

FAQs for the Workforce Recognition Stipend and Student Loan Repayment Programs

This FAQ is organized into the following sections:

- I. Workforce Recognition Stipend Program
- II. Student Loan Repayment Program
- III. General Application Information for Both Programs
- IV. Information about Award Disbursements
- V. Tax Implications of these Awards

I. Workforce Recognition Stipend Program

1. What is the Workforce Recognition Stipend program?

The goal of the Workforce Recognition Stipend program is to support and recognize Nebraska's child care workforce quickly and efficiently. The program is administered by Nebraska's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). This money is intended to help workers improve their financial well-being and, more broadly, shape the future of child care and early education in the state by incentivizing workers to stay in the field.

2. How is the program funded?

The Workforce Recognition Stipend program is funded with Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) money, which the federal government provided to states to invest in their child care workforce networks. A total of \$30,449,000 is available in grant awards for this program.

3. When can I apply?

Applications will be accepted beginning at 8:00 am Central Time on **Monday, December 5, 2022** until 7:00 pm Central Time on **Wednesday, January 11, 2023**. This is **not** a first come, first serve program. You can apply anytime during this period and, if eligible, you will receive an award.

4. Who is eligible and what are the eligibility requirements?

This grant is open to all child care staff 18 years and older who work in a licensed Nebraska child care home or facility. You do not need to be a resident of Nebraska to apply. In addition, being in a direct teaching role is not required; however, **all** applicants must have worked within the child care sector for at least six current and continuous months. Continuous employment does not need to be with the same employer.

If you are an employer, director, or owner of a child care home or facility, you **cannot** complete an application for your employees. Each person must fill out their own application.

Please see the section “General Application Information for Both Programs” for further details about eligibility requirements.

5. How will grants be disbursed?

Grants will be disbursed to all eligible applicants **after** the application window closes. Funds will be disbursed via electronic transfer, and so applicants will be asked to provide accurate routing and account numbers for their financial institution. These funds will not be disbursed to prepaid card or other non-traditional banking products.

See the “Information about Award Disbursements” section for more information.

6. What are the award amounts?

Award amounts have not yet been determined. The amount of program awards each applicant is eligible to receive will be based on the following factors:

- **Longevity** in the child care field, with a larger award going to applicants who have worked for a longer period of time in child care
- **Employment status**, with a larger award going to applicants who work full time (at least 30 hours/week) versus part-time (at least 15 hours/week)
- **The applicant’s role** in the child care sector, with a larger award going to applicants who work directly with children and in classroom teaching roles
- **The shift** an applicant works, with a larger award going to applicants who work nights (after 9:00 p.m. until 6:00 a.m.) and weekends (after 9:00 p.m. on Friday until 6:00 a.m. Monday) versus daytime shifts (6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday through Friday).

7. How can I use these funds?

These funds will be provided as stipends, or a sum of money similar to a bonus, which will be awarded to eligible applicants to support and recognize their work in Nebraska’s child care industry. The money can be used however the applicant wishes. Since this is a grant award program, the money does not need to be paid back.

8. If I receive an award, do I need to spend this money by a certain date?

No, there is no deadline for spending this award.

9. Will I have to submit receipts to prove how I spent the funds?

No, receipts will not be needed to prove how you spent funds.

10. How can I learn more about the program?



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Program information, a link to the application, and an application guide are available on the DHHS website at: www.dhhs.ne.gov/CCDF. Please check this website periodically to see if any updates have been posted.

II. Student Loan Repayment Program

1. What is the Student Loan Repayment program?

The goal of the Student Loan Repayment program is to increase economic stability for child care providers with student loans by decreasing their debt burden. The program is being administered by Nebraska's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). This money is intended to help workers improve their financial well-being and, more broadly, shape the future of child care and early education in the state by incentivizing workers to stay in the field.

2. How is the program funded?

The Student Loan Repayment program is funded with Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) money which the federal government provided to states to invest in their child care workforce networks. A total of \$10,000,000 is available in grant awards for this program.

3. When can I apply?

Applications will be accepted beginning at 8:00 am Central Time on **Monday, December 5, 2022** until 7:00 pm Central Time on **Wednesday, January 11, 2023**. This is **not** a first come, first serve program. You can apply anytime during this period and, if eligible, you will receive an award.

4. Who is eligible and what are the eligibility requirements?

This grant is only open to:

- Nebraska residents who are child care providers employed by a licensed child care program in the state of Nebraska; and
- Have a student loan in repayment status.
- Child care providers who have worked in child care for:
 - Six months if they have earned a degree or certificate related to early childhood education (see list of eligible degrees below); or,
 - Twelve months if they have not yet earned a degree or certificate or has earned a degree or certificate unrelated to early childhood education

Additionally, applicants must not have already received assistance from other student loan repayment programs to pay down the same debt for which relief is being sought as part of this program. For instance, if an applicant has \$10,000 in total student loan debt and \$9,000 has already been forgiven or repaid through another loan assistance program, only the remaining \$1,000 of the debt would be eligible to be considered for repayment as part of this program.

Please see the section "General Application Information for Both Programs" containing for further details about eligibility requirements.

5. Do I need to have completed my degree or certificate program?

Applicants who have not completed a degree are still eligible, but they must be able to demonstrate they are employed in Nebraska’s child care sector.

Specifically, applicants must have worked in the child care field for:

- Six months if they have earned a degree or certificate related to early childhood education (see list of eligible degrees below); or,
- Twelve months if they have not yet earned a degree or certificate or has earned a degree or certificate unrelated to early childhood education

A list of degrees and programs that are considered to be “related to early childhood education” is below:

<p>Certificate, associate degree, or similar (AD, AA, CDA)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied Psychology and Human Services (AD) • Associate of Arts with an emphasis on Early Childhood Education • Behavioral Sciences (AD) • Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential • Developmental Psychology (AD) • Early Childhood Certificate • Early Childhood Education (AD) • Early Childhood Education Diploma • Early Childhood Education Inclusive Endorsement • Early Childhood Education Supplemental Endorsement • Early Childhood Teacher Education (AD) • Elementary Education (AD) • Family and Consumer Sciences education Added Teaching Endorsement • Family and Consumer Sciences Education Initial Teaching Certificate • Human Services (AD) • Infant/Toddler Certificate • Non-Profit Management Certificate • Paraeducator- Pre-Teacher Education (AD) • Psychology (AD) • Social Services (AD) • Social Work (AD) • Sociology (AD) • Special Education Apprenticeship Program (AD)
<p>Bachelor’s Degree (BA, BS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioral Sciences (BA/BS) • Early Childhood Education in a Mobile Society (BS) • Early Childhood Teacher Education (BA/BS) • Elementary Education (BA/BS) • Family and Consumer Sciences Education (BA)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Development and Family Science (BA) • Human Services (BA/BS) • Inclusive Early Childhood Education (Birth-Grade 3) (BA/BS) • Psychology (BA/BS) • Social Services (BA/BS) • Social Work (BA/BS) • Sociology (BA/BS)
<p>Master's Degree (MA, MS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioral Sciences (MA/MS) • Child Development/Early Childhood Education (MA) • Early Childhood Teacher Education (MA/MS) • Educational Specialist Areas (MS) • Elementary Education (MA/MS) • Family and Community Services (MA) • Family and Consumer Sciences Education (MA) • Human and Family Services Administration (MA) • Human Services (BA/BS) • Psychology (MA/MS/) • Social Services (MA/MS) • Social Work (MA/MS) • Sociology (MA/MS) • Youth Development (MA)

6. How will the program be implemented?

Student loan repayment grants will be disbursed to all eligible applicants beginning in February, **after** the application window closes. Payments will not be made to applicants, but instead directly to the financial institution(s) holding the loan(s). As such, applicants will need to ensure they have provided accurate loan information. See the “Information about Award Disbursements” section for more information.

7. What are the award amounts?

Award amounts have not yet been determined. The amount of program awards each applicant is eligible to receive will be based on the type of degree or certificate program an applicant has completed or is pursuing. For example, those applicants that have completed a master’s or bachelor’s degree will be eligible for a larger award than those who have completed an associate degree or certificate program.

8. Am I eligible if I took my classes online?

Yes, degree and certificate programs for both traditional (in-person) and virtual or online learning are eligible. An applicant does not need to have attended a Nebraska institution.

9. How can I use these funds?

These funds are being provided to relieve eligible child care workers of their student loan debt. Payments will be made directly to lenders.

10. If my parents took out loans for me to go to school to support my studies and I now work in child care, could these funds help with repaying their loans?

No, this program does not cover loans taken out by an applicant's parent, or any other family member, even if the money was used to cover an applicant's educational expenses and this education led to work in the child care field.

11. Does this program help with any other loans, such as my Small Business Administration (SBA) loan?

No, this program is only for student loans.

12. Am I eligible if I have applied for other student loan relief programs, such as the recently announced federal student loan forgiveness program or the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program?

Yes, an applicant can have applied for other student loan forgiveness programs. However, applicants would not be eligible to receive assistance to pay down the same debt that is being relieved through other programs. If an applicant has a total of \$15,000 in debt and \$10,000 is being forgiven through another program, the maximum total an applicant could request assistance for in this program is \$5,000.

13. How can I learn more about the program?

Program information, a link to the application, and an application guide are available on the DHHS website at: www.dhhs.ne.gov/CCDF. Please check this website periodically to see if any updates have been posted.

III. General Application Information for Both Programs

1. How do I apply?

A link to the application is available on the DHHS website: www.dhhs.ne.gov/CCDF. It will take you to the application platform on Submit.com where you will set up a Submit.com account and can complete your application.

2. What documentation/information will I need to provide?

- **Applicant information**

- A copy of any government-issued ID or driver's license is acceptable for the Workforce Retention Stipend. If you are also applying for Student Loan Repayment, you must provide your Nebraska issued driver's license or state ID.
- A primary e-mail address where we can reach you
- A phone number we can use to reach you
- Your Nebraska Early Childhood Professional Record System Number (NECPRS) ID number. If you do not have a NECPRS ID number and you work directly with children in a teaching role, you will be required to register with NECPRS. (For more information about NECPRS, or to set up an account, visit: <https://necprs.ne.gov/home>. Upon logging in, your ID number can be found on the upper right side of your homepage.)

- **Applicant employment information**

- Name of your Nebraska child care employer(s) for the past 12 months. *(You are eligible for the Workforce Recognition Stipend if you have worked for a Nebraska child care employer for at least six months. We are collecting additional child care employment history to determine your eligibility for the Student Loan Repayment program. You should be prepared to list all child care employers over the last 12 months if you have not worked at your current location for 12 months.)*
- Address(es) of your child care employer(s).
- Child care provider license number(s). You can find this by referencing the DHHS Child Care Roster at: <https://dhhs.ne.gov/licensure/Documents/ChildCareRoster.pdf>
- Type of home or facility where you work (e.g., Family Child Care Home I, Family Child Care Home II, Child Care Center, School Age Child Care Center, Afterschool Program or Pre-School).
- Your supervisor's name and contact information *(for employment verification)*. If you are self-employed, you can list yourself.
- Your average hours worked per week.

- Your salary or wage. *(This is for information purposes only and does not affect your eligibility. If you are self-employed and do not draw a paycheck, you may enter \$0.)*
 - A list of any benefits you receive (e.g., health, paid leave).
 - A copy of your W2 or recent pay stub. *(If you are self-employed and do not draw a paycheck, you may upload a copy of your child care license.)*
 - A copy of the eligibility letter you received from DHHS Children's Services Licensing prior to beginning your employment in child care which verifies your background check was completed. If you do not have this letter, ask your employer to provide you with a copy. If your employer does not have this letter on file, you may send a message to DHHS.LicensureUnit@nebraska.gov or call 1-800-600-1289.
- **Applicant financial institution information (for Workforce Recognition Stipends, which will be made by direct deposit)**
 - Name of your financial institution *(It can be a bank or credit union but cannot be a prepaid card or non-traditional banking product.)*
 - Your account information and routing number. *(A routing number is a nine-digit number that identifies your bank or credit union. You can find this number at the bottom left-hand side of your check, looking up your financial institution online, or by contacting your financial institution.)*
 - A copy of a voided check. *(If you do not have a paper check, please contact your financial institution. If your address is not current on your check it is okay, however your name, routing number and account number must be current.)*
 - **For the Student Loan Repayment Program (only for Nebraska residents)**
 - Nebraska-issued driver's license or state ID.
 - Name of the institution that holds your student loan(s) and your account number(s)
 - A copy of your most recent student loan statement
 - A transcript, copy of your diploma, or other documents that provide proof of your enrollment or certificate/degree completion

3. Why do I need my bank account and routing number?

If you are awarded a Workforce Recognition Stipend, your funding will be electronically direct deposited into the bank or credit union account you designate on your application.

Awards will **not** be deposited to prepaid account cards or other non-traditional banking products. They will only be deposited into financial institution accounts

for which you provide a routing number and your account number. See the “Information about Award Disbursements” section for more information.

4. I live just across the Nebraska border but work in Nebraska. Am I eligible for these programs?

You are eligible to apply for the Workforce Recognition Stipend if you work in a Nebraska-licensed child care home or facility but live in another state. However, you must be a Nebraska resident to be eligible for Student Loan Repayment.

5. Are these programs open to in-home providers?

Yes, licensed Family Child Care Homes I and II are eligible.

6. I am an owner and employee. Am I eligible to apply?

Yes, if you are both an owner and employee you are eligible to apply if your home or facility is licensed by the state of Nebraska.

7. I am a center director at a Nebraska child care home or facility. Am I eligible to apply?

Yes, the Workforce Recognition Stipend program is open to center directors as well as other child care staff. However, only child care providers are eligible for the Student Loan Repayment program.

8. Can staff who serve as cooks or provide cleaning services at a child care home or facility apply?

Yes, the Workforce Recognition Stipend program is open to staff in those roles. You must be an employee of the home or facility. Contract workers are not eligible to apply.

For the Student Loan Repayment program, only child care providers are eligible to apply.

9. Is there a salary or income cap for these programs?

No, there is no salary cap or maximum income level for these programs.

10. I don't draw a salary as an owner. What should I use for salary or wage information?

The salary question on the application is for informational purposes only and does not affect your eligibility. If you are the Owner/Operator of a child care program and do not draw a salary, please include your estimated net income or your individual income as reported on your tax forms.

11. How will I know my application has been received?

Applicants will receive a confirmation e-mail from submit.com when their application has been received.

12. Can I start the application and return to it later?

Yes, you can simply login to your submit.com account and continue completing your application.

13. Will I be able to make changes to my application after I have submitted it?

No. Once an application has been submitted, an applicant cannot make any edits. Please review the application guide before you begin your online application to ensure you have the required documentation for submission.

If you have submitted your application and your circumstances change during the application period, please contact (402) 204-5506 or send an e-mail to: NE_child_care_grants@pubknow.com.

14. Can I fill out the application using my mobile device?

Yes, the website is mobile friendly. The application and supporting documents can be submitted electronically using your phone, tablet, or other mobile devices.

15. What if I fail to apply by the deadline?

The application deadline is **January 11, 2023** at **7:00 pm Central Time**.

16. Why do I need to complete an attestation before being notified whether my application has been approved?

Acknowledging that you have read, understand, and agree to the grant requirements and conditions is a step in the approval process. This includes but is not limited to:

- Agreeing to comply with the Grant Agreement Requirements and Conditions including but not limited to complying with all applicable federal laws, regulations, executive orders, policies, procedures, and directives.
- Agreeing to public reporting of your award information as part of the State of Nebraska's public transparency and accounting.
- Confirmation that your application contains complete and accurate information.

17. If my application is not approved, will I be informed about the reason for denial?

Yes, a notification email regarding application decisions will provide the reason(s) your application was not approved.

18. Is there an appeals process related to award or eligibility determinations?

The application process does not include an appeals procedure. Applicants must provide all requested documents as part of their application package upon submittal.

19. If I have questions, who can I contact for help?

Applicants can send an email to ne_child_care_grants@pubknow.com or call (402) 204-5506. Customer service representatives will be available from 7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. Central Time, Monday through Friday. Please be prepared to leave your name and contact information in case someone is not available to take your call.

IV. Information about Award Disbursements

1. How will I be notified if I am awarded funding?

Grant award decisions will be announced via email. Please ensure the email address you provide in your application is entered correctly.

2. How does the payment process work?

Awards will be disbursed between beginning in February 2023.

For the Workforce Stipend program, applicants will receive their award via direct deposit.

For the Student Loan Repayment program, awards will be sent directly to the institution(s) that holds the loan.

3. Are the awards one-time payments?

Yes, the awards for both programs will be paid in one single payment.

4. What common issues could result in denial or reduced payment?

- Providers who have not worked for at least six continuous months.
- Providers who are not currently employed by a child care home or facility that is licensed by the state of Nebraska.

5. What information about me will be made publicly available if I receive an award?

The State of Nebraska will issue public grant funding reports in aggregate form.

6. How does this award affect other DHHS benefits I am receiving (e.g., SNAP, TANF, Child Care)?

- **AABD (Aid to the Aged, Blind, or Disabled).** For awards to AABD households, please submit a policy question. Awards must be reported within 10 days of receipt of payment.
- **ADC (Aid to Dependent Children).** These awards are excluded. Any unspent remainder is considered a resource in the month following the month of receipt or report, taking into account adequate and timely notice. Awards must be reported within 10 days of receipt of payment.
- **Child Care benefits.** These awards are excluded. There is no reporting requirement.
- **LIHEAP (energy assistance) and LIHWAP (water assistance).** These awards are excluded as income. There is no resource test or reporting requirement.
- **SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).** These awards are excluded as income but counted as a resource for future months. There is no reporting requirement.

- **SSAD (social security for aged and disabled adults).** These awards are excluded. There is no reporting requirement.

7. If I have received a stabilization grant or other federal stimulus dollars, am I eligible for these programs too?

Yes, applicants will be eligible for these programs even if other federal stimulus dollars or grant awards have already been received.

V. Tax Implications of these Awards

1. Will any of the grant awards need to be repaid?

No, as long as you comply with the terms and conditions of the program. DHHS will conduct a post award review and repayment will be required if inaccurate or false information is provided and/or for other applicable instances of non-compliance.

2. Will my grant award be considered taxable income?

Per the IRS, certain federal assistance awarded to businesses and individuals is considered taxable income. Please consult your financial advisor and/or tax preparer as it pertains to your specific award and business or personal circumstances. Online resources are available on the IRS website.

3. Where can I find more information about the CRRSA funding and tax implications?

Please visit the IRS website for more information on the CRRSA and any tax implications it may have. We also encourage you to consult your financial advisor and/or tax preparer.