

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

GENERAL INFORMATION –

What is Child Care WAGE\$[®] Missouri?

Child Care WAGE\$[®] Missouri (WAGE\$ Missouri) is an education-based salary supplement program that provides financial incentives to early childhood professionals. Salary supplements are based on an individual's level of education and ongoing commitment to the field. WAGE\$ Missouri supports eligible child care aides, assistant educators, educators, assistant directors, directors, and on-site owners in family or center-based child care working 30+ hours per week directly, in care of or on behalf of, children birth to age five in St. Louis County. WAGE\$ Missouri rewards both educational achievement and continued retention at child care programs.

This is the first WAGE\$[®] pilot in Missouri with plans to seek more funds across the state. The St. Louis County pilot is funded through December 2028.

Who is eligible to receive a salary supplement?

Early childhood educators must:

- Work in a licensed or license-exempt child care program in St. Louis County.
- Work directly, in care of or on behalf of, children birth to age five in St. Louis County at least 30 hours per week.
- Meet education requirements on the WAGE\$ Missouri Salary Supplement Scale.
- Earn at or below the program's income cap of \$27 hour or \$56,160 a year.
- Have worked at the same program for at least six months and remain eligible and employed at the same child care program through the time funding is available.

Are part-time child care professionals eligible for WAGE\$ Missouri?

No. At this time, part-time employees do not qualify for the WAGE\$ Missouri program. Eligibility is based in part on meeting minimum work-hour requirements, as supplements are intended to support those working 30 hours or more directly, in care of or on behalf of, children birth to age five.

Can directors or owners qualify for WAGE\$ Missouri?

Yes. Directors and owners may qualify if they meet all eligibility requirements. This includes working at least 30 hours per week directly in care of or on behalf of children at a child care program. Owners must submit their most recent 1040 tax return, including all supporting schedules, along with W-2 form(s). If taxes are filed jointly, W-2 forms for both individuals must be included. Additional documentation may be requested if needed.

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What do I have to do to participate in WAGES[®] Missouri?

- Complete the application found at childcarewagesmo.org.
- Submit an official transcript(s) or current Child Development Associate (CDA) credential to verify education level. ***See the FAQ on transcripts listed below under TO APPLY for full information.*
- Submit a pay stub from within the last two months showing pay rate and amount of time worked.
- If you are a family-based child care program, your most recent Schedule C (Profit/Loss statement) from your tax return is required.
- If you are a center-based program owner, you must provide your most recent tax forms, including all supporting schedules.
- Have your employer complete and sign the Employee Information and Verification Form.

Does applying mean I will get the salary supplement?

Not necessarily. All applicants must meet the eligibility requirement, submit all documentation and be formally approved before receiving the salary supplement.

What is the deadline to apply?

WAGES[®] Missouri accepts applications on a rolling basis, with monthly processing deadlines and no set enrollment period. Once your complete application is received, including transcripts and pay stubs or tax forms, it will be reviewed and you will be notified of your eligibility. A salary supplement is only awarded after six (6) months of work at the same child care program have been completed and verified.

How much will I receive?

Salary supplement amounts vary based on your education level as outlined on the WAGES[®] Missouri Salary Supplement Scale found online at childcarewagesmo.org/eligibility. Awards are issued in two six-month payments, with each payment based on 30 hours of work or more completed weekly during a six-month commitment period worked at the same child care program.

How and when are supplements issued?

Payments are issued by check and mailed to eligible participants upon the successful completion of each six-month commitment period. These periods typically run from mid-month to mid-month and are established based on the participant's start date, application date, and when all documentation is received. Each installment represents half of the total annual award amount.

Before funds are released, program staff must be able to verify that the participant remained eligible and employed at their child care program during the preceding six months. All payments are contingent upon the availability of program funding. *Please note*, you will need to submit a current W9 form before payment can be sent.

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Do I have to pay taxes on the supplement I receive?

Yes, you do have to pay taxes on supplements since they are income. WAGE\$ Missouri does not remove any taxes from your salary supplement. During tax season, we will send you an IRS 1099 form to file with your taxes. Participants are responsible for reporting and paying personal income taxes and will be taxed on wage supplements.

Will taking the salary supplement affect my public assistance payments?

If you use public assistance, you can indicate this on the application. If you choose, you can meet with a tax consultant retained by Child Care Aware[®] of Missouri to determine if participation in Child Care WAGE\$ Missouri has an effect. You can decide whether to apply or not based on your meeting.

What if my program closes temporarily (for example, during the summer), can I still qualify?

Yes. Participants may be away from the classroom for up to two weeks without affecting their payment schedule.

If the closure extends beyond two weeks, the timing of the next supplement will be adjusted based on the length of time the participant was out of the classroom. WAGE\$ Missouri salary supplements are awarded only for time spent working directly with or on behalf of children in a child care program.

TO APPLY -

How do I need to send my transcripts?

Electronic Transcripts

We accept secure electronic transcripts sent from the college or university transcript service or the National Student Clearinghouse. If an applicant or child care provider receives an official electronic transcript by email, they may forward the original email directly to WAGE\$ Missouri.

Paper Transcripts

We accept official paper transcripts, even if the envelope has been opened. We will send back the official transcripts *only* if you request this. Transcripts may be mailed to:

WAGE\$ Missouri

955 Executive Parkway Drive, Suite 106

St. Louis, MO 63141

Please Note: Copies, unofficial transcripts, screenshots, photographs, student portal records, advising reports, and grade reports cannot be accepted.

What transcripts should I send?

WAGE\$ Missouri needs to review:

- All transcripts for degrees earned in all fields.
- All early childhood education related classes from all colleges at which early childhood education credits were earned, even if a degree was not earned at the school.

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What if I don't have an email address?

You must have an active email account to participate since this is the way WAGE\$ Missouri regularly communicates with participants. If you do not currently have your own email address, you can create a free account through companies such as Google Gmail, Yahoo, Microsoft, AOL, or other email services.

What if my diploma was awarded outside the United States?

Education from all countries outside of the US must be evaluated by an independent agency. The letter from the evaluation agency must state that the school is accredited or equivalent to a regionally accredited school. Further documentation may be required upon request.

FOR EMPLOYERS –

What is my employer responsible for if I apply for WAGE\$ Missouri?

Employers must verify the applicant's employment status and wages when requested. They must also agree not to use an employee's participation in WAGE\$ Missouri to offset regular pay increases. Employers are not responsible for providing salary supplements.

What if my center does not have a DVN license number?

Your child care program must be licensed or license-exempt meaning they are regulated by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Office of Compliance. All such programs are issued a license number (DVN). If your child care program does not have a DVN license number, contact WAGE\$ Missouri for guidance.

TEACH MISSOURI SCHOLARSHIP AND WAGE\$ MISSOURI –

How can I increase the level and amount of my supplement?

As a participant increases their education, they have the ability to increase their salary supplement level as long as they continue to meet WAGE\$ Missouri eligibility requirements. Anyone interested in increasing their education should visit the TEACH Early Childhood[®] Missouri Scholarship website at Teach-Missouri.org to find out about scholarship models available and eligibility criteria.

Can I participate in both the TEACH Missouri Scholarship and WAGE\$ Missouri?

Yes! TEACH Missouri and WAGE\$ Missouri go together. TEACH Missouri is a way to work up the WAGE\$ Missouri salary supplement scale by increasing one's education level. Participants in both programs can receive bonuses from TEACH Missouri and salary supplements from WAGE\$ Missouri simultaneously.

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RENEWALS –

Do I need to reapply each year to continue receiving a supplement?

No, not in most cases. Before each supplement is issued, WAGE\$ Missouri specialists verify eligibility with the applicant's director, administrator, or owner. *Please note*, if you have moved, you will need to submit an updated W9 form before payment can be sent.

Reapplication is only required if an educator becomes ineligible at any point, such as changing employers. *Please note*, if you change employers, you will need to reapply and submit a new application packet. To reenter the program, the applicant must submit a new application and pay documentation and have their eligibility reevaluated.