



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR PAY EQUITY FUND

Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund Frequently Asked Questions for Early Childhood Educators

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Information for All DC Early Childhood Educators Employed by Licensed Child Development Facilities

1. What is the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund?

The Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund is a special fund of the District of Columbia Government to support child care providers to increase compensation of the early childhood educators they employ. The program is administered by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). OSSE implements the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund based on District law and the recommendations of the Early Childhood Educator Equitable Compensation Task Force (“task force”).

2. How does the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund work?

OSSE distributes funds to child care providers that choose to participate in the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund. To participate, a child care provider must agree to pay eligible early childhood educators, by position and degree, salaries that meet or exceed the [minimum salaries](#) established by OSSE. Child care providers are not required to participate in the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund, but it is [highly encouraged](#).

3. How do early childhood educators receive Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Funds?

Child care providers that participate in the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund receive funds to raise the wages of their employees. Employers that receive funds must use them to pay eligible lead teachers and assistant teachers wages or salaries that meet or exceed the [minimum salary requirements](#) established by OSSE. Eligible lead teachers and assistant teachers must be paid the minimum salaries as part of their regular paycheck. Child care providers may not distribute funds from the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund to eligible staff through supplemental payments or bonuses.

4. Is my employer required to participate in the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund?

Child care providers are not required to participate in the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund, but it is highly encouraged. If your employer does not participate in the program, they will not receive any funds from the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund and will not be required to pay their staff the [minimum salaries](#). All employers must comply with other District and/or federal laws and requirements regarding worker wages

and hours that apply to all employers, including the Fair Shot Minimum Wage Act of 2016, and for child care providers participating in the District's child care subsidy program, the Living Wage Act of 2006.

5. How do I know if my employer is participating in the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund?

Ask your employer if they are participating in the program. OSSE also publishes a list of facilities participating in the program on a quarterly basis. A list of facilities participating in the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund in fiscal year 2026 (FY26) is [available here](#).

Information for Early Childhood Educators Employed by a Facility Participating in the Pay Equity Fund

6. How do I know if the minimum salaries for the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund apply to me?

Child care providers that receive Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity funds from OSSE must pay eligible lead teachers and assistant teachers, in the following staff types in the Division of Early Learning Licensing Tool (DELLT), who hold a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or higher wages or salaries that [meet or exceed the minimum salaries](#).

For the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund, the following staff types in DELLT qualify as a **lead teacher**:

- Teacher
- Montessori teacher
- Expanded home caregiver
- Home caregiver

For the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund, the following staff types in DELLT qualify as an **assistant teacher**:

- Assistant teacher
- Montessori assistant teacher
- Pre-K Enhancement and Expansion Program (PKEEP) assistant teacher
- Associate home caregiver

If you are assigned one of the staff types listed above in DELLT and hold a CDA credential or higher, your employer is required to pay you according to the required minimum salaries, consistent with your educational credentials as approved in DELLT, unless they have an approved waiver. For more information on waivers, see question 22.

If you are unsure of your staff type or approved credentials in DELLT, please talk with your employer.

7. I am a part-time employee. Does my employer have to pay me the minimum hourly wage/salary for the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund?

Yes, if you are a part-time employee in an eligible staff type with an approved record in DELLT, your employer must pay you an hourly wage or salary that is equivalent to or greater than the minimum hourly wage/salary based on your current role and credential approved in your staff record in DELLT. If you have questions about your role and credential, you should speak with your employer.

8. How does my employer determine what my staff type is in DELLT?

An early childhood educator's staff type in DELLT is based on their responsibilities at the facility where they are employed AND their qualifications. For example, an individual in the assistant teacher role must carry out the responsibilities that reflect an assistant teacher role as defined in OSSE's licensing regulations AND have the credentials required for the role. Employers must include the required supporting documentation (e.g., proof of degree completion such as a transcript, certificate, diploma, etc.) in an employee's staff record. An educator's staff type in DELLT should reflect the role they spend the majority of their time in.

9. How does my employer document my credentials in DELLT?

The credentials an early childhood educator is assigned in DELLT must be approved by OSSE and are based on the supporting documentation (e.g., transcript, certificate, diploma) provided in the employee's staff record. For example, if an early childhood educator's highest educational credential is an associate degree in early childhood education (ECE), their employer should include proof of degree completion, such as a transcript showing the degree was conferred, in the employee's staff record in DELLT. OSSE will review the supporting documentation to confirm the credential was conferred and approve the early childhood educator in DELLT as holding an associate in ECE. Staff records must include supporting documentation to prove the credential and/or credit hour attainment. Please make sure you have shared documentation of credential or degree attainment with your employer.

10. Are there minimum salary requirements for directors, assistant directors or other staff who spend part of their day in child care classrooms (for example, providing coverage)?

OSSE has not established minimum salaries for individuals who have a staff type of director, assistant director, administrative staff, teacher's aide, floater and/or substitute in DELLT. However, child care providers have discretion in how they spend their funding award, as long as they are meeting the minimum salary requirements for eligible lead teachers and assistant teachers. Should a child care provider have additional funds after meeting the minimum salary requirement for eligible staff, the child care provider may use the excess funds to compensate additional staff, including directors, assistant directors, administrative staff, teacher's aide, floaters, substitutes and individuals employed in other roles.

11. What are the minimum salaries required by the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund?

The minimum salary requirement for an eligible early childhood educator is based upon their role and credentials as documented in DELLT and reviewed and approved by OSSE. Staff records in DELLT must include required supporting documentation (e.g., proof of degree completion such as a transcript, certificate, diploma, etc.). For more information about how to determine an educator’s minimum salary based on staff type and credential, please consult this [guide](#). See the table below for more information.

Role	Credentials	Minimum Salaries for FY26 (annual salary)	Minimum Salaries for FY26 (hourly wage)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistant Teacher 	CDA or equivalent	\$48,736	\$23.43/hour
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Associate Home Caregiver 	Associate degree or higher or 60 hours of college-level coursework in any field	\$51,576	\$24.80/hour
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead Teacher Expanded Home Caregiver 	CDA or equivalent	\$48,736	\$23.43/hour
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home Caregiver 	CDA or equivalent	\$51,576	\$24.80/hour
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead Teacher Home Caregiver Expanded Home Caregiver 	Associate degree in ECE; associate degree with greater than or equal to 12 credit hours in ECE; or 60 hours of college-level coursework with greater than or equal to 12 credit hours in ECE	\$60,678	\$29.17/hour
	Bachelor’s degree or higher in ECE or bachelor’s degree or higher with greater than or equal to 12 credit hours in ECE	\$71,010	\$34.14/hour

12. Why did the minimum salaries decrease between FY25 and FY26? Does this mean my salary/wage will decrease?

The DC Council passed emergency legislation on Oct. 21, 2025 decreasing the minimum salaries for all staff types for the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund for FY26 in order to enable the program to operate within the funds available in the District’s approved FY26 budget. The minimum salaries were reduced by 4-5 percent from FY25, depending on role and credential, with slightly larger reductions applied to roles/credentials with higher minimum salaries. Employers must continue to meet the

[minimum salary requirements](#) for FY25 through December 2025, unless they have an approved waiver. The minimum salaries for FY26 take effect in January 2026. This means employers may decrease their employees' salaries/wages starting in January. Early childhood educators should ask their employer about their plans for implementing the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund starting in January 2026 and if their salaries/wages will change. Employers may choose to pay eligible educators more than the minimum salaries for FY26 but cannot pay them less, unless they have an approved waiver.

13. I am currently enrolled in a credential/degree program. Am I eligible for the minimum salary aligned to the credential/degree I am pursuing if I have not completed the program yet?

No. The minimum salary that an educator is eligible to receive through the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund is determined by the actual credentials they hold. This means that if your staff type is teacher and you are enrolled in a program to earn a bachelor's degree in ECE, but you have not completed the program, you are not eligible for the minimum salary of \$71,010 until you earn your degree and OSSE reviews proof of the credential in DELLT and approves the update to your staff record.

If you earn a higher credential/degree, provide proof of that credential/degree to your employer. Your employer must then update your staff record in DELLT to provide proof of the credential/degree. Your employer is required to pay you the minimum salary aligned to the credential/degree you've earned after OSSE has reviewed supporting documentation and approved your staff record in DELLT.

14. The minimum salaries say that lead teachers and expanded home caregivers can have a CDA. Are individuals in those staff types still required to meet the minimum education requirements?

Yes. Teachers and expanded home caregivers must meet the minimum education requirement for their staff type by having one of the following:

- Associate degree (or higher) in early childhood education or a closely related field; OR
- Completion of at least 60 credit hours or an associate degree (or higher) in any subject area with at least 12 credit hours in early childhood education; OR
- Enrollment in a degree program, provided that the teacher holds a CDA and earns an associate degree (or higher) within four years of their initial date of hire as a teacher at a child development center.

OSSE recognizes that some eligible teachers and expanded home caregivers may still be pursuing the required credential or exempt from the requirement due to 10 years of continuous service. Continuous service certifications issued to staff consistent with licensing regulations allow the holder to work in the position for which they hold a certification, but do not affect the education level used in calculating the amount of funding a child care provider receives through the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity

Fund or the minimum salaries to which an eligible early educator is entitled under the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund. More information on the education requirements and resources for early childhood educator to earn credentials and degrees is [available here](#).

15. I am a lead teacher and I hold a bachelor's degree in any field and a CDA. What is the minimum salary for which I am eligible?

This individual would be eligible for the teacher salary aligned to bachelor's degree in ECE or bachelor's degree (or higher) with greater than or equal to 12 credit hours in ECE. For early childhood educators in roles that require 60 hours of college credit, an associate or bachelor's degree in ECE, OSSE also considers holding a valid CDA credential as satisfying the requirement for 12 hours of college credit in ECE.

To obtain a CDA credential, a CDA candidate is required to complete 120 clock hours of coursework and successfully complete 480 hours of work experience, a professional portfolio, a passing score on the CDA exam, and a verification visit from a professional development specialist. Completing only CDA coursework does not qualify an early educator as meeting requirements for 12 hours of college credit in ECE.

16. How much is my employer required to pay me if I don't have a CDA credential or postsecondary degree?

Since January 2025, child care providers participating in the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund do not have to meet a minimum salary requirement for educators who do not hold at least a CDA. The Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund does not provide funds to child care providers for educators they employ who do not hold at least a CDA credential. This is because a CDA is the minimum education requirement for assistant teachers and associate caregivers in OSSE's licensing regulations. In alignment with the licensing regulations, a CDA is the minimum credential requirement for the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund.

If you are working toward earning a CDA and hold an enrollment-based certification to meet the minimum education requirements, the certification does not apply to the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund. For Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund purposes, the highest education level completed is recognized.

Facilities must still follow other wage laws, including the District's Minimum Wage and Living Wage, both of which are \$17.95 per hour as of July 1, 2025. This means that while some educators may not qualify for Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund minimum salaries, their employer is still required to meet local wage laws.

17. Can my employer provide a bonus or supplemental payment to meet the minimum salary requirements of the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund?

No. The funds that child care providers receive from the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund should not be distributed to staff through supplemental or bonus payments.

Child care providers must meet the minimum salary requirements through hourly wages or annual salaries paid to employees through their regular paychecks. Please talk with your employer to learn more about their plan for implementing the minimum salaries.

18. What happens if I change jobs?

If you take a job with another child care provider that is participating in the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund, your new employer must create a staff record for you in DELLT. The staff record must include all the required information (e.g., name, date of birth, staff type, etc.) and supporting documentation (e.g., hiring form, proof of credentials, etc.). Following OSSE's approval of your staff record in DELLT, if you are employed in an eligible staff type, your employer is required to pay you at least the minimum salary that aligns with your role and credentials.

If you take a job at another child care provider and the provider is not participating in the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund, your new employer is not required to pay the minimum salary for your role and credentials but must comply with other District and/or federal laws and requirements regarding worker wages and hours that apply to all employers, including the Fair Shot Minimum Wage Act of 2016, and for child care providers participating in the District's child care subsidy program, the Living Wage Act of 2006.

19. If my staff type/role changes will my salary change?

The minimum salary for an eligible lead teacher and assistant teacher is based on their role and credentials. If your staff type changes, your employer must update your staff record in DELLT and include the required supporting documentation. Your employer is required to pay you the minimum salary for your new staff type as soon as the staff type change is approved in DELLT by OSSE. Please note, if your staff type changes to a staff type associated with a lower minimum salary (e.g., you go from teacher to assistant teacher), your salary could decrease. Your staff type in DELLT should reflect both your credentials (including any certifications based on continuous service or enrollment in a degree program to meet required credentials) AND your responsibilities at the facility where you work.

If you are unsure of your staff type, highest credential or applicable minimum salary, you should talk with your employer. An employer may not change an employee's staff type solely to reduce the minimum salary for which an employee is eligible, if the employee's responsibilities have not changed and the employee meets the credentials required for their role or has obtained a certification allowing them to work in the role without holding required credentials. If you believe your employer has violated this requirement, email OSSE.ECEPayEquity@dc.gov.

20. Who do I contact at OSSE if I want my current credentials or transcripts reviewed?

To have your credentials and/or transcripts reviewed by OSSE, please send supporting documentation to OSSE's ECE Help Desk at ECEhelpdesk@dc.gov.

21. How can I check my staff type and credentials in DELLT? How can I upload documentation of my credentials in DELLT?

Early childhood educators do not have access to DELLT. Only your employer can access the system and make updates to your staff record. To confirm the staff type and/or highest credentials you have verified in DELLT, talk with your employer. If you have documentation of credentials and/or degrees that you would like uploaded in DELLT you should provide this documentation to your employer so that they can update your staff record in DELLT.

22. How do I know my employer is paying me the required minimum salary?

If you are employed by a child care provider participating in the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund in an eligible staff type and have at least a CDA, your employer must pay you the required minimum salary aligned to your role and credential as documented in DELLT, unless they have an approved waiver. See question 11 for the minimum salaries required for providers participating in the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund. Please note, employers are required to meet the minimum salaries before state or federal taxes or other deductions that may come out of your paycheck. If you are unsure of your staff type or credentials in DELLT, please talk with your employer.

23. I am concerned my employer is not paying me the required minimum salary. What can I do?

If you believe your employer is not paying you the minimum salary you are entitled to, please contact OSSE.ECEPayEquity@dc.gov and include the name of the child development facility where you work.

24. My employer said they were approved for a waiver and are not required to pay eligible staff the required minimum salary. Is this true?

Some child care providers may not be able to pay all their eligible staff the required minimum salaries even with financial support from the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund. To support as many providers as possible to participate in the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund and use the funding to increase their staff's pay, OSSE offers a waiver. A provider that is approved for a waiver is expected to use Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Funds to increase pay for staff to the maximum extent possible within the provider's resources. However, the provider is not penalized or found out of compliance if it does not pay all eligible staff at least the minimum salaries specified by OSSE.

If a child care provider is approved for a waiver, the provider is not required to pay eligible staff the minimum salaries. Providers with approved waivers must use all funds received from the program to:

- Cover salaries or wages for eligible teachers and assistant teachers;
- Cover taxes and mandatory benefits associated with salaries or wages; and/or

- Provide health or other discretionary benefits for staff.

Providers with approved waivers are required to create a salary schedule, by role and credential, of the salaries they will pay eligible educators. Educators should ask their employer to provide the salary schedule that was approved by OSSE. If you're unsure if your employer was approved for a waiver, email OSSE.ECEPayEquity@dc.gov.

25. How will this program affect my taxes?

Your employer will be required to pay employer payroll and other taxes and withholding taxes, as they are for other wages and salaries; however, you are required to pay applicable income or other taxes on the wages or salaries you receive from your employer. Early childhood educators may wish to consult with an accountant or other tax expert to find out whether the increase in pay will impact their tax liability.

26. Will a pay raise or pay decrease impact my eligibility to receive assistance from income eligible benefits programs (e.g., Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program [SNAP], housing vouchers, child care subsidy)?

OSSE does not administer Medicaid, SNAP benefits, or housing assistance and cannot provide specific guidance on eligibility for these programs. If you are concerned that a salary increase may impact your eligibility to receive assistance from income-based public benefit programs like Medicaid, SNAP, housing vouchers, etc., please consult with the agencies that administer those programs in the state in which you reside for additional information on eligibility. Early childhood educators who lose eligibility for Medicaid as a result of increased pay may be eligible for subsidized health insurance coverage through HealthCare4ChildCare. For more information about this program, please visit the DC Health Benefits Exchange website [here](#).

District residents who are employees of licensed child development facilities, regardless of participation in the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund, may be eligible for child care assistance. When calculating family income to determine subsidy eligibility, OSSE will exclude any income earned from employment in a child development facility licensed by OSSE and any income earned from the operation of a child development home by an individual who is the holder of the license. For more on the DC Child Care Subsidy Program, please visit the [website](#).