

Child Care WAGE\$® Nebraska

FY23 Results

From birth to age eight a child's brain is developing faster than at any other time in their life. The experiences a child has in those first eight years provide a foundation for their future. Children who receive high quality early learning experiences are more likely to live healthier lives, earn higher wages and contribute to society.

The quality of early care and education a child receives is directly linked to teacher education and compensation, but in Nebraska, many early educators do not have higher education degrees and earn less than \$15 an hour. The Child Care WAGE\$® Program provides education-based salary supplements to early educators to address the key issues of under-education, poor compensation and high turnover in the early childhood workforce. The WAGE\$ supplements make the early childhood field a more affordable and attractive professional option, thus reducing turnover rates. WAGE\$ offers higher financial awards as participants earn additional education, creating an important incentive to return to school. Ongoing supplements at the lower levels of education on the WAGE\$ scale are contingent upon completion of more coursework.

In Nebraska, the **Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children** administers Child Care WAGE\$®. In FY23, the program provided salary supplements to **17** child care professionals for education earned and for their commitment to their early childhood program. These teachers, directors and family child care educators worked in **17** different programs serving approximately **112** children.

Education

- **87%** of active participants either had an associate degree in ECE or higher or submitted education documentation to show progress in college.

Compensation

- **54%** of WAGE\$ participants earned less than \$15 per hour from their employers.
- WAGE\$ recipients earned an average six-month supplement of **\$1,082** or approximately **\$2,164** more per year, as a result of their participation.

Retention

- Only **9%** of WAGE\$ participants left their early education programs.

Demographics

- **6%** of WAGE\$ participants were people of color and/or Latinx
- **100%** of WAGE\$ participants worked in family child care homes.

Personal Impact

In surveys of WAGE\$ participants:

- **87%** said receiving a WAGE\$ supplement helped ease financial stress.

This year alone, **112** of Nebraska's children benefited from consistent care provided by a better educated teacher.

"WAGE\$ encourages teachers to stay with their programs and continue to do this important work despite the fact that the pay for this job generally undervalues how important early childhood educators are within our society. We are paid as 'babysitters' and not educators. Until wages for this pivotal work increase across the board, the WAGE\$ Program helps teachers like me to make ends meet and to remain with teaching." - WAGE\$ participant

The Child Care WAGE\$® Program is currently licensed and operating in five states. National outcomes can be found in the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® and Child Care WAGE\$® 2022-2023 Annual National Program Report.





Child Care WAGES® Nebraska FY23 Voices From the Field



Denita has been in the business of caregiving since becoming a CNA (certified nursing assistant) at sixteen years old. When her daughter was born, she went from working in nursing homes to private care, and in 2004, decided to switch from the field of caregiving to child care.



Denita says, "When I started my in-home program, I did not realize all that was entailed with early childhood. I thought of myself as a person who got to stay home and watch kids and provide them with activities while providing them with a safe and nurturing environment." It didn't take long before she was attending training sessions and striving to continually improve and provide the best quality of care she could. In the summer of 2013, she began to work toward achieving her associate degree. She graduated in 2016 with an Associate Degree in Human Services. She wanted to keep working towards her bachelor's degree, but with the cost and credit hours needed, she decided to wait.

Since then Denita has been able to continue her education. She received her CDA in August 2018, and used the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship to graduate from Chadron State College in the spring of 2022 with her Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education. She is enrolled in Nebraska's Step Up to Quality program, where she has been a Step Five (the highest level) since 2019, and is part of Sixpence Sprouting Success. Denita says, "I have had the pleasure of working with multiple organizations that view early childhood education as one of the most important foundations of development just as I do. I've taken classes to improve my family child care program not only for myself, but for my own children and the children I care for as well. The day I got the letter in the mail about Child Care WAGES®, it was definitely like a pat on the back and a thank you for what many of us are doing in this field."

– Denita Julius, WAGES Participant

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