



Office of the Governor

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Gov. Lujan Grisham announces historic pay increase for early childhood workforce**

SANTA FE – Today, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham announced a new grant available to child care providers that will increase wages for staff by \$3 an hour across the board, raising the wage floor to \$15 an hour for entry-level workers and \$20 an hour for lead teachers.

Early childhood educators are some of the lowest paid workers in the economy, and the low wages pervasive in the industry remain the single largest barrier to staffing classrooms and expanding child care access in the country. The new grant, Competitive Pay for Professionals (CPP), which is initially funded with \$77 million in American Rescue Plan Act dollars, will provide a critical support for child care providers statewide who are struggling to recruit and retain educators for their classrooms. The New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) projects that at least 16,000 child care staff across the state stand to benefit from the pay raise provided through the CPP grant. Applications will open on November 1.

“Early childhood workers have always been underpaid relative to the importance of the work they do,” said **Gov. Lujan Grisham**. “We need to attract and retain the best talent to ensure the youngest New Mexicans get the high-quality early education they deserve. My administration has already delivered historic pay raises for K-12 teachers, and it’s time to take the next step to ensure that early childhood educators and staff are paid a fair and competitive wage as well.”

“After visiting 25 communities across New Mexico during my statewide tour this spring, far and away the most pressing issue child care providers reported was difficulty staffing classrooms,” said ECECD **Secretary Elizabeth Groginsky**. “We’re in a situation where the market can’t support the wages that attract the qualified professionals that we rely on to educate and nurture our children during their most important developmental years. This is a win for all New Mexicans. The new wage supplement not only benefits early childhood educators, but also the child care providers who employ them, local economies that depend

on child care for their workforce, families that rely on child care to work or attend school, and the young children developing the skills that will help them thrive at school and beyond.”

“The future of New Mexico is found in the hearts and minds of our youngest learners,” said **Angela Garcia**, President of the New Mexico Child Care and Education Association. “Our early childhood educators are critical in building that future. This is the first step in recognizing them with a livable wage, without adding additional financial burdens on families. This investment will allow New Mexico to begin building a strong and sustainable workforce that will impact children and families for decades.”

The state created the CPP grant opportunity in response to a growing early childhood professional shortage felt in communities across the state, especially in rural areas, with a majority of child care programs reporting one or more classrooms closed due to lack of qualified staff. Under CPP, the state will provide funding to any applicant among New Mexico’s 951 licensed child care programs that attests that staff will receive a \$3/hour wage increase.

[Multiple studies show](#) that low pay for early childhood educators leads to high turnover and poorer outcomes for students, while higher pay improves educator retention and creates more stable relationships that help young children thrive in early education programs. The CPP grant is part of a wider strategic effort by the State of New Mexico to build and support a diverse, credentialed, and well-compensated early childhood workforce that is the backbone of a high-quality early education system. The governor has spearheaded multiple early childhood workforce support efforts, including:

- [Cost of living stipends](#) for more than 800 early childhood professionals seeking advanced degrees in the field
- Free college tuition for early childhood educators through the [ECECD scholarship program/New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship](#)
- [Incentive payments](#) for early childhood educators who continued caring for children through the COVID-19 pandemic
- A [PreK Parity Program](#) that ensures that PreK teachers who work in community-based settings receive compensation that is similar to teachers who work in public school-based settings
- [Bilingual/Indigenous incentive](#), available to early childhood professionals certified bilingual by accredited Tribe or program.
- The [ECECD Career Pathways Guide](#), which outlines steps, options, and financial supports for continuing education to better prepare individuals for multiple career options in early childhood.

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