

Baby Steps: Quality Infant/Toddler Care Project

Project Overview

Fiscal Year 2009 (2008-2009)

Eligibility

Initial Eligibility

- Licensed and license - exempt, full time child care centers with infant and/or toddler rooms dedicated exclusively to children under the age of 2 years are eligible.
- Centers holding an Hourly Child Care license or providing child care in resort or gym/spa settings are not eligible.
- Centers that have been suspended from grant eligibility by the Office of Child Care are not eligible for the duration of the suspension.

To remain eligible in future years, centers must:

- Meet the annual staff training goals
- Fulfill their quality improvement goals, raising their score on the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale - Revised (ITERS-R) to a minimum score of 3.0 for new centers and 3.5 for continuing centers.
- If centers do not meet these goals by the end of each year, they will not be eligible to reapply for one year. They will need to have met all of the original goals before reapplying.

What participants will receive

Funding is based on the following:

- Centers will receive a \$1200.00 grant for each group of four infants/toddlers. Actual payments are based on the daily attendance in three designated months.
- For Fiscal Year 2009 (2008-2009), Plan A* centers will also receive \$500.00 per group of four children for the purchase of materials and equipment.
- New Plan A centers will receive UP TO \$3500.00 for materials and equipment per classroom. These funds can also be used to install sinks and make other minor changes to rooms.
- New Plan B ** centers will receive \$3500.00 for materials and equipment. These funds can also be used to install sinks and make other minor changes to rooms.
- Each program will receive \$330.00 (per group of 8 children) to cover the cost of wages paid to the caregivers while they attend the required Infant/Toddler Endorsement classes.
- The maximum grant for Plan B centers is \$5130.00.
- If you cannot use the funds in the way they are meant to be used, due to fiscal policies of your center/agency, your participation may be limited or denied.

Required quality improvement activities

- Training: Each center director must complete the Infant/Toddler Endorsement within the first year of participation. At least one infant/toddler caregiver per group of children must also complete the Infant/Toddler Endorsement classes. *Staff must take at least one course per quarter until all four courses are complete.* The endorsement consists of forty hours of class time (four 10-hour courses).

- If a caregiver leaves the program, the caregiver who replaces her must begin attending the first available course.
- The classes are offered through the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs) throughout the state. The courses can be taken in any order and staff may attend classes taught by CCR&Rs outside their geographical area. (It may be necessary to take classes this summer. Check with your R&R immediately for information on their training schedule.)
- Staff who complete the Infant Toddler Endorsement will be eligible for a \$100.00 award through the Career Ladder program.
- Centers are required to pay caregivers for class attendance based on their usual wage.
- In the Metro and Northern regions, special arrangements are made to reserve space in the classes for Baby Steps participants. Only staff that are required by the project to complete the endorsement should take advantage of the special arrangements. If you do not know your CCR&Rs process for enrolling in classes, please contact them. Only the director and ONE caregiver per room are required to obtain the courses. All other staff are welcome to sign up for these classes if there are openings.
- Failure to complete the endorsement classes according to the policies listed above will make the center INELIGIBLE for at least one year. To reenter the program, the training would need to be completed by the director and caregivers.
- Observations: The Infant/Toddler Specialists will complete an annual observation using the ITERS-R in each participating classroom.
 - A three to four hour observation is required to complete the assessment.
 - After the observation, the Specialist shares the results with center staff.
- Quality Improvement Goals: Goals are set based on the results of the ITERS-R.
 - Centers choose as many goals as are needed to reach the required score of 3.0 or 3.5.
 - Centers are strongly encouraged to involve caregivers in setting goals.
 - The Infant/Toddler Specialist is available to help centers develop a plan to meet their goals.
 - Goals are listed on the Goal Report Form and submitted with the Baby Steps application.
 - Progress is reported each time an invoice for payment is submitted.

Additional 2008/2009 funds for equipment and materials

For Fiscal Year 2009, the funds for equipment and materials will be issued in July, at the beginning of the grant period. *Purchases must be made and receipts submitted by October 31, 2008.* The limits on equipment purchases include:

- No group feeding table may be purchased.
- No used or second-hand materials may be purchased.
- Purchases must be made exactly as they are listed in the Baby Steps Application packet.
- Purchases may only be made from companies or catalogs specializing in equipment for group care of infants and toddlers.

Invoice Process

The remainder of the grant funds may be spent on staff wages and benefits and other costs related to the provision of infant/toddler care. No permanent improvements to the buildings/grounds may be made with these funds without prior written approval from the Department of Workforce Services/Office of Child Care.

Invoices for these funds will be submitted three times a year and payments will be based on the Average Daily Attendance of the designated months.

- Invoices are submitted according to the schedule below.
- The following must be submitted with each invoice:
 - Goal Report Form OR Goals Progress Report
 - Training Report
 - Attendance Record for the target month
 - Documentation showing how staff wages were paid if they attended training during the billing period.
- Late invoices may not be processed until the next deadline.

Documentation

Documentation of how funds have been spent must be kept on-site for possible review by DWS staff or State/Federal Auditors. Copies of all paperwork related to the grant should be maintained by the center for four years. This includes:

- The invoice
- Goal Report Forms OR Goal Progress Report
- Training Report
- Attendance Record for the target month
- Sign-in/out sheets/reports for the target month
- Birthdates for all children listed on the attendance record for the target month
- Training certificates for the director and caregivers
- Documentation showing how staff wages were paid if they attended training during the billing period.
- A description of how the center is utilizing grant funds
- Copies of receipts for all purchases

Outside Assessments

- The Office of Child Care will complete an ITERS-R's in each participating classroom during each year of the project.
 - Centers will be notified in advance of all observations for the ITERS-R.
 - In addition to helping you set solid quality improvement goals, these ITERS-R's assess the effectiveness of the Baby Steps Project in increasing quality and provide the office with required financial and audit information.
 - These observations may also be used to train new Infant/Toddler Specialists and/or to complete reliability checks.

Audit Controls

To fulfill requirements placed on our office by state and federal auditors, attendance records may be matched to sign in/out sheets or computer records to check for accuracy of the Average Daily Attendance figures. These records will be checked on site. Appointments may or may not be made in advance.

APPLICATION AND INVOICE DEADLINES 2008/2009

First Invoice	Second Invoice	Third Invoice
Due October 15, 2008	Due February 15, 2009	Due May 15, 2009
Based on September attendance	Based on January attendance	Based on April attendance

* Plan A centers are those that serve a significant number of families receiving child care subsidy as determined by the Office of Child Care.

** Plan B centers are those that DO NOT serve a significant number of families receiving child care subsidy as determined by the Office of Child Care.