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS** will typically require that these courses be taken at a lower-cost institution, such as a community college, when available. This helps ensure the most cost-effective use of scholarship funds.

D. Negotiated Tuition Rates

If **TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS** has established negotiated tuition rates with a specific college or university, the scholarship will only cover those agreed-upon rates. Any tuition costs exceeding the negotiated rate will be the responsibility of the scholar.

VI

Getting Started with TEACH

A. Your First Semester

Starting college is a big step—and we want you to know how proud we are of you for taking it. Whether you're the first in your family to attend college, returning to school after many years, or balancing school with a family and full-time work, your journey is both courageous and inspiring.

We understand that this transition can feel overwhelming at times. New routines, unfamiliar systems, and academic expectations can be a lot to manage—especially while working full-time. But you are not alone. The TEACH Scholarship team is here to support you every step of the way.

This section will walk you through the procedures you'll need to follow with the TEACH office before the first semester. But more importantly, we want you to know: **you belong here, and you can do this**. Your dedication to children, your community, and your own growth is what makes you a scholar—and we're honored to be part of your journey. So, once you have been approved for TEACH and been accepted to college, here are the next steps to follow:

- Contact your **assigned college advisor** to schedule your classes as soon as you're accepted to college.
- Let the advisor know you work full-time and need a manageable course load. TEACH typically approves **3–6 credit hours** for your first semester.
- Start with early childhood courses to build confidence before enrolling in general education classes like math or psychology.
- To activate your scholarship each semester, **your employer and scholarship counselor must receive and approve your course schedule**.
 - ▶ Once you have a schedule, visit with your employer to obtain approval for all classes and complete Course Authorization Form (Form D).
 - ▶ Submit Form D and official copy of your schedule.
 - ▶ Employer will confirm approval.
 - ▶ Your counselor will contact you if any changes are needed.

B. Semester Checklist

Each semester, scholars will follow similar procedures.

1. Plan courses	2. Complete paperwork	3. Submit to TEACH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss next semester's courses with TEACH counselor. Courseload decisions are based on employer approval, academic progress, and status, the amount of personal obligations and extent of college experience. Counselors may limit the number of courses in which a scholar may enroll. <input type="checkbox"/> During your assigned time, schedule an appointment and meet with advisor to register for the next semester. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Complete Course Authorization Form (Form D) using your scheduled courses. If using a fillable form, send to employer for signature. <input type="checkbox"/> Employer will submit approval. <input type="checkbox"/> Download/save a copy of your official course schedule. <input type="checkbox"/> Download a copy of tuition statement (may be submitted later if not currently available). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Send the highlighted items to the TEACH email no later than one week prior to school's payment deadline. <input type="checkbox"/> Counselor will review schedule and inform you if schedule is approved or if changes are needed. Scholars must let us know if they change classes after registration. TEACH will need an updated copy of all documents.
4. Submit book claims	5. Submit release time	6. Send final grades
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Scholars may buy or rent books. Books may be new or used if they meet all course requirements. Digital books may be reimbursed if available. <input type="checkbox"/> Complete Form B and submit with paid receipts showing book title(s) and how item(s) was/were paid for. <input type="checkbox"/> TEACH will reimburse sales tax and shipping if included on the receipt. <input type="checkbox"/> Other than required calculators for math, supply items will not be reimbursed. <input type="checkbox"/> No books may be charged to TEACH. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Scholars and employers will log release time used throughout the semester. <input type="checkbox"/> The Release Time Claim form (Form C) will be completed and submitted. Employer and recipient must approve before sending. <input type="checkbox"/> Release Time claims may be at the end of each month or at the end of the semester. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> At the end of the semester, scholars must send a copy of their grade report showing final letter grades. <input type="checkbox"/> Screenshots from an online learning platform or screenshots showing course percentages are not acceptable. <input type="checkbox"/> Grades may be needed before approval of the next semester's schedule.

**SEND ALL DOCUMENTATION TO teach@arkansasearlychildhood.org.
WE WILL FORWARD TO YOUR COUNSELOR.**

C. Renewing Your TEACH Contract

Most TEACH contracts are valid for one year and must be renewed through the life of your educational program. We're excited to support you as you continue your educational journey. **As long as you're completing at least 9 credit hours with passing grades, remain employed with your sponsoring program, and your employer agrees to continue sponsoring, renewal is a simple and straightforward process.** This is also a great opportunity to check in with your TEACH Scholarship Counselor—share how things are going, update any changes to your goals, and let us know if there's any additional support you need. We're here to help you stay on track and succeed every step of the way.

Here are the steps to renew:

- 1. Notification of Renewal**
When your TEACH contract is due for renewal, the TEACH Scholarship Counselor will notify you.
- 2. Counselor Check-in/Intent to Renew**
Talk to your counselor about your plans if you wish to continue with the scholarship and how you are doing. Report any changes.
- 3. Information Update Form**
You and your director complete the Information Update Form (Form E).
- 4. Supporting Documentation**
Submit a current pay stub or copy of your teacher contract with Form E.
- 5. Verification Process**
Before renewal and incentive payment, TEACH will verify your grades and credit hours.
- 6. New Contract**
If you are continuing with the scholarship, a new contract will be created and sent for signatures from both you and your employer.
- 7. Graduation Requirements**
Upon graduation, you must submit a copy of your diploma or a transcript showing the degree and date awarded. This is required before any final incentive can be paid or a new scholarship can be approved.

D. If a Scholar Exceeds Approved Credit Hours...

TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS understands many of our scholars are balancing full-time work, family responsibilities, and school. That's why we take a thoughtful, individualized approach to determining how many credit hours the scholarship will support each semester. Our goal is to help you succeed—not just academically, but in all areas of your life.

While TEACH is designed as a gradual path, we understand some scholars may feel ready to take on more. If that's the case, we encourage you to first demonstrate a consistent record of **strong academic performance** and **success at work**. Once that foundation is in place, counselors will gladly consider increasing your approved course load.

Each semester, your TEACH Scholarship Counselor will review your academic progress including course drops/withdrawals and visit with both you and your employer about how work is going and your overall well-being. Based on this review, the counselor will recommend a course load that supports your success while minimizing stress and overload. We ask that you respect this decision, knowing it is made with your best interests in mind. While **we cannot recommend or endorse enrolling in more credit hours than your counselor has approved**, here are procedures which must be followed if you still choose to enroll in additional credit hours.

1. **Employer Approval**

This is required for ALL enrolled hours including unapproved courses.

2. **Financial Responsibility**

You will be responsible for paying tuition and fees for unapproved courses directly to college.

3. **Reimbursement Option**

You may apply for reimbursement at the end of the semester for any additional courses you personally funded if you earn a grade of C or higher. To apply, submit:

- a. A completed Form B

- b. Final grades

- c. Proof of payment (receipt for tuition and fees)

Scholarship employee and employer co-pays will apply and will be deducted from any reimbursement to either party.

4. **Ineligible Courses**

Courses dropped or not passed are ineligible for reimbursement.

5. **Future Course Loads**

Your counselor will consider grades from both approved and unapproved courses when determining future course load approvals.

6. **Repeated Overload Without Reimbursement**

Scholars who exceed their approved credit hours twice without qualifying for reimbursement will be responsible for 100% of tuition and fees for any future semester in which they exceed the approved credit hours.

We will always do our best to encourage scholars to follow the TEACH Early Childhood process that has **proven** to lead to success. Our goal is not to limit your ambition, but to help you reach your goals in a way that is sustainable, healthy, and achievable.

VII Release Time

One of the biggest challenges of going back to school while working full-time is time—time for your studies, your job, and your family. At TEACH, we recognize that your time is valuable, and we want to help make your educational journey more manageable. That’s why the TEACH Early Childhood® Scholarship includes **release time**—*paid time off from work to focus on school-related responsibilities.*

This benefit is designed to reduce stress, support academic success, and help you maintain a healthy balance between work, school, and life. Release time helps ensure that your academic responsibilities don’t come at the expense of your job performance or personal well-being. Release time is a foundational component of TEACH Early Childhood. It’s one more way TEACH is committed to supporting your success.

How Does It Work?

For each credit hour of approved enrollment, scholars are eligible for 16 clock hours of paid release time up to a maximum of **96** hours each semester.

What Can Scholars Use Release Time For?

- ▶ Attending class—online or on-campus.
- ▶ Studying for tests
- ▶ Completing assignments
- ▶ Meeting with advisors and instructors
- ▶ Personal business that cannot be completed outside of work hours (at the discretion of the employer and if staffing allows)

How is Release Time Scheduled?

- ▶ Scholars and employers should collaborate to create a release time schedule that works well for both the program and the scholar. Employers who are unable or unwilling to provide release time should not sponsor a TEACH contract.
- ▶ Release time does not need to be given in specific increments. TEACH tracks only the total number of hours used, not how they are distributed.
- ▶ Employers are not required to provide full days off or off-site time. Flexibility is encouraged to meet the needs of the program and the scholar.

How is the Program Reimbursed?

1. **Track Hours**
Scholars and employers should keep track of all release time used during the semester.
2. **Submit a Claim**
At the end of the semester, employers complete the **Release Time Claim Form (Form C)** for the hours provided.
3. **Approval and Submission**
Both the scholar and employer must approve the form before submitting.
4. **Reimbursement**
Employers are reimbursed at the established hourly rate. Scholars are paid for release time hours through their regular payroll. Sponsor co-pays for tuition, fees and books will be deducted from release time reimbursements.

What are some creative ways to offer release time?

We understand that every early childhood program is different, and providing release time can sometimes be a challenge. If you're unsure how to make it work, TEACH Scholarship Counselors are here to help. They can offer guidance and creative solutions tailored to your program's needs.

Some flexible and effective ways employers can provide release time include...

- ▶ **Adjust Start or End Times:** Allow the teacher to arrive late or leave early during times when child-to-staff ratios are lower.
- ▶ **Pay for Normally Unpaid Breaks:** Cover lunch breaks that are typically unpaid, giving scholars extra time without affecting staffing.
- ▶ **Substitute Release Time for Leave:** Use release time in place of personal or sick leave, preserving the scholar's own leave balances.
- ▶ **Pay for Unpaid Holidays:** Offer pay for holidays that are usually unpaid, giving scholars extra time for schoolwork.
- ▶ **Use Small Time Blocks:** Provide short increments of time throughout the week instead of full days off—this can be easier to schedule and still very effective.

Release time is only an option for a director or family child care scholarship. Family child care providers are encouraged to use release time with their scholarship if they have staff available to cover their program.

VIII Academics

At TEACH, we believe in your potential and are here to support you every step of the way. We know that returning to school—especially while working full-time and managing other responsibilities—is a big commitment. That’s why we focus not just on helping you get started, but on helping you succeed. Each semester, we review your grades to ensure you're staying on track toward your goals. This isn’t just about meeting requirements—it’s about celebrating your progress, identifying any challenges early, and making sure you have the support you need to thrive. Whether you're adjusting to college-level coursework, learning how to manage your time, or building confidence in your abilities, remember: **you’re not alone**. Your TEACH Scholarship Counselor is here to help you navigate challenges, connect you with resources, and cheer you on as you grow.

If a scholar is in jeopardy of not successfully completing a contract, a scholar will be required to meet with their TEACH Scholarship Counselor to develop an academic improvement plan designed to support their success moving forward. If a scholar chooses not to participate in the improvement plan, their TEACH contract may be terminated or not renewed. Additionally, the scholarship may be at risk if the scholar does not consistently meet contract requirements. Our goal is to help every scholar succeed, and we are here to provide guidance and support when challenges arise.

A. Grades and Minimum Requirements

At the end of each semester, all TEACH recipients must submit a copy of their final grade report. The report must clearly show the recipient’s name and list final letter grades for all courses. Charge approvals will be withheld if grades are not submitted by the end of the following semester. Failure to submit grades can also jeopardize continued participation in TEACH.

Minimum Academic Requirements

- ▶ Scholars must complete ≥ 9 credit hours per contract with passing grades.
- ▶ If your degree program requires a C or better in a course, a D will be treated as a failing grade for TEACH contract purposes.
- ▶ Withdrawals (W) do not count toward the 9-credit-hour minimum.

- ▶ If a scholar receives a grade of Incomplete, the State TEACH Director may approve a contract extension of up to 12 months to allow time for the final grade to be recorded.

B. Repeating a Course

At times, everyone can struggle in a course—especially when balancing work, school, and personal responsibilities. Experiencing a setback doesn't mean you've failed; it means you're learning, growing, and facing challenges head-on. If a scholar does not pass a course, they must meet with their TEACH Counselor to develop a plan for successfully completing the course the next time. If the counselor determines the plan is strong and realistic, **TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS** will cover the cost of the course one additional time. However, if the scholar does not pass the course a second time, they will be responsible for paying for it themselves.

C. Adding, Dropping or Withdrawing from a Class

Adding a Course. Adding a course means additional cost—and requires approval from both TEACH and your employer. If a scholar adds a course without approval, the college will be instructed to invoice the student directly, and the policies listed in Section VI(D) will apply in this case.

Dropping or Withdrawing. Sometimes, despite your best efforts, a course just doesn't go as planned. Whether it's due to unexpected life events, work demands, or simply realizing the timing isn't right, dropping or withdrawing from a class does not equal failure—it might very well be a wise decision to protect your well-being and long-term success. However, it is important that TEACH is involved in the decision.

- ▶ Ideally, students should drop a course during the 100% refund period (usually the first week of classes).
- ▶ If you drop a class, your counselor will take this into account when reviewing future course load approvals.
- ▶ In some cases, your counselor may meet with you to create an alternate plan for success.
- ▶ If multiple courses are dropped and this affects your ability to complete your contract, it may impact your contract renewal.
- ▶ Please remember that TEACH pays for courses up front, and dropped classes can result in wasted scholarship funds that could have supported another scholar.

D. Field Experience and Practicum

Most early childhood education programs require some form of practicum or field experience. Scholars should speak directly with their college advisor or department coordinator BEFORE STARTING THE PROGRAM to understand the specific requirements and policies at their institution.

If your program requires you to complete practicum or field experience outside of your sponsoring workplace, you can still retain your TEACH contract—even if this temporarily reduces your working hours below the required minimum. In these cases, your TEACH Counselor will need a written statement or email from your employer, confirming that:

- You will remain employed at the sponsoring program, and
- You will return to your position after completing your field experience,
- So that you can fulfill both your contract year and your commitment year.

E. CDA Credential Procedures

Scholars MUST indicate to TEACH they plan to seek the CDA credential through a Certificate of Proficiency program. To earn the credential through TEACH, a CDA candidate must:

1. Complete the Early Childhood Certificate of Proficiency coursework.
2. Obtain 480 hours of fieldwork.
3. Complete the Professional Portfolio.
4. Complete the family questionnaire.
5. Complete the Verification Visit conducted by a CDA PD Specialist.

Upon paying the CDA Application fee, the recipient or employer may submit their payment receipt. TEACH will reimburse a portion of the online application fee to whoever paid for the assessment (minus any co-pays owing). TEACH will only reimburse an application fee one time.

F. Praxis Tests

For scholarship models which include teacher licensure or endorsement, TEACH will reimburse a portion of Praxis testing fees. Once registered and contract is signed, recipients may submit receipts to TEACH for reimbursement (minus any co-pays). TEACH will reimburse a portion of the Praxis a maximum of two times.

IX Finances

A. Managing Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of both scholars and sponsoring employers to ensure that tuition and book co-pays are paid each semester.

- ▶ Co-pays will be automatically deducted from reimbursements, travel stipends, release time payments, and incentives (if applicable). If the reimbursement does not cover co-pays, the scholar or sponsoring program will be invoiced for the balance which must be paid prior to the beginning of the following semester.
- ▶ TEACH may also deduct amounts owed from other AECA-administered program disbursements to scholar or employer.
- ▶ Seriously delinquent accounts may be referred to a collection agency and may result in termination of the scholarship.

 **Note:** Invoices are not issued for charges, nor will checks be issued for credits, under \$25. Balances under this amount shall remain on the scholar or employer account.

Employer Responsibility: When agreeing to sponsor a scholar, employers must ensure they have the financial resources to cover co-pays and incentive payments—especially when sponsoring multiple recipients.

If you have any concerns about the financial aspects of the scholarship, please don't hesitate to reach out to your TEACH Counselor. We're here to help you plan and stay on track.

B. Payment of Tuition and Fees

Once your contract is signed, all required paperwork is submitted (see Section 6), and your course schedule is approved, the TEACH office will issue a charge approval to your college. This document authorizes the college to bill TEACH for your tuition and tuition-related fees. After Census Day—the official date when the college finalizes enrollment counts—the college will send an invoice to TEACH Early Childhood. Once received, TEACH will process the payment directly to the college.

You should not need to pay colleges directly unless you are responsible for:

- ▶ Private college tuition
- ▶ Unapproved coursework
- ▶ Non-covered fees (supplies, food, parking, housing, etc.)

 **Note:** The charge approval is NOT a payment. The approval simply allows the college to bill the TEACH scholarship for your classes. Your student account may still show a balance and you may still receive payment reminders until TEACH receives the school's invoice and issues payment. The charge approval protects your registration from being cancelled due to non-payment.

The TEACH scholarship system automatically calculates scholar and employer co-pays each semester for tuition, fees and books. Co-pays are deducted from reimbursements. If the reimbursement doesn't fully cover the co-pay, the scholar and/or employer will receive an invoice for any amount over \$25. If approved for a PELL grant, the scholar may use this aid to cover co-pays. Failure to pay co-pays may result in the withholding of charge approvals and even termination of the scholarship.

C. Books

TEACH Early Childhood scholars are usually responsible for obtaining the required books then requesting reimbursement from TEACH.

- ▶ Books may be purchased or rented.
- ▶ Students may use the college bookstore or a bookseller like Amazon.
- ▶ TEACH will not reimburse books purchased or rented from friends or classmates.

To request reimbursement:

- ▶ Complete and submit the reimbursement form (Form B).
- ▶ Submit paid receipts showing the title of each book.

Reimbursement will include tax and shipping if included on receipt.

TEACH will reimburse you for the percentage of book costs covered by your approved scholarship.

TEACH will reimburse for eBook purchases or a textbook subscription card but not the cost of an eBook reader unless ADA accommodations include it.

D. Travel/Access Stipend

Recipients are eligible to receive a travel/access stipend each semester they are enrolled in classes. Once TEACH receives your Form D, class schedule, and tuition bill, we will process your stipend.

 **Note:** If a scholar withdraws before attending any classes, scholars will be responsible for repaying any stipends received.

Any co-pays due will be deducted from your stipend and reimbursements.

E. Incentive Payments

Upon successful completion of a TEACH Early Childhood® contract, recipients are eligible incentive payments from TEACH and the employer. These incentives are distributed according to the following schedule:

EVENT	AMOUNT PAID
Verification of 9 credit hours with passing grades at end of contract	<input type="checkbox"/> 50% of the TEACH incentive
Within 90 days after successful completion of contract coursework	<input type="checkbox"/> 50% of the employer incentive or permanent wage increase
Completion of the 12-month service commitment	<input type="checkbox"/> Remaining 50% of TEACH incentive <input type="checkbox"/> Remaining 50% of employer incentive or permanent wage increase

- ▶ **Employment verification** will be conducted at the end of each contract.
- ▶ If a recipient **voluntarily leaves employment** before completing the 12-month service commitment, they will **forfeit any unpaid incentive amounts**.
- ▶ Once paid, employers must submit:
 - A **copy of the pay stub** showing incentive payment, or
 - Documentation of a **permanent wage increase**

F. Other Fees

There may be additional costs and fees associated with college enrollment that are eligible for partial reimbursement through TEACH. These expenses will be reimbursed at the same percentage rate as your approved scholarship.

Reimbursable	Not Reimbursable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Praxis testing fees <i>(if degree includes licensure)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> CDA online application fee <i>(requires additional contract)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Technology <i>(visit with your counselor about specific reimbursable items)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Graduation fees <input type="checkbox"/> Exemption test fees for required courses <input type="checkbox"/> Testing center fees associated with distance learning students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> School supplies <i>(other than required textbooks and a calculator for required math courses)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> College application fees <input type="checkbox"/> Transcript Request fees <input type="checkbox"/> Account balances associated with enrollment prior to TEACH approval <input type="checkbox"/> Student loan payments <input type="checkbox"/> School fees not related to tuition or course enrollment <input type="checkbox"/> Student account interest charges

For reimbursable fees, the scholar must submit Form B and a copy of their paid receipt for the item or service.

G. Shortened Terms

TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS classifies coursework into three standard semesters: Fall, Spring, and Summer. If your college offers shorter terms within a semester (e.g., Fall 1 and Fall 2), TEACH will combine those terms for the purpose of calculating incentives, stipends and release time.

Note: Additional incentives or release time will not be provided for intersessions. January intersessions are combined with the spring semester. May intersessions are included in the summer semester.

H. Taxable Income and Reporting

Some TEACH Early Childhood payments may be considered taxable income. Scholars and employers are responsible for reporting any taxable amounts to the Internal Revenue Service and the State of Arkansas.

- ▶ AECA is not permitted to withhold taxes on payments to program participants.
- ▶ Each January, a Form 1099 will be issued to any participant who received more than \$600 in taxable income during the previous calendar year.
- ▶ This form should be included when filing federal and state tax returns.

Note: This information is provided for general awareness and does not constitute tax advice. Participants are strongly encouraged to consult a qualified tax advisor for guidance specific to their situation.

I. Claim Deadlines

Please submit reimbursement requests no later than the 15th of the month after the semester ends.

Semester	Claim forms submitted by
Spring	June 15
Summer	September 15
Fall	January 15

J. Verification Holds on Payments

Because TEACH Early Childhood® scholarships are partially funded with federal resources, TEACH must implement payment-integrity safeguards consistent with federal expectations (45 CFR §98.67(c)(2) and 2 CFR §200.303) for fraud prevention, risk mitigation, and fiscal accountability. Therefore, **TEACH Early Childhood® Arkansas** may temporarily place a hold on payments—including stipends, reimbursements, travel/access stipends, release time reimbursements, and incentive payments—whenever verification is required to ensure compliance with eligibility, financial integrity, or documentation requirements.

A payment hold may occur when:

- ▶ Mail or payments are returned as undeliverable
- ▶ Address, residency, identity, tax, or employment information is inconsistent
- ▶ Required documentation is incomplete or appears altered
- ▶ Additional verification is required due to CCDF internal-control monitoring

Payments will resume once all requested verification is received and reviewed.

X Commitment

By signing the **TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS** contract, recipients agree to remain employed with their current child care employer throughout the contract period and for an additional 12 months following its completion. During this service commitment year, recipients must continue working at least the same number of weekly hours as they did during the contract year. Any changes in employment or work schedule must be promptly reported to TEACH. The service commitment is more than a program requirement—it plays a vital role in strengthening the early childhood education field. It supports:

- ▶ **Staff Retention:** Encouraging educators to stay with their employers helps reduce turnover and promotes a more stable work environment.
- ▶ **Workforce Stability:** Long-term employment contributes to a more experienced and consistent early childhood workforce.
- ▶ **Continuity of Care for Children:** When children are cared for by familiar, trusted educators over time, it fosters stronger relationships and supports healthy social-emotional development.

The TEACH service commitment benefits not only the scholar and employer but also the children and families they serve.

A. Voluntary Quit

The TEACH Early Childhood® contract is a **serious commitment** and should be entered into with **careful consideration**. Through this scholarship, recipients receive a mostly funded education, and employers benefit from having a more qualified early childhood educator on staff.

Thinking About Leaving Your Job?

If you're considering leaving your sponsoring employer, contact your Scholarship Counselor first. They can help you understand the consequences and explore your options.

- ▶ If you **voluntarily leave** your employer before completing your contract and service commitment:
 - Your **scholarship will be terminated**, and
 - After co-pays, your **employer is released** from further obligations.

- ▶ If a **charge approval** has already been sent for the current semester:
 - You may finish the semester.
 - You are still financially responsible for your co-pays.
 - If you complete the semester and submit final grades, no repayment of tuition or fees is required.
 - If you **drop or withdraw** after the refund deadline, you must **repay tuition and fees**.

Can I Transfer My Scholarship?

No, the TEACH scholarship cannot be transferred. In rare cases where an employer fails to meet contract obligations, you may be allowed to start a new contract with a different willing employer.

- ▶ Such cases require clear and convincing documentation.
- ▶ The employer must first be given a chance to fulfill their responsibilities.

Otherwise, if you leave your employer voluntarily:

- ▶ You will be **ineligible to reapply** for at least **one year** from your quit date.
- ▶ Exceptions may be made for circumstances beyond your control, reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- ▶ Employers may have their own repayment policies, but these would be separate from the TEACH contract.

B. Taking a Semester Off

Sometimes life may require you to take a break from school. If you need to do this, contact your Scholarship Counselor **in advance** to discuss your situation.

Credit Hour Requirement

- ▶ Scholars must still complete a minimum of 9 credit hours during their contract period. It is your responsibility to track your completed hours.

When a Break Is Okay...

- ▶ If you can still meet the 9-credit-hour requirement even with a semester off, your scholarship will not be affected.
- ▶ If you won't complete 9 credit hours, your TEACH Counselor will need to visit with you to explore options on a case-by-case basis.

Extended Breaks

- ▶ If you need to take more than one semester off, you must reapply for the scholarship, unless you receive prior approval from TEACH.

C. Layoffs and Terminations

If you are **laid off** through no fault of your own, you will:

- ▶ Be allowed to finish the current semester.
- ▶ Must find a new child care employer willing to sponsor your TEACH contract to continue the scholarship the next semester.

If you are **terminated (involuntarily)** by your employer, TEACH will:

- ▶ Allow you to complete the current semester, if possible.
- ▶ Review your situation on a case-by-case basis to determine what options, if any, are available.

Repayment Requirements

- ▶ If you **complete the semester and submit your grades**, you will not have to repay tuition and fees.
- ▶ If you **drop or withdraw** from courses **after the refund deadline**, you will be responsible for repaying tuition and fees for those courses.

D. Employer Changes

If your child care program experiences a change in ownership or management (for example, if it is acquired by another agency), you must contact the TEACH Early Childhood® office immediately.

- ▶ The **new employer** must agree to the terms of your original TEACH contract and sign a **new contract**.
- ▶ If the new employer **does not agree** to a contract:
 - You will be **released from your current service commitment**.
 - If you choose to leave the program, you may be eligible to **apply for a new scholarship contract** with a different employer.
 - You will be allowed to **finish the current semester** before the contract is officially terminated.
- ▶ **No repayment** will be required if you complete your courses for the current semester and submit final grades.

XI

Due Process and Appeals

At **TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS**, we are committed to fairness, transparency, and accountability in all scholarship decisions. If a scholar disagrees with a decision to terminate their scholarship, they have the right to request a formal review through the following due process procedure:

A. What Decisions Are Eligible for Appeal?

Only scholarship terminations related to **scholar performance** may be appealed. This includes, but is not limited to:

- ▶ Failure to meet academic requirements
- ▶ Incomplete contract obligations
- ▶ Repeated course withdrawals or failures
- ▶ Non-compliance with improvement plans

Course load decisions are already made collaboratively between the scholar, employer, and TEACH Scholarship Counselor. These decisions are considered final and are not eligible for appeal.

Decisions based on **ineligibility** due to changes in employment or other eligibility criteria are not appealable. For example:

- ▶ Quitting, being terminated or laid off from sponsoring employer
- ▶ Falling below the required weekly work hours
- ▶ Changing to a non-qualifying degree program or college
- ▶ Failing to meet residency requirements
- ▶ Employer becomes ineligible
- ▶ Employer chooses to withdraw sponsorship of TEACH contract
- ▶ Employer undergoes change of ownership and the new owner declines to sponsor TEACH scholarship

These situations result in automatic disqualification from TEACH.

B. Requesting an Appeal

To initiate an appeal, the scholar must submit a written request within **10 business days** of receiving the termination notice. The request must include:

- ▶ A clear statement of the decision being appealed
- ▶ Supporting documentation or explanation
- ▶ The desired outcome or resolution

Appeals should be submitted to the TEACH State Director at:
teach@arkansasearlychildhood.org

C. Appeals Review Panel

An **Appeals Review Panel** composed of three members of the **TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS** Advisory Committee will:

- ▶ Review all submitted materials from the scholar and TEACH
- ▶ Request additional information if needed
- ▶ Offer the scholar an opportunity to provide a written or verbal statement

D. Decision and Notification

The panel will issue a written decision within **15 business days** of receiving the appeal. The decision will be final and will include:

- ▶ A summary of findings
- ▶ The final determination
- ▶ Any conditions for reinstatement, if applicable

E. Reinstatement

If the appeal is successful, the scholarship may be reinstated with or without conditions. If denied, the scholar may reapply after a **one-year waiting period**, unless otherwise specified.

XII Telling Your Story

TEACH Early Childhood® ARKANSAS wants to know your stories that would make an impact on others interested in knowing why TEACH exists and what we are accomplishing. Please take any opportunity to share how the TEACH Early Childhood scholarship has helped you and the children in your care. You may send us stories, photos, videos, and we will share them with our early childhood community.

XIII Contact Information

Arkansas Early Childhood Association ♦ P O Box 4291 ♦ Fayetteville, AR 72702
www.arkansasearlychildhood.org
teach@arkansasearlychildhood.org ♦ 501 680 1930

It's important that we hear from you if any of the following situations apply. Keeping us informed helps ensure your scholarship stays on track, we can support you effectively and celebrate your wins with you!

Please contact us if you:

-  Change your contact information (address, phone number, or email)
-  Experience a change in personal circumstances
-  Are struggling in or failing a class
-  Are considering dropping or withdrawing from a class
-  Have a personal emergency that prevents you from attending school or work for an extended period
-  Change the number of hours you work or the age group you work with
-  Are thinking about changing jobs or are no longer employed at your current program
-  Are considering transferring to a different college or program
-  Your employer achieves national accreditation or earns a new level in Better Beginnings
-  Graduate or earn a credential, degree, or endorsement
-  Receive an academic award or honor