



November 19, 2021

Dear Early Childhood Professional,

Smart Start of New Hanover County values the important work of early childhood professionals and would like to recognize those who have achieved higher levels of education. If you have earned an early childhood certificate or higher, you may be eligible for a Dedication to Education Bonus from Smart Start of New Hanover County. This bonus opportunity is available to professionals working in licensed child care centers and family child care homes in New Hanover County.

We know that education of the teacher plays a key role in the quality of care children receive. To recognize all higher education degrees, we have modified our educational requirements to include those who have earned a certificate or diploma in early childhood from an accredited college or university. Additionally, we are adding an opportunity for qualified applicants to receive an Educational Enrollment bonus for having completed coursework towards an Associate degree between April 2021 and March 2022.

We value all early childhood professionals regardless of their income status. Workforce data shows that the majority of those working in child care are at or below the poverty level and likely do not receive benefits. After careful thought and consideration, we've implemented a salary cap. While no early childhood professional earns a worthy wage, SSNHC aims to direct funds to those whose wages are not in alignment with the education level they have achieved. Our hope is that this focus will bring awareness to this issue and encourage all early childhood professionals to respect and support each other in advocating for better compensation- especially those working in the private sector.

Enclosed are the application and eligibility requirements which provide details about this opportunity. Please make note of the following:

- Print clearly and submit documentation that is easy to read
- Only submit documentation that is required (no additional training documents, etc.)
- Degrees other than Early Childhood Education or Child Development are not accepted. If you have your Early Educator Certification (EEC) in which a different degree was accepted, please submit your EEC documentation
- Be sure to complete the Employment Verification at the bottom of the application
- Incomplete applications (including missing documentation) will not be processed

Application and documentation are due by **Friday, January 7, 2022, by 5:00pm** by mail or hand delivery only.

You will be notified, via a formal letter, of your eligibility status by Friday, February 4, 2022. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at (910) 815-3731 ext. 1010 or mindy.davis@newhanoverkids.org.

Thank you for your dedication to the early childhood field, but most importantly to our youngest citizens.

Sincerely,

Mindy Davis, M.Ed.
Early Care and Education Manager

Administrators, please share/make copies of letter, eligibility requirements, and application with ALL staff. Eligibility criteria has changed in which more staff may qualify.