

Higher Education Professional Development Incentive Award (PDIA-HE) Policies

1 General Information

1.1 The Professional Development Incentive Award – Higher Ed (formerly Higher Education Merit Pay) has been developed with the goal of improving the quality of early care and education for young children and families, by promoting early childhood education college coursework and certificate and degree attainment.

1.2 All applications are reviewed independently and will be considered for the incentive award if eligible.

1.3 The Early Childhood Project administers marketing, posting applications, notifying applicants of their application status, and submitting all final paperwork for payment to the Early Childhood Services Bureau (ECSB).

2 Professional Development Incentive Award – Higher Education Eligibility

2.1 Early Childhood Professionals must be working a minimum of 15 hours a week in:

- A state registered group or family child care home,
- A state licensed child care center,
- A Montana Head Start and Early Head Start
- A Tribal Child Care program whose tribe has an MOU specified by the state
- A Montana Child Care Resource & Referral Agency

2.2 Applicants must be a current on the Montana Early Care and Education Practitioner Registry prior to applying for any Professional Development Incentive.

2.2.1 There will be a onetime only pay out to individuals that are at the Pre Professional level on the Career Path.

2.2.1.1 Once an individual has moved up past the Pre Professional level they may be eligible for the Professional Development Incentive annually.

2.3 Qualifying individuals who are in the process of applying for state child care licensure or registration may apply for Professional Development Incentive Awards; however, award funds will not be released until the regular licensure /registration process is completed. (The establishment of a PV and PS number in CCUBS provides the necessary verification).

2.3.1 The ECP will verify PS#s and associations with current PVs through their database employment records prior to sending final paperwork to ECSB.

2.3.2 The ECP will verify employment from their database for programs without PV#s such as Head Start and Tribal Programs with MOUs.

- 2.4 Professional Development Incentive Awards - Higher Education will be awarded to approved applicants participating in at least six college credits per semester.
- 2.4.1 An individual may receive this award a total of two semesters per year for \$750.00 each semester with a maximum award of \$1500.00.
 - 2.4.2 Higher Education Professional Development Incentive applicants MUST be participating in a college program that leads to a certificate, credential or degree in Early Childhood Education/Child Development from a regionally accredited college or university.
 - 2.4.3 If an individual is taking the 60 hour Infant Toddler course as part of their required degree program, it may be used here and they may receive this award. This will preclude them from receiving the \$500 award for I/T course completion from the ECSB. The ECP will notify the ECSB Program Officer of all people who receive this award for the I/T course.

2.5 Professional Development Incentive Awards - Higher Education will be awarded to approved applicants taking 2-5 college credits per semester.

- 2.5.1 An individual may receive this award a total of two semesters per year for \$250 with a maximum of \$500.

2.6 Application forms must be complete and include all required information and signatures in order to be considered.

2.7 A complete application must include the following:

- 2.7.1 Signature of owner/director and PV number if applicable verifying that the applicant is employed at the facility at least 15 hours a week;
- 2.7.2 An applicant signature;
- 2.7.3 A list of course numbers, course names, credits and institution name;
- 2.7.4 The amount of financial aid and/or third party funding the applicant is eligible for and expects to receive.

3 Professional Development Incentive Award – Higher Education Application Process

3.1 Professional Development Incentive Award - Higher Education applications are posted for Fall Semester the second week of June with a due date of the first week in August. Spring/Summer semester applications will be posted the first week in October with a due date the third week in November.

- 3.1.1 Applications will be available at The Early Childhood Project website (www.mtecp.org) and notification will be sent to all partners.

3.2 Professional Development Incentive Award - Higher Education applications are due in The Early Childhood Project office no later than 4:00 pm on the date specified on the current application.

3.2.1 Applicants will be informed no more than 10 business days from the application deadline regarding the approval or denial of their application.

3.2.1.1 Formal letters will be sent to the address specified by the individual on the application.

3.3 Individuals may only be approved for one Professional Development Incentive Award.

3.3.1 If an individual applied for the incorrect PDIA the ECP will arrange for the necessary switch to the correct award on a case by case basis in collaboration with the ECSB.

3.4 Applications must be completed in full.

3.4.1.1 Failure to complete the application with required signatures will result in denial.

3.5 The Higher Education Professional Development Incentive Award application is submitted to The Early Childhood Project for approval prior to the stated deadline. Applicants are selected for the award, based upon the requirements, content and quality of their application, and their priority ranking.

3.6 If a participant does not complete the approved Plan of Study stated on their application, she/he will not receive the award.

3.6.1 Ex: If the applicant is approved for six semester credits and they do not complete the six credits, they will not qualify for any award funds.

3.7 All coursework must be required classes toward a degree in Early Childhood/Child Development or Level 4 or higher on the Career Path.

3.7.1 General education courses will be accepted if they are requirements of the degree program.

3.8 Coursework for undergraduate practitioners must be completed at a regionally accredited higher education institute through the U.S. Department of Education.

3.9 Coursework for graduate practitioners may be completed at a higher education institution that is not located in Montana. But it must be regionally accredited through the US Department of Education.

3.10 Professional Development Incentive Award applications are due in The Early Childhood Project office no later than 4:00 pm on the date specified on the current application.

3.10.1 Applicants will be informed no more than 10 business days from the application deadline regarding the approval or denial of their application.

3.10.1.1 Formal letters will be sent to the address specified by the individual on the application.

4 **Priority for Professional Development Incentive Award – Higher Education**

4.1 Early childhood credential, certificate or degree refers to a national Child Development Associate (CDA) with college coursework, 30 credit Early Childhood college certificate, Child Care Development Specialist (CCDS) Apprenticeship, an Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctorate in Early Childhood Education or related field with an emphasis in Early Childhood Education.

1. Individuals who have previously received the award and have not completed a credential in early childhood education or a related field and, are continuing in a college coursework that leads to a completion of any of the above.
2. Individuals who have not previously received the award and have not completed a credential in early childhood education or a related field and, are participating in college coursework that leads to a completion of any of the above.
3. Individuals who have previously received the award and have completed a credential in early childhood education or a related field and, are participating in college coursework that leads to a completion of any of the above.
4. Individuals who have not previously received the award and have completed a credential in early childhood education or a related field and, are participating in college coursework that leads to a completion of any of the above.
5. Individuals who are taking 2-5 early childhood college credits to complete professional development/ training hours for The Practitioner Registry or licensing. The 60 hour Infant Toddler and Preschool Courses taken for credit will not be eligible.

Note: Priority will be given to highest scored applications when funds are limited.

5 Submitting for Payment

5.1 The following documents will be required for payment of the Higher Education Professional Development Incentive Award:

5.1.1 W-9 form

5.1.2 Employment and Practitioner Registry Verification Form

5.1.3 Transcripts or official grade reports

5.2 If the paperwork is complete an Early Childhood Project Staff member will sign off on the employment verification form and sent it and the W-9 form off to the ECSB for payment of the award.

5.3 The Early Childhood Project will submit batches of final paperwork for payment at the end of each semester.