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New scholarship program aims to bolster the child care workforce

The Office of Child Care has released more than \$4 million to pay for college, higher ed

SALT LAKE CITY (May 5, 2022) — The Department of Workforce Services' Office of Child Care has released \$4 million in scholarships to encourage careers in early childhood education and support child care hiring. Utah's Early Education Payback Program provides reimbursement for the cost of early childhood education and related college degrees.

"We looked at the hiring challenges happening across so many industries, especially in child care, and saw a unique opportunity," said Office of Child Care director Rebecca Banner. "This scholarship program gives college students a head start by paying for their education while they earn valuable work experience. Plus, child care employers can offer the scholarship as an incentive for hiring and retaining employees."

The payback scholarship is available to students with declared majors in early childhood education, elementary education, child development and early childhood special education. They can earn up to \$3,500 per semester while working at least 15 hours per week at a Workforce Services-eligible and licensed child care program in Utah. A grade of C- or higher is required in order to be reimbursed for classes.

"Child care is essential to supporting working families," said Banner. "We want providers to be able to attract qualified employees. And we want to introduce students to a career path they may not have considered."

Additional college scholarships are available through the Office of Child Care for professionals already working in child care programs but not majoring in the field. Students can be reimbursed up to \$750 per semester for each qualifying course up to 12 credit hours. There are also scholarships for professionals to attend conferences and expand their knowledge in the field.

More information about the Utah's Early Education Payback Program and other scholarship opportunities is at jobs.utah.gov/occ/urpd/scholarships. Application instructions are [here](#).

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