

Improving the Compensation and Retention of Effective Infant/Toddler Educators in Rhode Island

Recommendations of the Moving the Needle on Compensation Task Force

December 2019



The early childhood professionals who provide the day-to-day services for infants and toddlers participating in Rhode Island’s child care, Early Intervention, and family home visiting programs are supporting the development of healthy brain architecture upon which all future learning and development is built. Yet wages for infant/toddler educators remain well below the wages of kindergarten teachers and below the levels needed to meet the basic needs of individuals and families. The Task Force has developed recommendations to improve the compensation and retention of effective infant/toddler educators.

Compensation Goals

Infant/Toddler Educator Target Wage Scale, Rhode Island, 2019

LEVEL	EDUCATION	TARGET HOURLY WAGE FLOOR	12-MONTH TARGET ANNUAL SALARY FLOOR
1	CDA credential or 3 ECE credits	\$16	\$33,280
2	12 ECE credits	\$17	\$35,360
3	Associate’s degree	\$19	\$39,520
4	Associate’s degree & 24 ECE credits	\$20	\$41,600
5	Bachelor’s degree	\$22	\$45,760
6	Bachelor’s degree & 24 ECE credits	\$24.15	\$50,240

* Assumes that these amounts will need to be adjusted over time to account for inflation/cost of living. Note: level 1 is \$1 more than the target for the minimum wage of \$15/hour and level 6 is equivalent to the starting kindergarten teacher salary in Rhode Island in 2017-2018 (\$41,869) adjusted to a 12-month schedule.

CROSS-SECTOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Adopt and use a **statewide target wage scale** linked to education levels for infant/toddler educators that establishes goals for educator wages. The target wage scale should provide wage parity with kindergarten teachers for similarly qualified infant/toddler educators.
- 2) Conduct a **public education campaign** designed to show the value of infant/toddler educators and the need for improved compensation.
- 3) Establish an **Infant/Toddler Employer Group** facilitated by the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training to help early childhood program operators develop strategies to recruit, develop, and retain effective infant/toddler educators.
- 4) Establish a working group to develop and introduce an **Early Childhood Workforce Investment Act** in the Rhode Island General Assembly in 2020.

INFANT/TODDLER CHILD CARE RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Meet federal rate guidelines for the Child Care Assistance Program through tiered quality rates.

2) Fund an infant/toddler wage supplement demonstration project to help child care programs retain qualified and effective infant/toddler educators.

- Provide strong education and retention awards to qualified infant/toddler educators participating in the demonstration project using the state's target wage scale, with participants at all education levels.
- Connect awards to education levels and demonstration of high-quality teaching/program practices, using a valid and reliable classroom/program observation tool.
- Engage and secure support of child care employers to sponsor educators in the demonstration project and support improved teaching and program practices.

- Design the demonstration project so infant/toddler educators in centers and family child care programs statewide can participate if the program enrolls and prioritizes infants/toddlers in the Child Care Assistance Program and is working to improve its BrightStars quality rating.
- Partner with national experts to conduct an evaluation of the impact of improved wages on the educators, the programs, and the families of infant/toddlers participating in the demonstration project.

EARLY INTERVENTION RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Leverage existing billing opportunities to support Early Intervention.

2) Establish a compensation-based incentive pool.

3) Review and update Early Intervention reimbursement rates.

FAMILY HOME VISITING RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Incorporate the infant/toddler educator wage scale into family home visiting contracts.



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