



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Office of Child Care

2025 State and Territory CCDF Administrators Meeting (STAM)

July 22–24, 2025

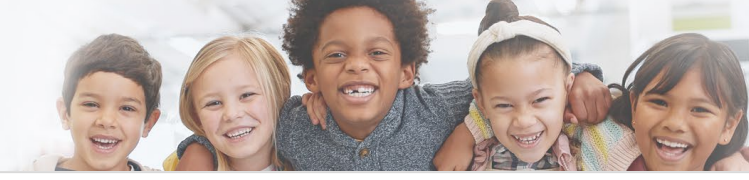
Hyatt Regency Reston
Reston, Virginia



Exploring Strategies to Support the Child Care Workforce

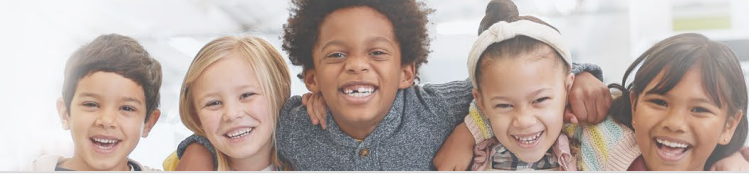
Alexa Watkins, Child Care State Capacity Building Center (SCBC)

Lisa Ojibway, National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance (NCECQA)



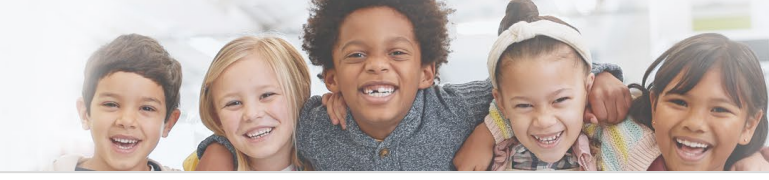
Session Objectives

- Explore strategies to support the child care workforce.
- Discuss insights to support and retain a highly qualified workforce.



Preparing, Supporting, and Retaining a Qualified Child Care Workforce

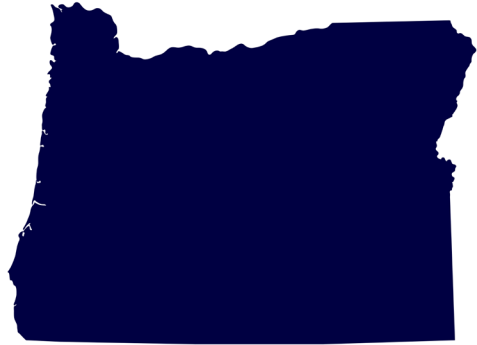




State Presentations



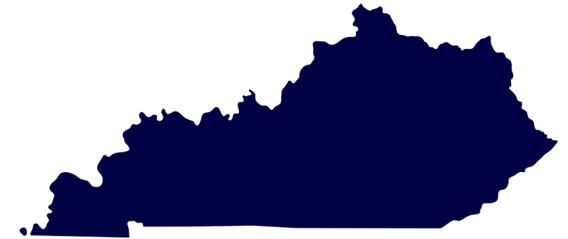
Illinois



Oregon



Rhode Island



Kentucky



Smart Start Workforce Grants

STAM Conference

July 2025

Agenda

- Smart Start Workforce Grants Overview
- Guiding principles
- Role of the Smart Start Ad Hoc Advisory Council
- Implementation Timeline
- Eligibility Requirements
- Impact of First Year Implementation
- Questions

Nation-Leading Early Childhood

Strengthening and growing early childhood requires field sustaining funding reform and investment in affordability for families.

- Smart Start Illinois has **built on federal relief funded innovations** and take steps to realize goal of making Illinois the best state in the country to raise young children.
 - These investments pair with Preschool for All expansion to set a **national model for early childhood services**.
- Minimize child care deserts, raise child care wages, address the teacher shortage, and expand child care quality through investment in **Smart Start contracts, apprenticeships, and scholarships**.
 - Stabilize and support **Early Intervention**, ensuring that children with delays and disabilities receive the services needed for healthy development.
 - Sustain and expand **Home Visiting**, rooted in innovative funding practices successfully tested with relief dollars.



Smart Start Child Care

Smart Start Child Care is a key component of Smart Start Illinois—a multi-year initiative to expand preschool access, increase funding to child care providers, invest in new early childhood facilities, and better serve vulnerable families. The plan reflects Illinois' strong, ongoing commitment to children, families, early educators, and child care providers.

Smart Start Workforce Grants (\$200M):

Provide stable, increased funding to licensed providers across Illinois, helping raise wages and strengthen the workforce serving families through the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP).

Smart Start Quality Support Program (\$10M):

Supports participating programs in embedding continuous quality improvement (CQI) practices. This includes building new CQI structures, implementing leadership strategies, and offering professional development for administrators and staff.

Smart Start Workforce Grants invest in programs to pay attractive wages without raising costs for families

- Eligible child care providers will receive Smart Start Workforce Grants to support higher wages for their staff members
- Those who participate in the program must pay teachers and teaching assistants at or above a required wage floor
- All grant funding must be spent on wages
- Illinois is the first state in the nation to implement this type of workforce compensation program



Smart Start Workforce Grants decisions align to guiding principles

Smart Start Guiding Principles



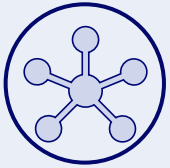
Decisions must be grounded in fairness, prioritizing programs with limited access to funding



Decisions must be informed by child care providers and educators who stand to be most impacted by them



The program must stay within the allocated budget and meet the Governor's stated goals



Grants should maximize program reach while also setting a wage scale that creates competitive wages for the field



Grants must provide eligible programs with enough funding to cover the costs associated with requirements



We recognize that we need to make decisions on a timeline with the best information we have.

Smart Start Workforce Grants Decisions

Grants focus on **programs serving children receiving CCAP** and account for **raising wages** for home-based providers and their assistants.

Smart Start Workforce Grants were informed by **community engagement** with over 1,800 programs providing input on costs associated with running their programs.

Smart Start Workforce Grants require programs to **serve more children with CCAP** than Smart Start Transition Grants. With a lower overall budget for SSWG, eligibility criteria increased.

Smart Start Workforce Grants were estimated to reach approximately 4,000 programs, which is **62% of full day licensed child care programs in Illinois**.

The **cost model was updated** and accounted for the cost for an average program to raise starting wages by at least \$2-\$3 to the wage floor.

Smart Start Workforce Grants decisions reflect a **year of planning**.



Build
**understanding
and alignment**
on strategic
intent and
goals



Provide **input
and feedback**
throughout the
design process



**Review and
pressure-test**
relevant cost
analyses,
potential policy
options, and
administrative
options

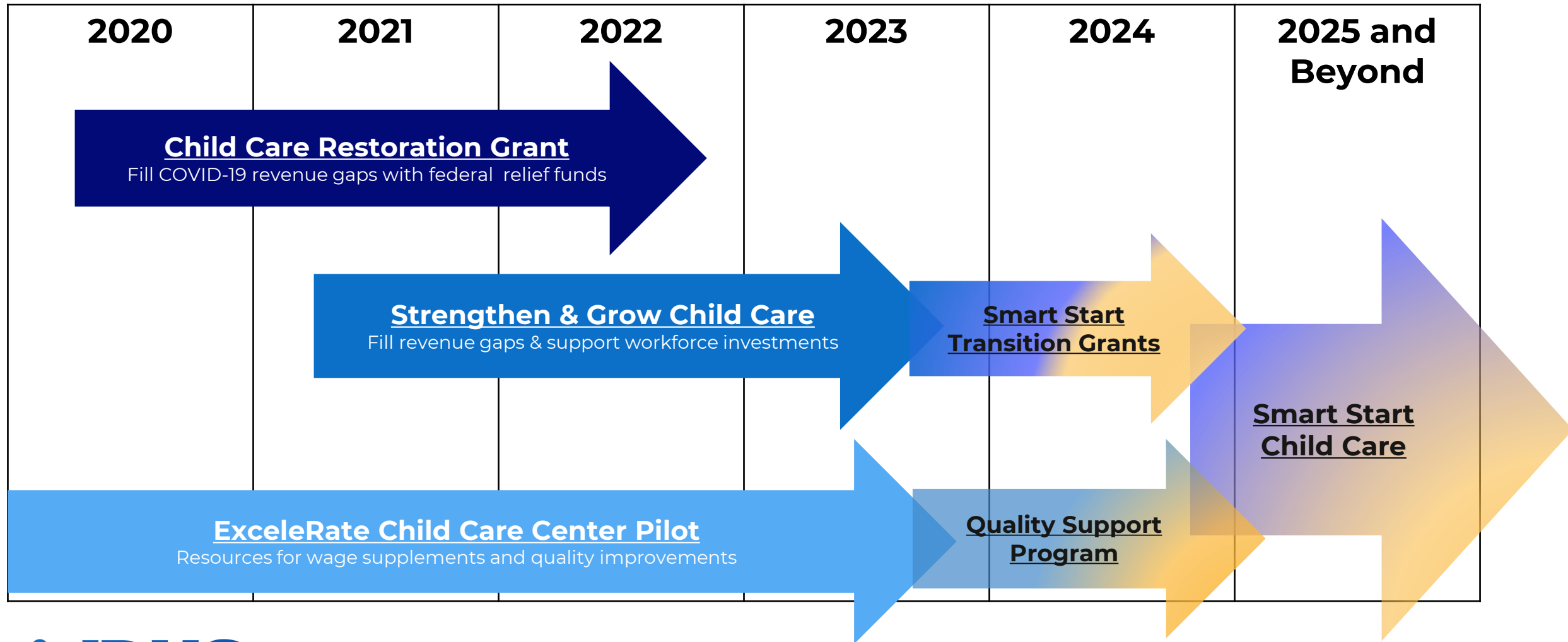


Surface any
**potential risks
and
opportunities**



Support overall
plan
development
and **champion
it among
stakeholder
groups**

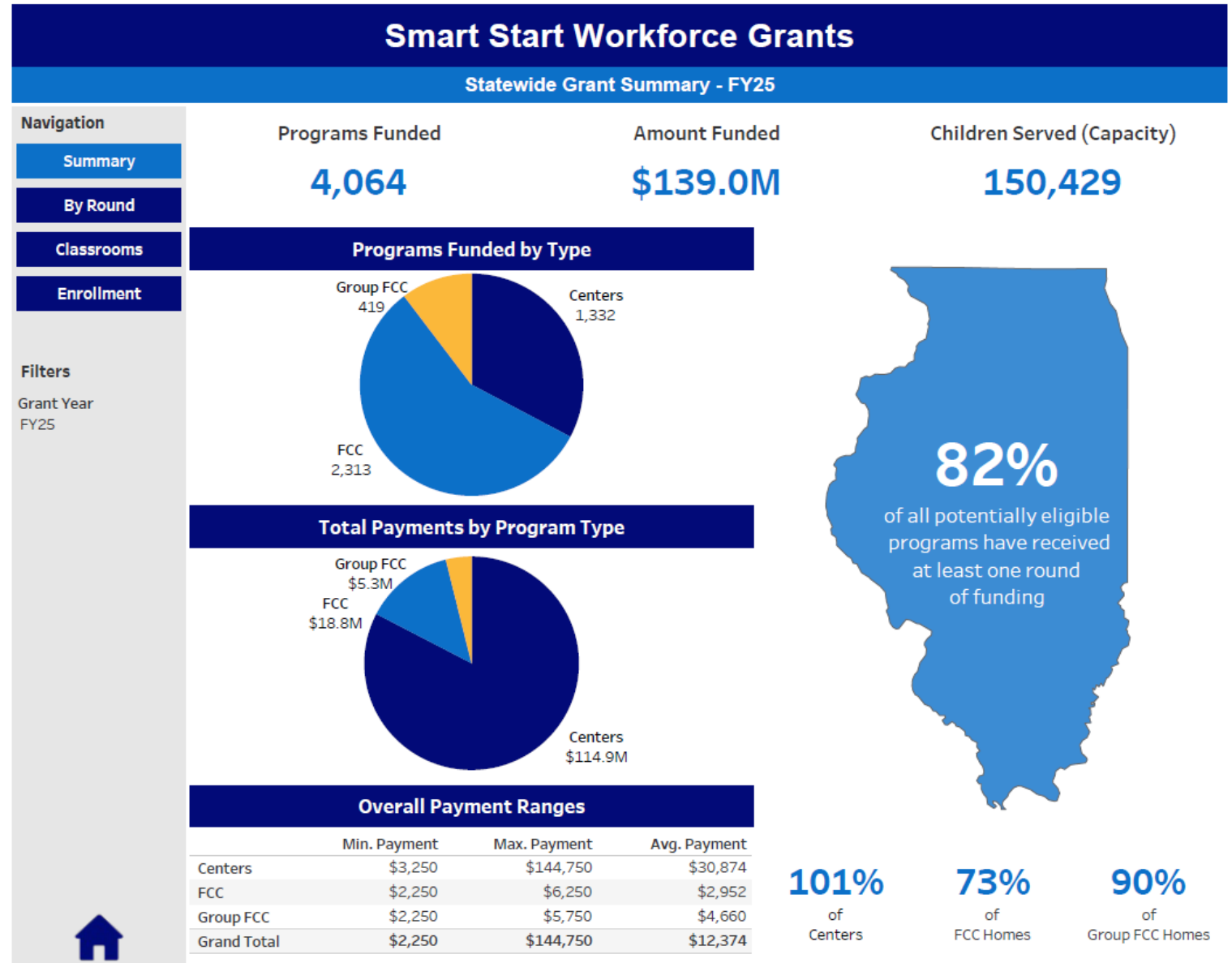
IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE FOR SMART START CHILD CARE



Smart Start Workforce Grants are Available for Programs:

- licensed as a child care center, family child care, or family group child care.
- licensed and caring for children by the first of the month prior to the opening of applications. For example, if the application opens on April 1, 2025, programs must be licensed, open, and caring for children by March 1, 2025.
- that operate as a full-day, full-year program offering eight consecutive hours of care per day, five days per week, 47 weeks per year.
- For centers - at least 15% of the program's current licensed capacity (at time of application) enrolled and funded by CCAP in any one month in the year prior to submitting an application (e.g., any one month between January 2024 – date of application).
- For family child care - care for at least 1 child and for family group child care 2 children enrolled and funded by CCAP in any one month in the year prior to submitting an application (e.g., any one month between January 2024 – the date of application).

FY 2025 Impact



Questions

- For more information regarding SSWG:
- [Smart Start Workforce Grants - Gateways to Opportunity](#)
 - Michelle Wood, Bureau Chief of Quality Initiatives
 - Michelle.Wood3@illinois.gov
 - Trish Rooney, Associate Director of Office of Child Care
 - Patricia.Rooney@Illinois.gov





DIVISION OF
EARLY CHILDHOOD

- Appendix

Smart Start Workforce Grants will support center-based programs to increase wages for assistant teachers, teachers, and other program staff

Center-based programs will be eligible for the following grant awards for each classroom:

| Classroom type | Quarterly award |
|--|-----------------|
| Smart Start Workforce Grants, Infant/Toddler | \$6,750 |
| <i>Smart Start Transition Grants, Infant/Toddler</i> | <i>\$7,000</i> |
| Smart Start Workforce Grants, Ages 2-5 | \$6,000 |
| <i>Smart Start Transition Grants, Ages 2-5</i> | <i>\$6,000</i> |

Smart Start Workforce Grants support family child care providers to increase their wages and their assistants' wages

Family child care homes and group homes receive a **base award of \$9,000 annually** and additional funding if they have an assistant, based on the number of hours assistant(s) work

| | Assistant weekly hours | Annual grant award | Quarterly grant award |
|---|---|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Workforce Grants: Family Child Care Homes and Group Homes | 0-20 hours/week | \$9,000 | \$2,250 |
| | 20-60 hours/week | \$16,000 | \$4,000 |
| | 60+ hours/week (only available for group homes) | \$23,000 | \$5,750 |

Center-based programs are required to pay teachers and teacher assistants at least an established wage floor*

| | Region | | |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Role | Group 1A | Group 1B | Group 2 |
| Wage floor for lead teachers | \$19.25 per hour | \$18.50 per hour | \$18.25 per hour |
| Current median wage | \$17 per hour | \$16 per hour | \$15.40 per hour |
| Wage floor for assistant teacher or floater | \$18 per hour | \$17.25 per hour | \$17 per hour |
| Current median wage | \$15 per hour | \$14 per hour | \$14 per hour |

A **wage floor is a minimum required wage but is different from the legally required minimum wage. For SSWG, the wage floor is a requirement that programs agree to when they accept the grant.*

Group 1A: Cook, DeKalb, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, and McHenry counties.

Group 1B: Boone, Champaign, Kankakee, Madison, McLean, Monroe, Ogle, Peoria, Rock Island, Sangamon, St. Clair, Tazewell, Whiteside, Will, Winnebago, and Woodford counties.

Group 2: all counties not listed in Group 1A or 1B

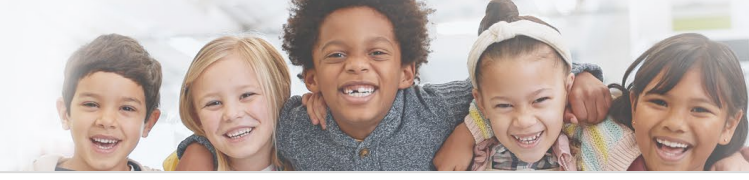
Home-based programs will be required to pay teacher assistants at least an established wage floor*

| | Region | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Role | Group 1A | Group 1B | Group 2 |
| Wage floor for home-based assistants | \$18 per hour | \$17 per hour | \$17 per hour |
| Current median wage | \$15 per hour | \$14 per hour | \$14 per hour |

A **wage floor is a minimum required wage but is different from the legally required minimum wage. For SSWG, the wage floor is a requirement that programs agree to when they accept the grant.*

Home-based provider/owners may use the rest of their grant funds for their own compensation, or to invest in their home-based business.

***Group 1A:** Cook, DeKalb, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, and McHenry counties.*
***Group 1B:** Boone, Champaign, Kankakee, Madison, McLean, Monroe, Ogle, Peoria, Rock Island, Sangamon, St. Clair, Tazewell, Whiteside, Will, Winnebago, and Woodford counties.*
***Group 2:** all counties not listed in Group 1A or 1B*



Oregon



DELC Professional Learning System and Workforce Investments



PREPARE

- Higher Education Consortia
- Oregon Registry
- Training and Higher Education Scholarships
- Training Financial Supports and Reimbursements
- Trainer and Training Approval

STRENGTHEN

- Focused Child Care Networks
- Shared Services Alliance - Business Coaching
- Spark Quality Recognition and Improvement System
- Technical Assistance Capacity Building Center
- Coaching System
- Professional Development



GROW

- State Center for Business Technical Assistance
- Child Care Infrastructure Fund Technical Assistance
- Tribal Business Expansion Support

RETAIN

- Statewide Substitute Pool
- Central Coordination of CCR&Rs
- Connection to Specialized Supports
 - Pyramid Model Implementation
 - Infant Toddler Specialists
 - Regional Inclusive Partners
 - Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants

Child Care Infrastructure Fund Technical Assistance



First Children's Finance State Center for Business Technical Assistance

- Training and system work began in 2021 and state center established in 2024
- Business training topics include enrollment, managing finances, marketing, staffing, policies for business management, and planning for the future
- Specific strategic supports for child care businesses during the critical first two years of operation

Child Care Infrastructure Fund Technical Assistance & Tribal Business Expansion & Supports

- Established as part of HB 3005 (2023), the Child Care Infrastructure Fund (CCIF) technical assistance program awarded to Northwest Native Chamber and First Children's Finance in 2024

Combined impact:

- Responded to a total of 2,389 requests
- Provided 553 hours of 1:1 consultation for CCIF applicants

Statewide Substitute Pool



- Western Oregon University operates Child Care Substitutes of Oregon
- Provides up to 50 hours per year of free substitute staffing hours to early learning programs
- Helps provide coverage if:
 - Staff are sick
 - Request vacation
 - Attend trainings
 - Need additional support so they can attend to higher needs of children

June – September 2024

1,146 **hours** of
substitute care
provided

85 part time
substitute **staff**
1 full time position

266 **programs**
participating on
average
Working in 14 of the
15 CCR&R **regions**

Retain: Connection to Specialized Supports



Infant Toddler Specialists

Based in CCR&Rs statewide, working directly with early learning programs

- Convene regionally based Infant Toddler Focused Child Care Networks
- Support Baby Promise regions (3)
- Provide infant toddler training
 - Across all CCR&R's **4,578 participants** took training specific to infants and toddlers
 - **18 Infant Toddler Specialists** statewide

Inclusive Partners

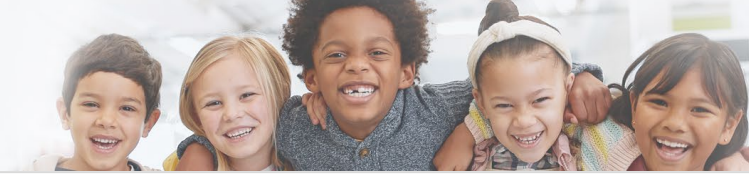
Goal to preserve access to child care settings **for children with specialized needs** by consulting with and providing technical assistance to early learning programs

- 370 in person consultations or technical assistance connections statewide since March 2024
- Recently expanded Inclusive Partners services and **added 15 positions statewide** in each CCR&R

Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

Evidence-based strategy for preventing suspension and expulsion in early learning and care programs

- 15 Regional Service Providers
- New service that has not previously been available in most communities and is part of Every Child Belongs
 - 12 regions currently in Planning phase
- **22 positions** will be hired throughout the state



Questions



Rhode Island ECCE Workforce Development Pathways

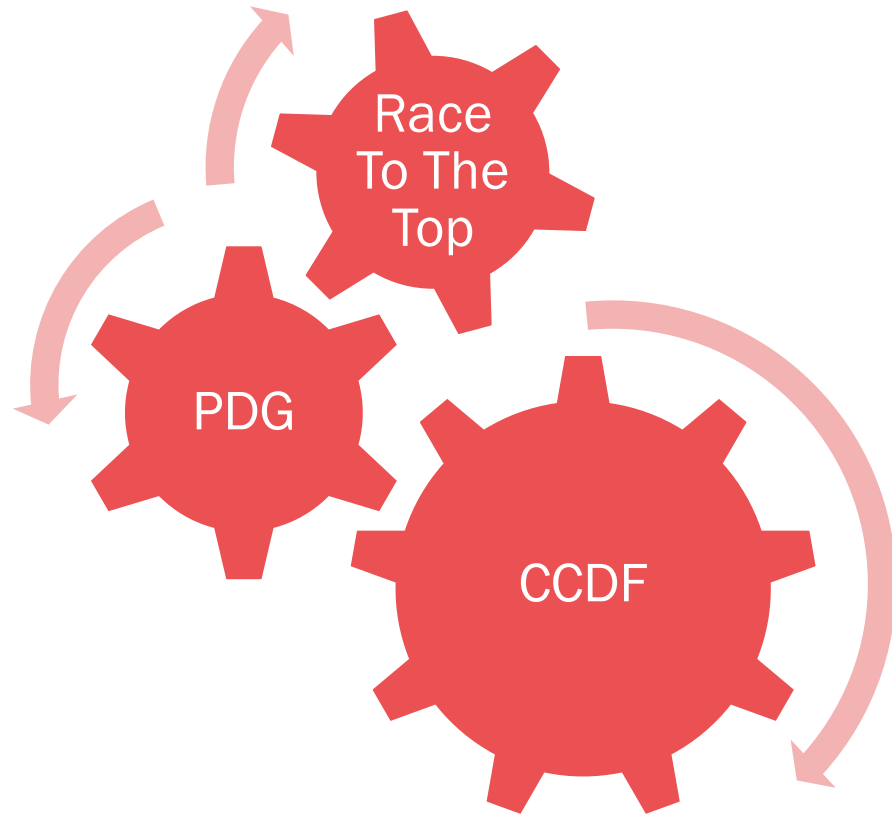
STAM 2025: State and Territory CCDF
Administrators Meeting

July 2025



RI DHS CCDF Supported Workforce Development Pathways

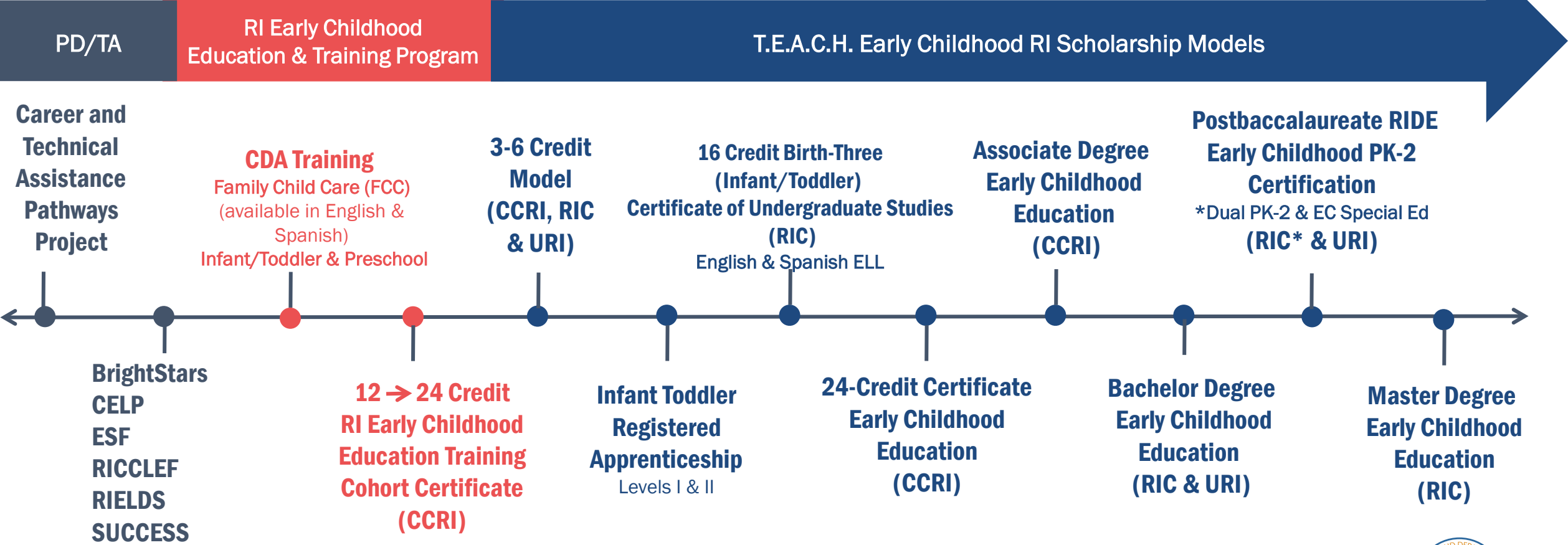
RI recognizes the importance of a highly qualified workforce to support the provision of high-quality early care and education to RI children and families in service of our vision for all children reading at grade level by 3rd grade



- Rhode Island has strategically invested federal funding to implement and pilot innovative workforce development pathways
- Through embedding workforce pathways into our QRIS standards and implementing a Tiered Quality Rating Child Care Assistance Subsidy Model RI has been able to sustain it's workforce infrastructure
- On going project management, collaboration and stakeholder engagement are key to our success

DHS Sponsored Professional Development & Technical Assistance (PD/TA)

DHS pathways provide early childhood educators and programs access to free or low-cost training and higher education opportunities designed for the working professional and aimed at supporting high quality classrooms and career advancement starting with PD/TA through Master's level.



Infant Toddler Registered Apprenticeship

The DHS Registered Apprenticeship is designed as a career pathway where individuals employed in a licensed child care program that accepts RI's Child Care Subsidy can obtain paid work experience, related instruction (higher education), and a stackable, portable, nationally-recognized credential.

Level 1: Educators complete the Community College of Rhode Island Rhode Island Early Childhood Education and Training Program cohort-based Infant Toddler CDA training. Participants also participate in the LearnERS training concurrently.

Level 2: Educators Complete Rhode Island College Infant Toddler (IT) Certificate of Undergraduate Studies. Courses:

- Contextualizing IT Education
- IT Cognitive Development & learning
- IT Social Emotional Development
- Field Experience
- Early Childhood Development

Student Benefits:

- No cost to students: tuition, training and professional development, CDA exam fees & 1st CDA renewal fees
- Chromebook & computer literacy training
- On-site coaching & mentoring
- Receive two 1.5% permanent wage increases
- Receive college credits for CDA training transferable to RI State Institutions

Employer Benefits:

- Reduction in staff turnover
- Receive \$1000 sign on bonus & RI Department of Labor and Training Registered Apprenticeship bonuses (\$1K per individual-up to \$5K)
- LearnERS participation
- LearnERS + Workforce pathways align to QRIS standards positioning programs to increase QRIS rating and received Tiered Child Care Subsidy rates

Step Up to Wage\$ Rhode Island

Step Up to WAGE\$ RI provides education-based salary supplements to center-based educators, directors, and family childcare providers working with children in an early childhood setting. The program is designed to increase retention, education, and compensation.

Impact to Date

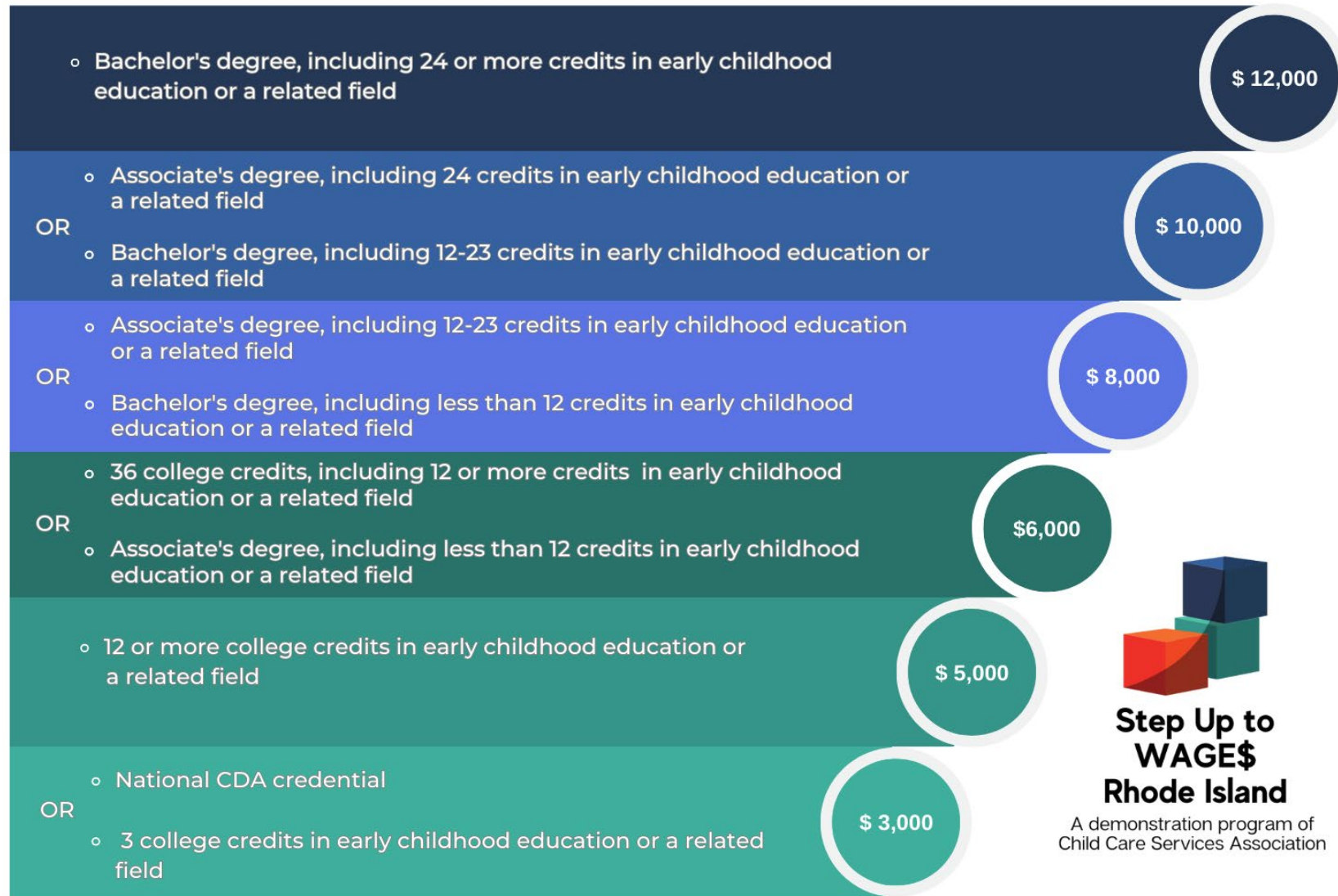
Total Funding Awarded: over \$ 3.1 million

of Participants: 556 (and growing!)

Average Wage of Recipients:\$18.23

Retention Rate: 93%

Supplement Qualifications & Totals



**Step Up to
WAGE\$
Rhode Island**

A demonstration program of
Child Care Services Association

Nicole Chiello, M.Ed.

Associate Director

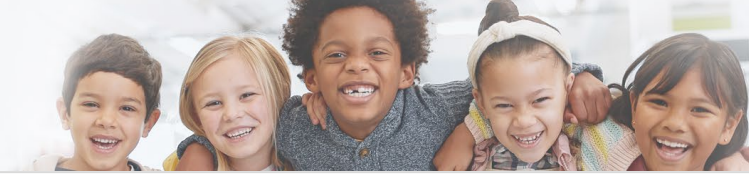
RI Department of Human Services



Nicole.Chiello@dhs.ri.gov



[Linkedin.com/in/nicole-chiello](https://www.linkedin.com/in/nicole-chiello)



Questions

Kentucky Division of
Child Care

Phillip Smith,
Assistant Director

State Administrator
Meeting 2025

PROTECTED POPULATION

INTRODUCTION

- The idea of making workers in the child care industry a protected population was initiated by our prior director, Sarah Vanover.
- Supplying quality child care remains an issue, as our state continues to recover from COVID. This protected population initiative serves as a benefit to attract, recruit, and retain more workers in the child care industry.
- Many times in child care, health insurance and paid sick leave are not available. Many providers find themselves offering free or reduced tuition for their employees as a benefit, but doing so cuts into their bottom-line dollars. This provision helps child care providers offer higher pay and better benefits to their employees.

PROTECTED POPULATION

Kentucky implemented the Child Care Employee Exclusion on October 24, 2022.

- This serves as a provision for families applying for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) that meet all technical eligibility requirements and have verified employment in a Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) Regulated Licensed or Certified child care program. Members of this Protected Population will be eligible to have ALL household income excluded for the CCAP application process.
- Benefit to the providers as many were offering child care services to their employees at little or no cost.

POLICY POINTS

1. Verified employment must be with a CHFS Regulated Licensed or Certified child care provider.

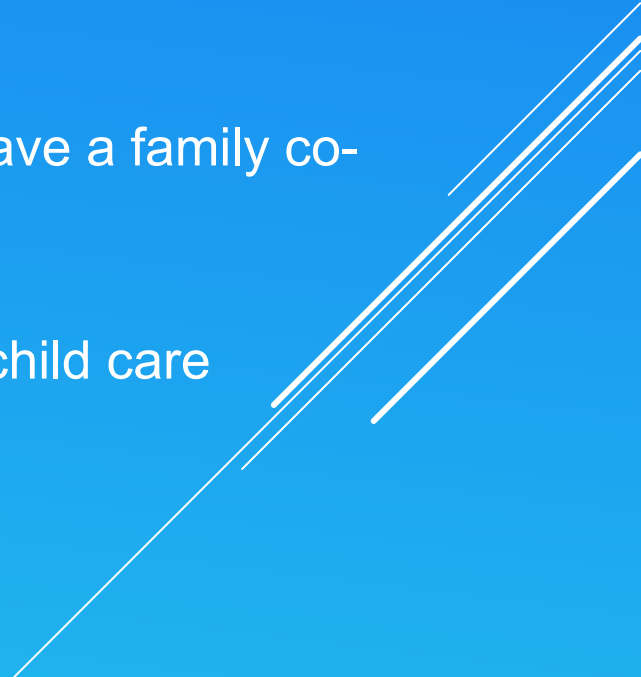
➤ *Parents that are working in a CHFS Licensed facility ~~CAN~~ are not required to have their child/children attend at the same location.*

➤ *Employment must be at least 20 hours per week.*

2. All earned and unearned household income is excluded for this “Protected Population”.

3. CCAP work requirements, SNAP E&T, and training/education, as well as all other technical eligibility requirements still apply for the household/ responsible adults and parents.

POLICY POINTS CONT.

- 4. The Child Care Employee Exclusion is not applicable for center owners/co-owners.
 - 5. All existing mandatory verifications are still applicable and failure to provide these timely may result in denial/discontinuance.
 - 6. Families receiving child care assistance under this provision will not have a family co-payment as their monthly income is assessed at zero.
 - 7. Families would still be responsible for any overages assessed by the child care provider, if applicable.
- 
- A series of three parallel white diagonal lines are positioned in the bottom right corner of the slide, extending from the bottom edge towards the right edge.

POLICY POINTS CONT.

Clients that terminate their employment with the center-

- If an approved employee terminates their employment with the provider, the Child Care Employee Exclusion ends, the household income will no longer be excluded and the CCAP case will revert to normal CCAP rules.
- If the household's income is over the State Median Income (SMI) limit, then the case is pushed into a Transitional Child Care (TCC) Period.
- **TCC:** CCAP households that are discontinued due to combined household incomes exceeding 85% State Median Income at case change and recertification are eligible for Transitional Child Care/TCC.
 - This continues the client's CCAP benefit for 6 months.
 - *Co-payments are accessed at zero for the TCC eligibility period*
 - *Reimbursement rates are reduced and calculated at 50% of the Provider Subsidized Rate or the State Max Rate (whichever is lower) and will be rounded up to the nearest whole dollar.*

CHANGES THAT WERE REQUIRED

- **Regulation change:**

KAR 922 2:160- Section 4(3)

Effective October 24, 2022, to the extent funds are available, a household shall have all earned and unearned income excluded from the eligibility determination if an applicant or responsible adult meets the requirements of subsection (1) of this section and has verified employment in a regulated:

- (a) Licensed child care center; or
- (b) Certified family child care home

- **System changes:** The application process for child care staff is the same as it is for CCAP, with the exception of gathering some additional information.

- Added new question regarding Earned Income Details - ***“Is the Individual employed by a CHFS regulated/approved Licensed or Certified Provider?”***

- Added a new Licensed/Certified Provider Verification screen to capture the employer’s licensing number that is captured/verified separately from the employee’s employment/ income.

- Add new column on EDG Summary > Financial Summary screen to display a Child Care Employee Exclusion flag for CCIE/TENF CCAP TOAs- this tool is used to see that the case was approved using the child care employee exclusion.

CHILD CARE EMPLOYEE EXCLUSION NUMBERS

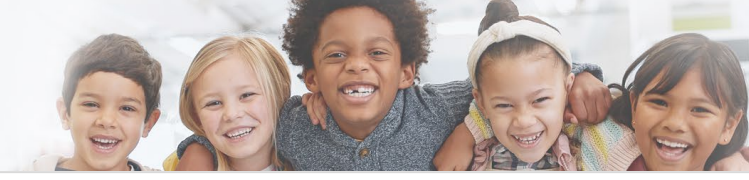
| Month/ Year | Number of Families | Number of Children | Expenditures | Cases Over 85% SMI | Cases Under or Equal to 85% SMI |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Oct – Dec 2022 | 903 | 1,517 | \$1,496,965.07 | 290 | 604 |
| 2023 | 3,889 | 6,819 | \$30,372,105.97 | 980 | 2,910 |
| 2024 | 5,221 | 9,137 | \$46,701,532.85 | 1,425 | 3,868 |
| Jan –Jun 2025 | 4,617 | 8,068 | \$25,991,055.92 | 1,230 | 3,331 |

- Cases that are under or equal to 85% SMI are paid using CCDF monies.
- Cases that are over 85% SMI are paid through the \$15 million set aside in Kentucky's general fund.

QUESTIONS?

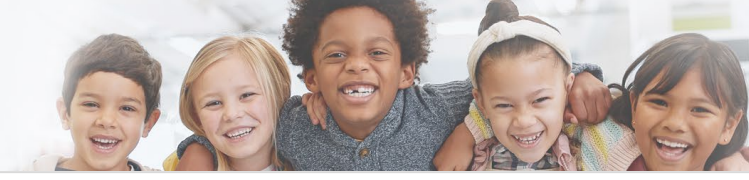
PHILLIP.SMITH@KY.GOV

A series of several parallel white lines of varying lengths, slanted diagonally upwards from left to right, located in the bottom right corner of the slide.



Small Group Discussions





Resources



[Resources to Support Early Care and Education Workforce Strategies | The Administration for Children and Families](#)



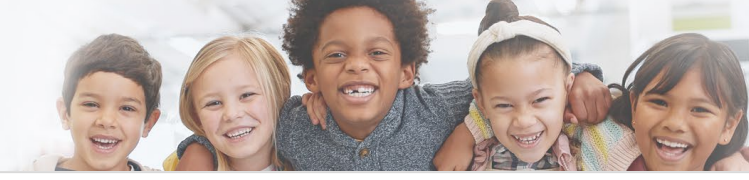
[Early Care and Education Workforce Salary Scale Playbook: Implementation Guide](#)



[Early Care and Education Program Highlights: Workforce Benefits Program Exemplars](#)



[National Early Care & Education Workforce Center](#)



Technical Assistance Is Available

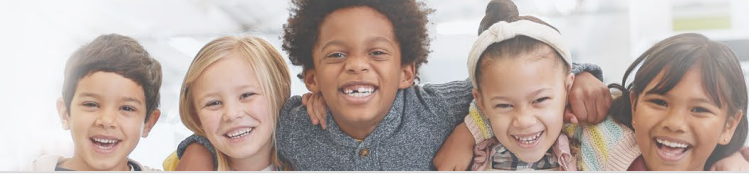
Please use this QR code or
corresponding web link to request
individualized technical assistance.



2025 State and Territory CCDF Administrators Meeting (STAM)

July 22–24, 2025

Hyatt Regency Reston
Reston, Virginia



Child Care State Capacity Building Center

1902 Reston Metro Plaza
Reston, VA 20190
Phone: 877-296-2401
Email: SCBC@icf.com

National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance

1902 Reston Metro Plaza
Reston, VA 20190
Phone: 877-296-2401
Email: NCECQA@icf.com

[Subscribe to OCC Updates](#)