

# Child Care Services Association National Early Childhood Educator Apprenticeship Program Overview

## BACKGROUND

For nearly 50 years, Child Care Services Association (CCSA) has led improvements in early childhood education systems, advocating for the accessible, affordable high quality child care that is so important for a child's early development. Children who receive high-quality early childhood education, particularly those from low-income, vulnerable families, are more likely to graduate high school, pursue secondary education and become contributing members of society. This is clear in its mission to lead efforts to strengthen accessible and affordable quality early care and education by providing support for families, communities and the workforce.

In 1990, Child Care Services Association created the T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Early Childhood® Scholarship Program to address the issues of under-education, poor compensation and high turnover within the early childhood workforce. A unique scholarship opportunity, the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Program is a comprehensive national strategy to help address the need for a well-qualified, fairly compensated and stable workforce.

As a leading national early childhood workforce intermediary, the National Center, a division of Child Care Services Association, a large non-profit with local, state and national programs, has worked across the nation since 2000 to address inequities in the education, compensation and career mobility of the early childhood workforce. Through one of its primary workforce initiatives, T.E.A.C.H. scholarships, the National Center Division makes credentials and college completion desirable, accessible and achievable for low-income, incumbent early childhood educators from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds. This work is accomplished by: (1) reducing the financial and non-financial barriers to access to and success in college; (2) working across all early care and education settings, including child care centers, Head Start and Pre-K; (3) increasing compensation; (4) incentivizing retention; (5) providing counselors/coaches to help recipients address barriers to success; (6) shortening the time it takes to educators to achieve higher education attainment; and (7) leveraging funding to create a more accessible, responsive higher education system.



The National Center licenses and supports a single non-profit organization in each of 23 states and D.C. to operate statewide, individual T.E.A.C.H. scholarship programs. Participants achieve gains in their education and compensation and are retained in their worksites at higher rates. In FY21, scholarship recipients working toward degrees averaged 14-17 completed credit hours, experienced a 8-9% wage gain and had a 5% or lower turnover rate. They reflect the ethnic/racial/income characteristics of the children they serve: 52% were first-generation college students, 54% had not taken a college course before and 50% were people of color and/or are Latinx.

In addition to supporting states with the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program, the National Center provides technical assistance to states across the country to build a more stable, well-educated and fairly compensated early childhood workforce. The National Center's special projects raise the awareness of early childhood workforce compensation issues and create new or significantly expand policy, strategy development and implementation and funding to improve the workforce's compensation in participating states. The National Center is a one-stop shop for national, state and local policymakers looking for proven strategies to support the longstanding challenges facing the early childhood workforce. The apprenticeship program will enhance the National Center's existing programs and provide new opportunities to work with all states to develop early childhood education pathways for the workforce.



## WHY ADD AN APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM?

Apprenticeships provide a unique opportunity to support skill development in the high demand field of early childhood education. Utilizing the unique structure of an apprenticeship, a participant will be able to gain employment and attend institutions of higher education working toward industry-recognized credentials and degrees. Combining employment, on-the-job training, college coursework and individualized mentoring, an apprenticeship can be a chance to build a more stable early childhood workforce.

The components of T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood scholarships for associate and bachelor's degrees have always mirrored the components of an apprenticeship program. The National Center has developed a registered apprenticeship model that works in coordination with these existing scholarships to support the early childhood workforce across the country. While not all states house the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program, technical assistance and support can be provided to states, identifying possible opportunities to use the apprenticeship model.

## APPRENTICESHIP KEY COMPONENTS

Apprenticeship programs have five main components: paid job, on-the-job training, related-technical instruction, mentorship and credentials. Blending these key components together is what makes an apprenticeship a unique opportunity to meet a participant where they are and support them in earning credentials and degrees. As the early childhood workforce works to strengthen career pathways for those entering the early childhood profession, apprenticeship can provide those opportunities.

### PAID JOB COMPONENT

Apprentices in the CCSA National Apprenticeship Program will be employed as early childhood educators in early learning programs. Their employers must sign an agreement that confirms their willingness to sponsor the apprentice and meet a variety of conditions. For example, employers must meet the licensing, Head Start and/or Pre-K standards within their state and be in good standing. To be eligible to participate, apprentices must work and be paid for 30-40 hours a week. Apprenticeship employers must be willing to sponsor them as an apprentice and agree to:

- Contribute at least 5% of the cost of tuition and books each semester, unless covered by a PELL grant,

- Provide at least three hours a week of paid release time when the apprentice is enrolled in coursework, and
- Agree to award a bonus of at least \$300 at the end of each completed contract that is matched, and a raise of at least 2.5% upon completion of the associate or bachelor's degree.



### ON-THE-JOB LEARNING (OTJ)

Apprentices working as early childhood educators must have the opportunity to engage in and learn about the critical functions of being an early childhood educator, through the following responsibilities:

1. Planning and implementing intentional, developmentally appropriate learning experiences that promote the social-emotional development, physical development, health, cognitive development and general learning competencies of each child served;
2. Establishing and maintaining a safe, caring, inclusive and healthy learning environment;
3. Observing, documenting and assessing children's learning and development using guidelines established by the profession;
4. Developing reciprocal, culturally responsive relationships with families and communities;
5. Advocating for the needs of children and their families;
6. Advancing and advocating for an equitable, diverse and effective early childhood education profession that is well-compensated; and
7. Engaging in reflective practice and continuous learning.

Apprentices will work under the supervision of a site director and/or a mentor for at least one year or until the completion of a degree. The apprentice will complete 2,000 hours of on-the-job (OTJ) training as part of the apprenticeship program. These responsibilities and OTJ hours are built around the National Association for the Education of Young Children's Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Profession, which aligns with the recommendations from the Transforming the Workforce report from the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. Apprentices will complete a minimum of 40 hours for each key competency. All OTJ hours will be logged by the site director and/or mentor and reported for documentation.



## **RELATED-TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION (CLASSROOM LEARNING)**

Apprentices will be enrolled in institutions of higher education in an early childhood program. Each apprentice will complete a minimum of nine college credit hours annually as part of the apprenticeship program.

## **MENTORSHIP**

Apprentices will have two different types of mentors during their participation in the program. First, each apprentice will have a T.E.A.C.H. counselor (if the T.E.A.C.H. program is not available in the state, the state will need to work closely with their early childhood scholarship program). Their job is to help each the apprentice manage the expectations of their scholarship, help them navigate the expectations of higher education, balance the demands of work, college and family and troubleshoot any personal crises that might occur that could derail their steady progress toward degree completion. All T.E.A.C.H. counselors have at least a bachelor's degree and have worked in the early childhood education field.

Second, each apprentice will have a jobsite mentor that can model and support teaching practices. Ideally, the apprentice will identify a mentor, preferably within their place of employment, such as the site director or lead teacher in the program. If an apprentice is unable to identify a mentor, T.E.A.C.H. (or state scholarship program) will help them identify a qualified mentor in their area. Mentors can serve in a variety of roles in the early childhood profession but must have education and experience in the field. All mentors will have at least a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or related fields and have at least three years of experience in the field. If a mentor meeting these qualifications is unavailable, a mentor waiver must be submitted for review. Mentor waivers will be reviewed and approved on an individual basis to ensure program quality is maintained. Mentors are expected to check in with their apprentice at least twice a month to:

- discuss classroom challenges/questions that the apprentice may have,
- review best practice techniques, and,
- if observed, provide observation feedback.

Each mentor will observe their apprentice in their classroom working with young children at least two times in a semester. Mentors will try to integrate what the apprentice is learning in their college classes with their application in their early childhood classroom or on their playground. Each mentor will be provided a stipend each semester for this work. If a state does not have a T.E.A.C.H. program, the National Center will work with states as part of the initial interest process to review the state's early childhood landscape to determine other scholarship opportunities that may support the mentor function of an apprenticeship.

## **CREDENTIALS**

Individuals participating in the CCSA National Apprenticeship Program will earn college coursework toward an associate or bachelor's degree in early childhood education, with or without a teaching license. An associate degree will qualify an apprentice to work at the ECE II level and a bachelor's degree with ECE III.

Apprenticeships provide a unique opportunity to support the early childhood workforce with targeted, individualized support as they work toward credentials and degrees. Apprenticeship participants will come from a variety of roles within the workforce: those with extensive experience but limited college course work, those that earned the Child Development Associate Credentials (CDA) or those with a high school diploma or GED. The CCSA National Center Apprenticeship model will support their early childhood workforce in recruiting and retaining talent. Apprenticeships also provide a chance for the National Center to strengthen early childhood education in all states.

## **CONTACT**

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