

Child Care WAGES® Nebraska

FY22 Results

Before first grade, a child may spend more than 10,000 hours in child care. Research tells us that children enrolled in a good early care and education program in the first five years of life are most likely to be in a highly skilled job or in college at age 21. Ensuring quality early care and education for children today creates a viable workforce for the future and a strong American economy in the long run.



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 WAGES® 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 WAGES supplements make the early childhood field a more affordable and attractive professional option, thus reducing turnover rates. WAGES 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 WAGES scale are contingent upon completion of more coursework.

In Nebraska, the **Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children** administers Child Care WAGES®. In FY22, the program provided salary supplements to **34** child care professionals for education earned and for their commitment to their early childhood program. These family child care educators worked in **34** different programs serving approximately **245** children.

Education

- **74%** of active participants either had an associate degree in ECE or higher or submitted education documentation to show progress in college.

Compensation

- **88%** of WAGES participants earned less than \$15 per hour from their employers.
- WAGES recipients earned an average six-month supplement of **\$1,067**, or approximately **\$2,134** more per year, as a result of their participation.

Retention

- Only **3%** of WAGES participants left their early education programs.

Demographics

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

Personal Impact

In surveys of WAGES participants:

- **96%** said WAGES encouraged them to stay in their current early education program.
- **81%** said WAGES encouraged them to pursue further education.
- **100%** said receiving a WAGES supplement helped ease financial stress.
- **62%** said they needed the funds to pay bills.
- **62%** said they were more able to address the basic needs of their families, such as food and housing.

This year alone, **245** of Nebraska's children benefited from consistent care provided by a better educated teacher.

"It is difficult to stay in child care when you are underpaid. When you are paid competitively, it makes you feel successful and the enthusiasm then is transferred to the children. My life and the lives of my children have been forever changed with my educational level and the money." -WAGES participant

The Child Care WAGES® 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 WAGES® 2021-2022 Annual National Program Report.

Child Care WAGE\$® Nebraska FY22 Voices From the Field



Shelley Wallace never imagined being a family child care provider. Even as a small child, she knew she wanted to be a teacher, but she always believed she would be an art teacher, not an early childhood educator. Her aunt, who she idolized, had her doctorate in education and was a principal at a local school. Shelley started college with the intention of being like her aunt, but life got in the way and she settled for an Associate Degree in Accounting, instead. However, Shelley promised herself that someday she would still get a bachelor's degree.

At the time of her graduation, her son was struggling developmentally and she decided to homeschool him for a year so he could catch up. During this time period, Shelley also began operating a family child care business in order to provide for her family. Shelley believed that after a year she would find a job in accounting and go back to college part time. What she didn't know was she was going to find her life's passion.

Shelley currently runs the only NAFCC accredited family child care program in Nebraska, has a certified Nature Explore classroom and was the first Wonderschool in Nebraska. Even though she has been doing family child care for 20 years, she still ached to have her bachelor's degree. She heard about T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Nebraska and, after receiving a scholarship, enrolled in the Early Childhood Education Inclusive degree program at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. She now also serves on the T.E.A.C.H. and WAGE\$ Advisory Committee because she wants to help other providers achieve their dreams as well.

Shelley worried about student teaching. She knew she could never leave her assistant on his own with seven children. However, she needed to care for a minimum of seven children to meet her financial needs. Receiving a WAGE\$ supplement has enabled her to financially cut back to five children while she completes her student teaching experience.

Shelley Wallace said, "I am looking forward to having my teaching certificate and fulfilling my lifelong dream of being a certified teacher, all because of T.E.A.C.H. and WAGE\$." Shelley is planning to use her WAGE\$ stipends once she graduates to get her master's degree and doctorate in early childhood education. She also wants to continue her family child care program until she is ready to retire. Shelley said, "I believe the best place for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers is with family. That is what family child care is all about and because of WAGE\$, I can continue to provide that care and education until I retire."



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