

Great Start Kent County Early Childhood Scholarship Policy 2011

It is the intent of the Great Start Kent County Early Childhood Scholarship Fund to allocate funds to be used for tuition scholarships from September 1, 2011 to August 31, 2012, contingent upon available funding. It is anticipated that approximately \$360,000 will be available (contingent on funding) to serve Kent County children who are 3 years of age by December 1, 2011 and are from low-income families and who demonstrate the highest needs. **It is the condition of this scholarship that families who receive it would qualify for the Great Start Readiness Preschool Program or Head Start and that they agree to attend one of those two programs for the following year. This will then provide two years of free quality early education for each applicant. Information on enrollment for the 2012-2013 preschool year will be made available to parents in January of 2012.**

Funding Parameters

Scholarship funds will be distributed to eligible child care centers/preschools to serve qualifying children as it is determined that applicants choose to attend. Funds awarded must be used to provide tuition assistance for Kent County children 3 years of age on or before December 1, 2011 from families with incomes at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.

200% of Poverty Income Guidelines as of January 2011

| People in Household | Income |
|--|----------|
| 1 | \$21,780 |
| 2 | \$29,420 |
| 3 | \$37,060 |
| 4 | \$44,700 |
| 5 | \$52,340 |
| 6 | \$59,980 |
| 7 | \$67,620 |
| 8 | \$75,260 |
| For each additional family Member, add | \$ 7,640 |

Funds will be awarded and reimbursed to successful provider applicants on a per slot basis at the rate charged to the general public. Great Start Kent County Early Childhood Scholarship Fund will not pay more than the normal tuition charged by the participating program. Funds cannot be used to supplant other state and federal funds (Head Start, state administered child care assistance for eligible families, etc.)

Program Eligibility

Tuition scholarship funds will be awarded to eligible child care and/or preschool center provider applicants to be used to support tuition assistance for children from families with incomes at or below 200% of poverty. **Priority will be given to children who meet income eligibility guidelines and have additional identified needs.** Providers will be reimbursed on a per slot basis after submission of an invoice for services with appropriate documentation. Recruitment of providers will identify child care and/or preschool centers in targeted neighborhoods (or in close proximity to those neighborhoods) where data demonstrates that there is significant unmet need. To be eligible to receive tuition scholarship funds through the Great Start Kent County Early Childhood Scholarship Fund, providers must meet the following criteria:

1. Provide programming that serves children 3 years of age and includes a planned curriculum. Child age is as of 12/01/11.
2. Providers must meet the following standards criteria (applicants must provide appropriate documentation to verify):
 - Hold Regular License (not Provisional) with no substantial violations within the past 3 years.
 - Staff (including Program Director) is involved in ongoing, planned professional development.
 - Staff (including Program Director) agrees to participate in trainings that may be sponsored through this Great Start Kent County Early Childhood Scholarship Committee.

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3. Preference will be given to programs that:

- Have achieved National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation
- Are working toward National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation
- Demonstrate use of a comprehensive, research-based or evidence-based curriculum; a systematic child assessment addressing all areas of child development; and a reliable, published screening tool. Examples of curricula choices are The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, High Scope Curriculum and curriculum that is linked to the Michigan Department of Education Learning Expectations. Examples of assessment tools include, but are not limited to, Creative Curriculum and High Scope COR. Examples of screening tools are Ages and Stages Questionnaires and Brigance Screens.

Program Responsibilities

Successful applicants must use awarded funds to support tuition scholarships that serve children from families at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines.

Programs receiving these tuition scholarship funds will be responsible for the following:

1. Maintain a system to collect supporting documentation required as a condition of receiving these designated funds (e.g., child attendance records, tuition reimbursement invoices, etc.)
2. Maintain a system to track child attendance at program and to provide follow-up with families if attendance falls below 90%. Attendance remaining below 90% after consultation and assistance provided for correction of this, may result in loss of scholarship assistance for the child. This information must be shared with the program administrator (Kent Regional 4C) within two weeks.
3. Maintain a system to track and report performance measure data required by the Great Start Early Childhood Scholarship Committee. Required performance measures are subject to change dependent upon decisions made by the Great Start Kent County Early Childhood Scholarship Committee.

Required Performance Measures

- Documentation of education level of Program Director, lead teachers and classroom staff
- Documentation of professional development of staff during past year
- For children who receive scholarship funds, report the following:
 - # of children receiving scholarship funds
 - # of families served
 - # of children receiving scholarship funds by race/ethnicity – Native American, African American, Hispanic or Latino, White, Multi-Racial, Asian, Other
 - # and % of children screened for age appropriate skills
 - # and % of children screened for age appropriate skills that were referred for additional services of treatment
 - # and % of children/families retained by the program and # and % of those who dropped out of the program

4. Assisting scholarship families with the transition to free preschool opportunities for 4 year olds.
5. Attending a two-hour orientation for scholarship providers.
6. Submit completed mid-year and year-end progress reports to the scholarship program administrator using approved format provided by the administrator.
7. Demonstrate a commitment and ability to comply with all relevant state and federal laws, including all rules and policies associated with this request for proposal.

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Use of Funds

These funds are designated to support tuition scholarships that serve three year olds in Kent County families at or below 200% of poverty. Funded providers will be reimbursed on a per slot basis after submission of an invoice for services with supporting attendance documentation. Funded providers must invoice for services bi-weekly.

How to Submit an Application and Timeline

Applying child care centers and/or preschool providers should submit one (1) original application to Judy M. Freeman, by one of these three methods:

Via email at jfreeman@firststepskent.org

Via fax at 616-632-1004, Attn: Judy Freeman

Via U.S. mail

Judy Freeman
Great Start Collaborative
Attn: Scholarship Application
118 Commerce Ave. SW
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Provider applications must be postmarked by June 17, 2011. After this date, requests to serve children will be addressed contingent upon funding availability and geographic location. The Great Start Early Childhood Scholarship Committee will review provider applications and will determine those providers that meet the Program Eligibility guidelines. Scholarship funds will be awarded through a process designed to identify eligible children with the greatest need.

Families should submit one (1) original application to Jennifer Griffith, by one of these two methods:

Via email at jenniferg@4cchildcare.org

Via U.S. mail

Jennifer Griffith
Kent Regional 4C
Attn: Scholarship Application
233 East Fulton, Suite 107
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Family applications are due by July 30, 2011. Announcements on the scholarship awards will be made in early August.

Contracting Period

It is anticipated the contracting period would be for September 1, 2011 through August 31, 2012 (or when funding award verification is granted.) Tuition scholarship funds cannot be used to cover child care or preschool hours covered by other funding sources (state administered child care assistance for eligible families, Head Start, etc.) If a preschool receives notice of award of other federal, state or local funding support for preschool services for a scholarship recipient after entering into a contract with the Great Start Kent County Early Childhood Scholarship Fund, the provider must notify the committee immediately and the contract funding award will be renegotiated.

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