



Early Educator Pandemic Retention Bonus Program Overview

Updated 6/3/2024

About the Early Educator Pandemic Retention Bonus program

As essential workers, early educators continue to play a crucial role in keeping licensed child care programs open and serving Rhode Island families throughout the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021, the Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS) was awarded \$18.7 million dollars in funds through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) State Fiscal Recovery Fund (SFRF), as appropriated by the Governor and the General Assembly, and Early Educator Pandemic Retention Bonuses were issued to eligible employees in Spring and Summer of 2022. This program is intended to invest in early educators by offering bonuses to direct care staff employed at DHS-licensed child care providers.

In Spring 2022, the Pandemic Relief Office reauthorized additional funds to be dedicated from the ARPA SFRF to fund this grant program for Fiscal Year (FY)23 and FY24.

Educators will be eligible to receive a maximum of 4 quarterly bonuses, depending on eligibility in each application window. These retention bonuses will supplement educators' compensation to support retention and recruitment in the early learning sector, as well as recognize the vital work that early educators do in supporting the State's littlest learners.

Application Timeline and Eligibility

The following table outlines the timeline for upcoming application window and the eligibility criteria for applicants. **Please note, Window 10 is the final window of bonuses. The funding amount in Window 10 will be determined by the total number of applications received.*

Window	Timeline	Funding Amount	Eligibility Criteria
Application Window #10 – Final Window	July 1-12, 2024	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An active full-time or part-time employee of a DHS-licensed child care program • Providing direct care to children during some portion of the average day of operation • Currently employed at the same DHS-licensed program as of March 1, 2024

In addition to the eligibility criteria outlined in the table above, **recipients of these funds must attest to their intention to maintain employment with the same program for at least 3 months after receipt of award.** For questions related to eligibility, please contact childcaregrants@pcqus.com.

Application Process

Applying for this bonus is a two-step process:

- **Step One: Submit an Eligibility Form**
 - **How to access:** The link to the Eligibility Form will be posted on <http://kids.ri.gov/cabinet/funding-opportunities/>. The form will gather basic



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information, including your name, email, DHS-licensed program at which you work, the date you started employment at the program, and your role. The estimate time required to complete this form is approximately 5 minutes.

- **Purpose:** This Eligibility Form will be used to verify your employment. Information gathered in this form will be shared by email with your DHS-licensed program employer for verification of your employment. Once verified, you will be emailed the link to the full application.
- **Step Two: Submit Application**
 - **How to access:** The link to the full application will be sent directly to your email (as submitted in the Eligibility Form) from childcaregrants@pcgus.com. The estimated time required to complete this form is approximately 15-20 minutes.
 - The application will be hosted on an online, cloud-based tool called GrantsConnect. If you do not have a GrantsConnect account, you will be prompted to create an account prior to accessing the application. Additional instructions will be included in the email.
 - The application will collect banking and tax information (such as your social security number, bank account and routing number if you opt for a direct deposit, etc.), additional information related to your employment, and agreement to attestation language.
 - Please note, if you miss the submission deadline or do not reply in a timely manner to communications regarding a submitted application, the application will not be processed.
- **Step Three: Track Progress of Application**
 - Each applicant is responsible for tracking the progress of their application through the bonus process. If you have not received an automated update after Step One or Two, or would like to know the status of your application in the process, you can contact childcaregrants@pcgus.com.

DHS anticipates disbursing funds within 30 business days of receiving a completed application.

Applicants will elect to receive funds either by direct deposit or by mailed check. Electing to receive funds by check may delay payment up to an additional 30 business days due to processing and mail delivery. Applicants are recommended to deposit/cash their check immediately upon receipt. Failure to deposit and/or cash a check within 90 days will result in non-payment of funds.

Please note, awards within this program will be issued on a first-come, first-served basis.

Additional Resources

We want this application process to be straightforward and are here to help! There are several ways to access assistance, in English and Spanish, during the application process.

- **View online resources and webinars** at <http://kids.ri.gov/cabinet/funding-opportunities/>.
- **Contact us!** Reach out to our team at: ChildCareGrants@pcgus.com or **833-930-3540** for assistance in English or Spanish.