



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR PAY EQUITY FUND

What Educators Need to Know About Changes Starting in January 2026

How the Program Works

The [Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund](#) is a District of Columbia Government program that supports child care employers to increase pay for early educators they employ.

Child care providers that participate in the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund must pay eligible early educators wages or salaries, based on their role and highest credential, that meet or exceed the [minimum salary](#) requirements. Participating child care employers receive funds from OSSE four times a year to help them reach the minimum salary requirements for eligible staff.

What’s Changing for Educators

Due to a change in local law, the minimum required salaries for the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund have been reduced effective Jan. 1, 2026. This means your employer *may* decrease your salary/wage starting in January 2026.

If your employer does make changes to your salary or wage, they must inform you of the change and provide you an updated offer/hire letter that reflects your new salary or wage. If you have questions about how changes may affect your salary, you should talk with your employer or your company’s HR team.

Role	Credentials	Min. Annual Salary	Min. Hourly Wage
• Assistant Teacher	CDA or equivalent	\$48,736	\$23.43/hour
• Associate Caregiver	Associate degree or higher; or 60 hours of college-level coursework in any field	\$51,576	\$24.80/hour
• Lead Teacher	CDA or equivalent	\$48,736	\$23.43/hour
• Expanded Home Caregiver			
• Home Caregiver	CDA or equivalent	\$51,576	\$24.80/hour
• Lead Teacher	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
• Home Caregiver			
• Expanded Home Caregiver	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

Why Your Salary May Decrease

Reductions to the minimum salaries affect how much funding your child care employer receives from OSSE. Some employers may not have the resources to pay their staff the same salaries they were paid in 2025 because they are receiving less funding from the program.

Why These Changes Are Being Made

The DC Council passed, and Mayor Bowser signed, emergency legislation reducing the minimum salaries. These changes enable the program to continue to operate within the available funds.



Where to Find More Information

Scan this QR code to download an FAQ for early childhood educators.