



Participants & Employers Say AR-WAGE\$[®] Decreases Turnover

The Challenge in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

The first five years of a child's life are marked by rapid brain development. High-quality ECCE helps lay the foundation for a child's future success. However, the cost of providing quality care exceeds what families can afford. Many talented ECCE teachers leave the field for better-paying jobs, which disrupts the stable, positive relationships that young children need to thrive.

Arkansas Step Up to WAGE\$[®]

To address this crisis, Arkansas Step Up to WAGE\$[®] paid qualifying early childhood professionals a salary supplement every six months from 2022 to 2025. The supplements were tiered by education level and contingent on maintaining employment with the same program.

UAMS evaluated the program's impact by surveying more than 1,400 supplement recipients and 250 employers. Evaluators also conducted focus groups with 52 recipients and 15 employers. Participants and their employers report encouraging evidence of AR WAGE\$ stabilizing educators' personal finances and reducing turnover.



Decreased Turnover

The program successfully reduced turnover. Employers said 80% of staff who received the supplement were still employed with their programs. **Nearly 90% of programs retained at least half of the staff who received supplements. From the recipients' perspective, only 8% said they had left the ECCE field since applying for Step Up to WAGE\$®.** Of those who remained, 91% were with the same employer.

The supplements directly influenced retention: 76% of recipients were more likely to stay in the ECCE field overall, and 54% were more likely to stay with their current employer because of the program. Sixty percent planned to stay at their current job for at least three more years.



Personal Financial Impact

Recipients and employers described the profound financial impact of the supplements. Employers shared stories of staff who were able to pay their power bills, afford rent for their first apartment or get through tough financial times. Recipients reported using the supplements to pay for classroom supplies, unexpected household expenses, and medical emergencies.



High Satisfaction

Satisfaction was high among both groups. Nearly all participants reported an easy application process and high-quality customer service. If the program were to return, nearly all recipients said they would reapply and would recommend the program to others. Similarly, nearly all administrators would recommend the program and support staff participation.



Access the full evaluation reports on the UAMS website

Step Up to WAGE\$ Administration



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