

Early Childhood Education Graduate Bursary Program

Policy No.: FCD-BUR-001

Effective Date: May 1, 2015

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Legislative References: n/a

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Bursary Program is to improve recruitment and retention of qualified early childhood educators in regulated child care by reducing student debt. Well trained early childhood educators are an essential component of regulated child care services and are the main determining factor in the level of quality provided by these services. The ultimate goal of this bursary program is to increase the number of qualified early childhood educators within the province which will, in turn, improve the quality of child care services available to children and families in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The ECE Bursary Program is offered to provide assistance to candidates who have obtained a diploma through full-time studies in Early Childhood Education through a recognized post-secondary institution in Newfoundland and Labrador. Bursaries are available to graduates who meet the criteria set by the Department. In return, bursary recipients must commit to work in regulated child care in this province for two years after graduation.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

1. **Definitions:** The following definitions will apply in interpretation of these policies:
 - 1.1. Date of graduation: The date noted on the Diploma issued by the post-secondary institution.
 - 1.2. Early Childhood Education (ECE) Diploma program: A post-secondary ECE program operating in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador that is recognized for the purposes of child care services certification as Level II.
 - 1.3. Full-time Studies: Full-time studies means enrolled in and successfully completing a minimum of four courses in a regular semester or two courses in an intersession, either in-class or through distance or online delivery.
 - 1.4. Full-time Equivalent (FTE): Two years full-time equivalent is working 2,880 hours and minimally 18 months out of 24 months.

- 1.5. Permanent full-time employment: Minimally 120 hours per month.
- 1.6. Permanent part-time employment: Minimally 60 hours per month.
- 1.7. Quarter: A quarter is a 3 month period, each covering one quarter of a fiscal year – April 1st to June 30th (1st Quarter), July 1st to September 30th (2nd Quarter), October 1st to December 31st (3rd Quarter) and January 1st to March 31st (4th Quarter).
- 1.8. Regulated child care service: A licensed child care centre or family child care home, or a family child care home approved under a licensed family child care agency.

2. Bursary Amount:

- 2.1. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will provide up to \$5,000 (based on semesters completed through full-time studies) to graduates of an ECE Diploma program, for the purpose of reducing student debt.

3. Eligibility: To qualify for the ECE Bursary, eligible candidates must:

- 3.1. Graduate from a recognized two-year Early Childhood Education program in Newfoundland and Labrador – a minimum of one semester in full-time studies.
- 3.2. Begin permanent full-time or permanent part-time employment in a regulated child care service in Newfoundland and Labrador within six months of graduation, for a period of not less than two years full-time equivalent. Those working part time may require an extended period of service.
- 3.3. Submit a complete application package within six months of graduation.

4. Application:

- 4.1. Graduates of an Early Childhood Education Diploma program who wish to apply for the ECE Bursary must submit a complete application package within six months of graduation, including:
 - Completed application form (<http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/family/childcare/childcareresources.html>);
 - A direct deposit authorization form (available at a bank) or void cheque is required with the application (unless the full amount of the bursary is being paid towards an existing student loan).
 - Copy of ECE Diploma;
 - Copy of official transcripts;
 - Proof of permanent full-time or permanent part-time employment in a regulated child care service in Newfoundland and Labrador:
 - Licensed Child Care Centre - Correspondence from employer indicating start date and confirming permanent full-time or permanent part-time status.
 - Licensed or Approved Family Child Care Home – Copy of Licence or of Approval Certificate (from a Family Child Care Agency) and documentation of start date.
- 4.2. A signed Application Form must be submitted with required documentation as described. *If the package is sent via email, only PDF format is acceptable.*

5. Return Service Requirements:

- 5.1. Bursaries will be awarded to individuals who sign a contract with the Department agreeing to provide two years of service (full-time equivalent) as an early childhood educator in a regulated child care service in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.
- 5.2. This employment may be in more than one regulated child care service.
- 5.3. Applicants must begin working within six months of graduation (date of graduation is the date on the diploma).

- 5.4. Recipients must notify the Early Childhood Education Bursary Program in writing within 14 days if there is a break in employment or the recipient cannot fulfil the two-year requirement.
- 5.5. Recipients who do not fulfil the employment requirement must repay all or a portion of the bursary issued to them, plus interest.
- 5.6. The Provincial Director of Child Care Services may permit an extension of time to fulfil the two year employment requirement in extenuating circumstances, such as parental leave, if the recipient intends to return to work. Conditions regarding a time extension will be determined by individual circumstances on a case-by-case basis.
- 5.7. Verification of return service requirement is based on Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Supplement approvals in each quarter, through ELCC Supplement records in the Department:
 - Eight full-time quarters (i.e. receiving the full ELCC Supplement) meets the two-year full-time commitment.
 - Two part-time quarters is considered equal to one full-time quarter for verification purposes.
- 5.8. Recipients who work in regulated child care but are ineligible for the ELCC Supplement in a quarter are required to send notification in writing to the Department within 10 days following the end of that quarter. This notification must be accompanied by verification of hours worked – verification includes copies of paystubs or a letter from the employer indicating the number of hours worked in the quarter.
- 5.9. Break in Service: If a recipient has not worked in regulated child care during a quarter, notification must be sent in writing to the Department within 10 days following the end of that quarter indicating the reason and the approximate timeframe of the break in service – for example, maternity leave.

6. Extension of Contract:

- 6.1. Extensions to the two-year contract in order to meet the two-year FTE must be requested in writing to the Provincial Director of Child Care outlining the reason(s) for the request. If granted, extensions will not exceed two years (four years total) to meet the required commitment.
- 6.2. Recipients who do not fulfill the employment requirement or who do not notify EECD in writing of a break in service, must repay all or a portion of the bursary plus interest as per the contract terms.

7. Assessment and Approval:

- 7.1. Eligibility for the ECE Bursary shall be assessed based on submission of a complete application package including all required documentation.
- 7.2. Incomplete application packages will be returned to the applicant.
- 7.3. Complete application packages received within six months of the applicant's graduation date will be further assessed for compliance with other eligibility criteria.
- 7.4. If assessed as eligible:
 - 7.4.1. The amount of the bursary will be calculated (up to \$5,000) based on the number of semesters completed through full-time studies. A contract will be drawn up and signed by the Department.
 - 7.4.2. Two copies of the contract will be sent by mail to the applicant to be signed. One signed copy to be sent back to the Department, the other signed copy to be retained by the applicant for their records.

- 7.4.3. The signed contract must be sent by mail or delivered by hand or courier – faxed or emailed contracts are not acceptable.
- 7.4.4. Upon receipt of the signed contract the Department will contact Student Financial Services (SFS), if a student loan is indicated in the application. The Federal portion of student assistance owing will be invoiced by SFS and paid directly on the Federal portion owing – up to the calculated eligible bursary amount.
- 7.4.5. Any remaining bursary (or the full eligible bursary amount if no Federal student assistance is owing) will be paid by direct deposit to the applicant.
- 7.5. Application packages received outside the six-month eligibility period will be ineligible for the ECE Bursary.

8. Decision/Notification:

- 8.1. If an applicant has met all the requirements of the ECE Bursary Program a contract will be sent for the applicant's signature that will indicate the amount of bursary approved.
- 8.2. An applicant will be advised in writing within 10 business days if ineligible or if the application is incomplete.

9. Income Tax Information:

- 9.1. The ECE Bursary is considered to be taxable income and must be reported on a recipient's Income Tax return.

10. Questions/Inquiries:

ECE Bursary Program
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
Family and Child Development Division

3rd Floor, West Block, Confederation Building
P. O. Box 8700
St. John's, NL, A1B 4J6

Phone: (709) 729-5960
Fax: (709) 729-1400
E-mail: ECEBursary@gov.nl.ca